

Art as a Language for Education in Nation Building

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Abstract

The enormous contribution of visual art towards building a strong and a virile Nigeria has not received enough scholarly attention. In view of this problem, this work attempts at analyzing and projecting the impact of visual arts toward nation building. The research employed a qualitative method, while sources of information were gathered from primary sources (mainly oral) and secondary sources, which include, published materials such as, Newspapers, Books, Magazines, Journal Articles among other published and unpublished sources. The study reveals that government's efforts towards projecting visual art as the required catalyst for nation building is still insufficient, hence the need for this research. This work is hoped to stimulate more attention in the area of exposing the role of visual arts in nation building.

Introduction

Art which is basically a means of self-expression has an origin that dates back to the prehistoric period. It has remained an integral part of human existence. Okeke (2017) avers. "Since art is virtually a reality that can neither be ignored nor eroded, obviously it is an inextricable part of life" The oldest theory of art holds that art is an imitation of reality (Nwakeze-Ogugua, 2014). Although Art could be said to be universal (Gettlein, 1998), Igboamazu (2016) views it as a dynamic activity when he avers that "over time, the value of art has shifted with age and culture. The meaning or significance of some art objects has also either shifted or become obliterated".

Art remains the basis of achievement of most great world civilizations from the ancient times to the present. In the ancient Greece, under Pericles, Athenian art reached new heights; a standard of excellence which endured till the Medieval Period. The High Renaissance (1500-20 AD), during which the ideals of the Renaissance are thought to have been given most complete expression in most human endeavours, was dominated by three artists: Leonado Da'vinci, Michealangelo and Raphael. Art was prominent during these periods mentioned because; art constitutes a visual language which is very effective in mobilizing and enlightening the people. Renaissance in particular, was a period of enlightenment. Okeke (1979) postulates that 'a true creative mind is well able to communicate

with the widest possible public with varied life experiences. The attribute of genius is the ability to reach the depth of human feeling with the barest of means....

Art as a language of education is a social system and a way of safeguarding and strengthening the moral code of a dynamic human group with common destiny.

Art and Nation Building

Art could form the basis of building a strong and self-reliant nation; a weapon that can shatter the chains of domination and dependency and enthrone a vibrant and self-reliant society whose economy will be rooted in our indigenous artistic talents and technology. This idea appears to have sustained the pre-colonial Nigeria, hence the preponderance of indigenous art traditions in Nigeria which include, the ancient Awka blacksmithing, the Benin Bronze casting Technology, the Bida bead industry, among many other art traditions. Some of these artistic enterprises survived the eroding effects of colonialism to the present time though, with evidences of decline in various aspects.

These declining art industries could be revived if the barriers hindering the production of their products in large scale are removed. These barriers are religious, social and political in nature. Under religious factor, one discovers that some indigenous furniture and designs which are set aside as sanctimonious objects could be mass produced and exported. Islam on the other hand also discourages some aspects of visual arts and technology.

Wangboje (1976) states that; "in areas where the Islamic religion has come to be dominant, however, there is a very different attitude. The representation of figures is considered wrong". Some of our indigenous art designs if given the required contemporinity hold promise of placing Nigeria among the advanced nations of the world.

Art and Political Education

Political education enables group of individuals to understand the nature and organization of their society as well as their position within the society and the part that they are expected to play in order to ensure the positive development of the nation. If the Independent Electoral Commission of Nigeria (INEC) for example, presents a new elocutionary procedure without showing graphic or visual illustration of the features or expectations, it simply underscores a lack of knowledge of effective communication. The omission of visual communication in two kind of

process is capable of confusing understanding through the absence of clarity (Adeniran 1991). Offor (1997) upheld this view when she insists that an artist understands more the characteristics or the channels to use in directing his message, since one effective form of illustration is worth more than a million words, an artist should make his message simple enough to be understood.

Art and Mass Mobilization

It is a known fact that, art plays an important role in mass mobilization and public enlightenment. New social circumstances, economic efficiency and democracy cannot develop without peoples; however, people living in a new independent/democratic dispensation are socially and psychologically burdened with the legacy of former times. Ogili (1997), coming from Nigeria's colonial history, states that;

there is no doubt that they need some levels of enlightenment to help them to overcome the negative effects of the legacy of inferiority complex and low esteem imposed on them by the colonists, and to establish new values, attitudes and behaviour. Generally speaking, the aim of mobilization is to increase citizens understanding and acceptance of an idea or process.

Art is a veritable instrument for accelerating the pace of all aspects of rural development, to shake off inertia in a people, achieve mobilization and direct their productive forces towards their living conditions. Various attempts by successive government's at mass mobilization such as "War Against Indiscipline" by Buhari and Idiagbo's regime, "The Green Revolution" by Shehu Shagari's regime, Operation Feed the Nation" by General Olusegun Obasanjo among others, relied heavily on art works such as posters, sculptures and painting for their success. Artistic posters, graphic illustrations, drama and songs could be used to equip all Nigerians to shun behaviours that are contrary to social justice; to make the people aware of the fact that the respectability of a government, stability and progress of the country are facilitated through social justice. An example of this are ubiquitous posters produced and distributed by MAMSER and Federal Ministry of Information preparing the people's mind to accept democratic change and social justice in Nigeria. The posters also advice the audience to eschew all vices in public life, including corruption, dishonesty electoral and census malpractices, ethnic and religious bigotry. These artistic efforts go a long way in propagating the virtue of hard work, honesty, self reliance,

commitment to; and promotion of our national integrity.

Conclusion

The use of art as a language for education is not a process of making an artist out of everybody. It is more of training the eyes to see in greater details, the ears to hear more clearly and hands to handle things better. It is an obvious fact that lack of competent judgment could lead to the acceptance of mediocrity (Okeke, 1979).

role of the Art in nation building can never be over estimated. Okeke (1979) avers "The artist is very eager to contribute his own towards the liberation of African humanity and to make his mark on the sands of time". To achieve an effective organization of the Nigerian society, the development of its languages of education which include, visual arts, music and drama must be made a foremost priority. People, especially those who work in mass media establishments, houses must be educated in the area of visual literacy to ensure that the materials which appear in the mass media are effective enough to encourage the maintenance of social value and justice in order to promote national consciousness, which cannot be without social justice.

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