

## VISUAL ART EDUCATION: A CATALYST FOR NIGERIA'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY

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### **ABSTRACT**

*There are many variables to be considered when picking a course of study or vocation for a future livelihood either in a formal or informal education. Visual arts is one of such formal or informal education that can guarantee profit making and job security in Nigeria, as this has become very glaring considering the state of affairs with the present Nigeria economy situation which has also resulted to a high level of unemployment and a drastic reduction in the country's per-capital income. This paper avers that Vocational education, entrepreneurship and apprenticeship systems are in other word related to visual arts as a profit making enterprise, therefore could sustain job security and take the country out of economic recession. This paper discusses further on how visual art can be re-branded in Nigeria for economic growth and sustainable development.*

**Keywords:** Visual art, Artist, Technical and Vocational Education, Entrepreneurship

### **INTRODUCTION**

Education is the most treasured wealth any citizen can get from any nation, be it formal or informal education. The significance of education is normally felt through the acquirement of knowledge and information, as well as skills acquisition or aptitude, vocational training, entrepreneurship are all related skills gaining systems that prepares an individual towards a lucrative profit making business and a job security, and all this skills are identified as technical and vocational education.

In Nigeria educational system, technical and vocational education are aimed to offer training to improve individual's general skill especially in relation to their present or future career which is normally offered at the

senior secondary and tertiary levels of education. Lamidi and Samuel (2016) posit that such training prepares middle and higher level technical manpower, at the Polytechnics and has to do with the understanding of concepts, values, fundamental beliefs and purposes. Esen, (2002) in Bisalla and Adeyemi (2016) avers that Technical and vocational education especially the visual arts education is the ingredients of socio-economic and political stability of a nation and its economic survival. For quiet sometime now Nigerians have adopted education as an official component for achieving socio-economic stabilities and political survival. Technical and vocational education, is expected to create a true democratic Nigerian Society and a spring board for economic recovery. According to the National policy on education (2004) in Lamidi and Samuel (2016) states that the philosophy and value of education in Nigeria includes,

- Interpretation of the individual
- Respect for the work of individual
- Faith in man's ability for the common good of the society
- Moral and spiritual value in inter personal and human relations
- Shared responsibility for the common good of the society and
- Social, cultural, economic, scientific, and technological progress

It is therefore significant to note that the above philosophies of education should be seen to deal with 'certificate' that are usually effort concentrated. This will to a certain level create job opportunities for some individuals that most have been trained towards skills acquisition and will in essence also empowered the graduates to be relevant and architects of goods and services in the country. It is on this backdrop that the concept African indigenous education, entrepreneurship system, technical and vocational education and re-branding through visual arts is discussed with a view to highlighting positive philosophy of visual arts education in the development of a given economy.

### **AFRICAN INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

There are non-formal education systems in Nigeria that have provided job security for a number of citizens, but African art education is known to have the capability of a far reaching changes in the society because

the society is dynamic, education for any given society must also change in order to meet the needs of the dynamic nature of the society. To support this assertion Mushin (2009) defines "African indigenous education as a process of passing among the tribal members and from one generation to another the inherited knowledge, skills, cultural traditions, norms and values of the tribe". Therefore, African indigenous education can generally be defined as a form of learning in African traditional societies in which knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the tribe, were passed from elders to children, by means of oral instruction and practical activities. Jegede (1983), in Lamidi and Samuel (2006), avers that before the coming of the missionaries and the colonialists in Nigeria, traditional Art education was based on the apprenticeship system. Among the Yoruba, Adegbolage family of Abeokuta, with other wood carvers, ran a workshop and art shop. Bamigboye and Arowo- Ogun and later Bamidele all apprenticeship centres which made the traditional education system to flourish. Benin City is another main art community in the traditional apprenticeship/training systems known for brass work, ebony and ivory carving in Nigeria.

In the submission of Jegede (1983), in Lamidi and Samuel (2016), apprenticeship system is a dynamic impact that Nigerian traditional artist have made to visual art education to spread and sustain traditional arts and crafts; this offer jobs for numerous traditional artists. The traineeship system is a sustainable traditional education system that is still enabling the youths towards the prospect of self-sustainability. A lot of benefit was made by taking away boredom among the young men and women thereby reduced crime rate in the urban rural areas. Early training of children at their formative stage in apprenticeship system will provide the child the confidence to learn better. The apprenticeship has also assisted the individual, to grow a personal ability, without any sensitive rigidity. Ali (2000) in Lamidi and Samuel(2016) opines that at about 1892, different indigenous groups across Nigeria, were already training young men and women in different occupation, trades, as well as manufacture of different materials and services such as; Building, hair making, body decoration, pottery, wood carving and iron smiting. However, the apprenticeship system is a type of customary education which has a long

lasting influence of a child developmental stage. In some instance the apprentice usually stayed with the master craftsman or woman, at times an hostel accommodation is arranged for them to enable the child stay with the family and be provided with basic services such as; food, clothing and moral training which could last for the period agreed by both parties.

### **Entrepreneurship System**

The word entrepreneur is derived from the French concept "entreprendre" which literarily is equivalent to the English concept "to undertake". From the business point of view, to *undertake* simply means to start a business. An entrepreneur is one who organizes, manages, and assumes the risks of a business or enterprise. Often, individuals leave the job market, set up their own businesses or set up businesses due to one reason or the other. Foriwaa et al (2013) Considered the above statement and advance that an "entrepreneur is regarded as a special kind of labour because not all labour possesses entrepreneurial abilities, which enable them to start a business from the scratch". There are several definitions of the concept 'entrepreneurship' by several scholars who do not agree with themselves. Thus, the researcher further states that Entrepreneurship is more than simply "starting a business"; Entrepreneurship is a process through which individuals identify opportunities, allocate resources, and create value. This creation of value is often through the identification of unmet needs or through the identification of opportunities for change. In support of the assertion, Calvin (2003) state that it is one of "today's most potentially rewarding avenues to gaining control over life and career". Therefore, entrepreneurs see 'problems' as 'opportunities' and then take action to identify the solutions to those problems. In similar submission, Hisrich, et al (2005), in Lamidi and Samuel (2016), observe that Entrepreneurship embraces, initiative organization of social and economic assets, to turn such resources and situations, to practical risk management accounting. In broad a sense, entrepreneurship is the self-motivated manner of making smooth wealth. The wealth is produced by an individual who undertake the role of taking a major threats, in terms of equity, time and/or occupational pledge to create significance for some products or

services. The product or services may or may not be totally new, but value must somehow be added by the entrepreneur, by receiving and locating the necessary skills and resources. Entrepreneurship is found in all careers, scholastic scheme, in medicine, law, and architecture, engineering and visual art. Therefore, the central focus of all the meanings put onward include similar attributes such as, organization, wealth creation, newness of ideas, risk taking. Entrepreneur in visual art should be taken without negligence, for it is a dynamic drill in endowing persons in a society and should be seen as a well pronounced initiative for employment haven. It is a misconception to say that formal tertiary schools do not offered entrepreneurial courses. For instance, the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) have been accountable for taking such part that train some feature of entrepreneurship in different institutions in Nigeria. Another example is the course trends in Arts and industrial design curriculum content in Federal polytechnic Nasarawa, the course has been designed to include some aspect of entrepreneurship. This is to let the students understand the need to endow them after completion of their course of study, in case they cannot find a job. This is the main importance of visual art and economic recovery this paper is trying to highpoint. To further stress the significance of entrepreneurship as a key step for economic recovery in Nigeria. Lamidi and Samuel (2016) cited the Vanguard newspaper publication of April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2010 on a signed memorandum of understanding by national board for technical Incubation (NBTI) and the National University Commission (NUC) to develop entrepreneurship education in curriculum, in Nigerian Universities. This is intended at nurturing a long-lasting culture of entrepreneurship in higher institutions of learning, in a struggle to nurture the country's economy towards 2020.

The authors further assert that Divine (2012), also sees entrepreneurship as a driver of Nigerian economy's wealth in which a high majority of jobs are created by minor businesses started by entrepreneurially inclined persons. Entrepreneurship skills and attitudes build inventive benefits to society, even beyond their use to business scheme. Personal qualities that are dynamic and significant to entrepreneurship, as creativity and a high spirit initiative can be useful to everybody, in their working

responsibilities and everyday survival. Also, the importance of technical skill that is needed to be independent is gained from side to side entrepreneurship education.

### **Technical and Vocational Education**

Technical and vocational education has been a fundamental part of national development strategies in many societies, because of its influence on productivity and economic development, Technical and Vocational education begins with assessment of career choices, provisions, basic academic and life skills, and allows attainment of higher academic standards, leadership, preparation for industrial-defined work, innovative and continuing education. Vocation education and training, prepares learners for careers that are mental based or practical, typically non-academic and fully related to specific trade, occupation or vocation (Applied or visual art). It is in that regard Alalibo (2017) posits that the "foundation of economic growth globally is technical/vocational education". Technical education is rudimentary to the socio/economic development of any nation.

Following this fact, stakeholders have emphasized the need to establish better equipped technical schools in the country to boost development. It was in realization of this importance that the federal government established the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) in January 1977 in response to the acute shortage of technical manpower which was a major constraint towards the execution of the then 1975 – 1980 Third National Development Plan on Education. Ugwuja(2010) observe that vocation and technical education is an aspect of education designed to prepare students for industry, agriculture, commerce, home economics, which is usually provided at the senior secondary or lower tertiary level. According to the national policy on education (NPE), it is defined as that aspect of education that leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. In this sense, it forms a practical segment of education that involves skill acquisition. Therefore, technical education is a subset of vocational education. However, vocational education can also be seen as that education designed to prepare individual for gainful employment as

semi-skilled worker or technicians or sub professional in recognized occupations and in new and emerging occupations or to prepare individual for enrolment in advanced technical education programme. Vocational education can be explained in terms of:-training designed to advance an individual's proficiency in relation to his or her present future occupation, training or re-training experiences which are designed to fit individuals in recognized occupation. Thus, vocational education is that part of total educational system, which offers courses leading to the acquisition of specific skills to enable one to perform certain job. Sometimes, vocational education offers re-training to up-grade workers already in employment. Bisalla and Adeyemi (2016) are also in support of technical and vocational education and observe that it gives the individual the skill to live,learn and work as productive citizens in a global society and a variety of components falls under the umbrella of Technical and Vocational education: agricultural education, business education, family consumer sciences, health occupation education, marketing education, as well as art and craft education.

Abdullahi (1994) in Osalor (2013) avers that technical education is a feature of education that involves the acquisition of techniques and application of the knowledge of the science for improvement of man's immediate environment. Technical and vocational education prepares one for the world of work with which the individual become reliant and can make contributions to the development of the society. As employers look for new talents every year from new graduates, it is important to not only have a solid education but graduates that have features that stand out from the rest of the graduating students. In the same manner Cote,(2007) in Osalor (2013) state that with the economy being more globalized than ever, it is important to have a background and a skill set that allows graduates to become immersed in the global economy right from graduation and it is important for these students or graduates to have skills in innovation in technology education and entrepreneurship to be ready to fit into the global market place on which today's economy depends on entrepreneurial skills needed by technical and vocational education.

## **Re-Branding Through Visual Arts**

Gyegwe et al (2012) opines that for art to become a tool for national transformation, it needs the potential to create jobs. For example, the previous minister of labour and productivity in 2009, Prince Adetokunbo Kayode cited the World Bank figure for unemployed youths at the tune of about 4million between the age of 18 and 25years and further predictions that was also made is that the number could rise beyond that since people of the age 26 to 40 years were not captured. While there were large numbers of youths pursuing limited jobs, the artist can be protected with the difficulty of being part of a band wagon, by looking at the opposite direction as the direction is getting fortified entrepreneurially. According to Beckman (2011) in Gyegwe et al(2012) "entrepreneurship and art are inseparable". This is why the artist need to be equipped with the necessary entrepreneurial skills to help him market and sell his/her art as this would affect the nation positively. As artists graduate from Universities, Polytechnics, or Colleges of Education without the knowledge of how to sell their art, their education losses value, this is why the author realizes entrepreneurship to be rooted in providing useful and noticeable results, it continually spurs education to be practical, useful, and heroic.

The researchers further see it as encouraging professors to join students as they vigorously pursue their ventures". In the light of the above, the universities and schools training artist, should also equip them with the necessary knowledge they need in other to sell what they can create, the artist again need to develop the sense of opportunity, appreciation and developmental process. Scherdin and Zander (2011) in Gyegwe et al (2012) sees "a potential or perhaps already emerging fluidity between the field of art and business", this once more, brings to fore the need for the artist to be a total businessman or entrepreneur, since art and business cannot be separated. Being an entrepreneur, the artist needs to be innovative after developing a sense of opportunity recognition, thereby bringing about novel ideas or approaches in rendering his/her works. Schumpeter (1934) Scherdin and Zander (2011) in Gyegwe et al (2012) states that "artistic work is also about the introduction of novelty, which has remained central to the entrepreneurship literature"; this is



why scientists like Thomas Edison's electric bulb has remained a novel idea. Its novelty has continued to generate money on a daily basis all over the world. In a period where some markets are deteriorating, Nigeria can grow through art. The music industry and movie industries in Nigeria are contributing their quota to the economic development of Nigeria; they are also being used as agents of rebranding, but the fine arts or visual arts needs to do more. This can be achieved through supporting artists to create ventures here in the country. These ventures can be supported with soft loans and tax holidays. The studios that such ventures will create will further grow into training other artists who will be relieved of the challenges of unemployment in the country. Cash generated from such galleries, studios, training academies, will contribute to economic development of the nation. Additionally, the government or its agencies should also consider exposing Nigerian artists within Nigeria. This is so because such monies spent on a few artists on foreign trips in the bid to expose them can help establish younger and budding artists whose activities can also impact economically on the nation. Successes in such schemes can lead to Nigeria becoming a tourist destination of which the benefits are enormous including a laundered image and economic development. The art industries in Nigeria have continued to suffer. For example the textile industry has been overwhelmed by the influx of standard and sub-standard textile goods from foreign countries. This has led to the depleting of Nigerians finances, especially when you have to buy cheap goods that would not last more than two months. The government needs to curtail such influx to give strength to the Nigeria artist. To a large extent, it would be recalled that there has been virile textile practice among the, Akwete, Okene, Tiv, Yoruba, and indeed every culture in Nigeria. The continual importation of foreign textiles will never allow their development.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Subsequently visual art education is a treasured benefit in building a new socio-economic order. The developing nations must give serious thought to visual art education. This high-quality is essential since it will add immeasurably to the structure that will lead to the general socio-

economic recovery and development. Therefore prominence should be placed on visual art activities from pre-primary through secondary level education. This will equip the youths with the occupational skills to guarantee a meaningful living regardless of the preferred profession that they have chosen to undertake. It will be valuable for both the artists and the clients of artworks to make art part of the elementary national education as it is in some developed economy like Germany and Switzerland. Government should fit in some experts in the various art fields in policies concerning on national planning that will spawn a robust economy. Planners of development programmes should involve competent intellectuals from the arts amongst others. Effort should be made at sensitization of the citizenry by all the tiers of government to stimulate mass interest in artistic advancement. An appropriate co-ordination will bring about desirability of the creative arts activities among parents /guardians who will in turn inspire their children /wards in the study of art not only as an academic discipline but as a proper and sustainable profession. The government as a matter of urgency should step up the activities of the small and medium size enterprise (SME) and the youth entrepreneurship programme (YEP), apprenticeship system should be given financial support and other services required for sustainable development and self-reliance.

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