

ARTS EDUCATION ADVANCEMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

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Abstract

The Arts education has consistently been proclaimed as the bedrock to economic development due to its focus on skills training, (self) employment avenues and economic impacts on Gross Domestic Product of economics. No serious minded economic policy formulators and administrators at modern times can afford to undermine education, art education, internal economic structure (micro economy), the arts and the need for diversification. This paper is therefore designed to review literature on economy and the arts, analyse the importance of arts, education and economy, the role of arts education on economic development in Africa. It posited that arts and social science are very important aspects of our education and should not be treated otherwise but should be given premium like other subjects in the curriculum of schools. Conclusively, the paper is of the view, Africa possesses enormous human resources, talented and artistic man power; what the continent needs is viable and consistent educational programmes and the strengthening of the arts both the institutional and its practice.

Keywords: Arts, Arts education, Development and Economy

Introduction

Education in the Arts is an integral part of development of each human being. Those who have studied the learning processes throughout the ages have emphasized the importance of the arts in the education process. Kaagan (2018) affirms that study in the arts is integral to our society; the arts being part of the cultural heritage, making us most human and most complete as people. Arts education refers to education in the discipline of visual and creative arts. Wikipedia (2011) clearly defines it as encompassing all the visual arts, that is, painting, graphics, instructor, and the arts being studied as an individual disciplines and integrated into general subject matter teaching.

As Kaagan (2018) infers, sufficient data exists to overwhelmingly support the belief that the study and participation in the arts is a key component in improving learning throughout all academic fields. With effectiveness in reducing student dropout, raising student attendance, developing better team players, fostering a love for learning, improving greater student dignity, enhancing student creativity and producing a more prepared citizen for the workplace for tomorrow. In fact, it restores the dignity of man. Evidence from research is one of the many reasons educations and engagement in the arts is beneficial to the educational process and society at large.

Jensen (2021) explains that the arts develop neural systems that produce a broad spectrum of benefits ranging from fine motor skills to creativity and improved emotional balance, enhancing the process of learning. The system they nourish, which include our integrated sensory attention, cognitive, emotional and motor capacities are infact, the driving forces behind all other learning. Arts are basic to general education of students. The arts experience makes a very significant contribution to the mental, emotional and social growth of the students. Arts stimulate thought and acts as a medium for developing creative and critical thinking in man. Arts education offers the students the opportunity to further refine skills and focus on the ability to utilize skills, creative thinking and problem solving in order to develop their own beliefs and values.

It is common knowledge that Arts education has the potency to engender sustainable national development. According to Kum-Essuon (2015) “historical trends and critical observation suggest that nations that formulate their philosophical visions using their arts and culture as a basis are not only better identified globally, but achieve substantial development”. Arts education aims at developing the intellectual, moral, social, and physical characteristics of the learners so that they could be able to enjoy a living as a people, support themselves adequately as adults, and contribute sufficiently to nation-building (Swenzy-Dadzie, Nantwi & Issah, 2020).

Arts Education

Art is a visual language whose statement records man’s response to a multiplicity of environmental stimuli. Such stimuli can be social, political, cultural or even religious in closed or open societies (Enamhe and Echeta, 2017). The term ‘arts’ includes but not limited to music (instrumental and vocal), dance, drama, folk art, creative writing, architecture and allied fields, painting, sculpture, photography, graphic and craft arts, industrial design, costume and fashion design, motion pictures, television, radio, film, video, tape and sound recording, the arts relates to the presentation, performance, execution, and exhibition of such major art forms, all those traditional arts practiced by the diverse peoples of this country, and the study and application of the arts to the human environment.

Arts refer to the theory and physical expression of creativity found in human societies and cultures. Art implies the quality, technique, expression, and production of aesthetic significance.

Art is a human conception made manifest by the skillful use of a medium. It signifies a doing, a making, a fashioning or putting together, and it usually implies that the thing is accomplished by human skills. Major constituents of the arts include literature – made up of poetry, prose and drama, performing arts – among them music, dance, and theatre; and visual arts – including drawing, painting, photography, ceramics, sculpting, and architecture – the art of designing and constructing buildings. Some art forms combine a visual element with performance (e.g. cinematography) or artwork with the written word (e.g. comics). From prehistoric cave paintings to modern day films, art serves as a vessel for storytelling and conveying humankind's relationship with the environment.

Today, more than ever, arts education is needed by our young people as a forum for safe express, communication, exploration, imagination, cultural and historical understanding. Brain research as Jensen (2021) discovers further, confirms that arts education strengthens students problem solving and critical thinking skills adding to overall academic achievement, school success and preparation for the work world.

Arts means language use Art as a Language or Meaning of Arts

Arts is a language of visual images that everyone must learn to read. In arts, visual images are made and studied increasingly. These images affect our need, our daily behavior, our hopes, our opinions and our ultimate ideals. And that is why Eisner (2020) believes strongly that any individual who cannot understand or read images is incompletely educated. Accordingly to him, complete literacy includes ability to understand, respond to and talk about visual images. Therefore to carry out its total mission, arts education stimulates language, spoken and writing about visual images. As arts teachers, we work continuously on the development of critical skills as our way of encouraging linguistic skills.

Economic development use D

For clarity each word is herein defined separately, in view of examination of its combined and contextual meaning. Encarta (2001) explains economy as (1) Thrift, the Prudent managing of resources to avoid extravagant expenditure or waste, in (4), it says, financial affairs, the production and consumption of goods and services of a community regarded as a whole. Hogan (2016) defines economy in sociological terms saying, “economy is the dominant form of economic activities characterising a society”, he adds some examples of economies, which include, collecting and hunting economy, nomadic economy, settled agricultural economy, modern industrial economy.

Two types of definitions of economy are looked at; development is therefore defined by Iwe (2019) as transition from less human conditions to those, which are more human. Iwe, in his

definition is concerned about human situations and conditions that have to do with their environment; social, legal, economics, which generate a better environment to live a godly and religious life. Also, Encarta defines development as, event causing change an incident that causes a situation to change or progress. This definition simply portends that, the activities of the arts, when guided through the right channel can cause events to change for progressive development.

However, these definitions do not elucidate change and progress in the light of economy and artistic skill. For further explanation on these, let's look at the view of Rodney (2021) who strongly contends that, Development is many sided process, at the level of the individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, well-being, at the level of social groups, capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships. The concept, which Rodney highlights here transcends the narrow purview of many literary exercises on development, or some classes of Governments officials' understanding of 'development', as building and construction of roads. He is of the broader ideas of the term 'development', indicating that certain characteristics possessed by the individual such as increased skills and capacity, freedom to choose, creativity, self discipline, responsibility to oneself, family and nation and material well-being are indices of development; the lack of these is at variance with the term development.

The Arts, Education and the Economy

It thus seems clear to one that, Africa economic problems have defied every economic strategies adopted; theories made by erudite economists, tested and proved to work in other economies, yet failed in the Africa context. What is therefore the missing link; is it in the policies or its application? In response, it is rather pertinent we begin with Deragon's (2018) philosophy of economic reengineering which says, "Given the crisis state of our economic system rather than fixing broken system may be it is time to replace it with innovation, creativity and knowledge".

Finn and Pickett at different times illustrate that, creativity; education and knowledge are the driving forces of modern business. The viability of education in the lives of human kind has been the reasons for philosophical studies from time past. Its application in today's economic revolution is eminent; more especially creative education will impact on the lives of people. The reflexes of aesthetic education in human elements reflect in every facets of his life, not only to his body, but in a variety of his engagements. It is also natural that man is endowed with artistry and creativity; these inherent qualities when nourished will help in the development of quality, aesthetic and acceptable products. Hence, the arts and its education in Nigeria must gain root in the education of children from the foundation because, as John F. Kennedy (1917-1963) puts it, children are the greatest resource for the world and its best hope for the future.

Agreed, there has been management incompetence, most policies are wrongly interpreted and misdirected poorly or administered: it is worthy to note the advice of United Nations (UN) on the

twenty five percent of the total National Budget on science, technology and research, which is never implemented. The arts both in practice and study are not supported by the government and the business world to reap its potential. To the ignorance of many, the arts, science and technology are complementary. However, it is worthy to mention that, at recent times, the encouragement given to the arts by President GoodLuck Jonathan is inspirational.

Nonetheless, the conditionality attached to the two hundred million dollars set aside for the arts is speculatively saddled with bureaucratic bottle necks. It is indeed sad to note, that, at present, there's hardly any intellectual forum that brings the various forms of the arts in the country together where issues related to this and others can be discussed. Unfortunately, the visuals arts is worse off in this direction; this is so because, it does not have legal structure, hence have limited or virtually no influence as a pressure group on government and corporate tenders regarding art contracts that concerns the public, and fraudulent activities related to them.

The role of Art Education in Economic Development in Africa

It is a common knowledge that education in the world over is of vital importance. Individuals in the society acquire education by attending educational institutions at primary, secondary and tertiary levels where they obtain the needed knowledge, skills, values, attitude, and become refined human beings in the various fields they have chosen for themselves. Therefore, the survival of this engine room called education which provides the above relevant services should be a concern to all and sundry including the government. According to Afigbo (2014),

“Education is the aggregate of ideas, methods, institutions, facilities and personnel designed and deployed by society to teach its members how to get through life by doing or by nursing and realizing set goals”. Art is an important aspect of culture, social, economic, political and other aspects of society. Arts education enables students to become creative arts practitioners. Students learn to develop the necessary imaginative, intellectual, theoretical and practical skills to equip them for continuing personal development and professionalism (Ajibade et al., 2021).

Arts inform and provide visual, tactile and more practical learning environments. In the primary and secondary levels of education, art teaching is in the service of general development of the pupils and students, which actually starts with drawing and illustrations in demonstrations of events which are supposed to be read out. But, instead of reading out, the illustrations speak on their own and leave lasting impressions in the pupils and students. The concept of social sciences has two perspectives, which are: (1) as a field of academic scholarship that explores aspects of human society, and (2) as a major knowledge base that uses scientific methods to study society. The arts have the potential to play a leading role in national transformation in diverse ways. These ways include: cultural, social, economical, political, educational and religious development. These contributions have manifested in areas like industrial development, democracy and good

governance, healthcare services, constitutional developments etc. National transformation is a range of social, economic, political and cultural change.

The role of arts to national development is catalytic. This is because they are the fulcrum on which society is examined. They are also the tools used by policy makers to advance the course of society. They are the organized body of knowledge that is part of the development process, and as well assumes detachment to examine society so as to chart the course of national transformation. Arts and social sciences constitute engines for national transformation around the world. However, many nations of the world don't seem to be making maximum use of them in their transformation programmes. As much as arts and social sciences are prominent determinants for national transformation, they constitute indispensable propellers for achieving that transformation.

Evaluating the Exploits and Prospects of Creative and Cultural Industries in Africa

The African continent is festooned with an impressive array of rich cultural diversity alongside an unbridled creative potency inherent in the citizenry of the nations within it. Each country boasts of creative and cultural arsenals that have impressed tourists and observers from not just the West but other parts of the world over the years. It is important at this point to review the most prominent cultural events in the continent, especially the outstanding ones, organized in selected countries in different parts of Africa, that reflect the rich cultural diversity abundant there. Most of them include film festivals, art fairs and musical celebrations. In order to achieve this, important art and cultural events in Africa will be discussed with emphasis on their contributions to the socio-cultural, political and economic aspects of the society.

In the area of the arts, there are five outstanding high profile festivals, and they include; the Harare International Festival of the Arts (HIFA) held in Zimbabwe, Dakar's Biennale of African Contemporary Art (Dak'Art) held in Senegal, Bushfire Festival of Swaziland, Bayimba International Festival of the Arts in Uganda, and Lake of Stars Arts Festival of Malawi. Other top notch African cultural events that project the creativity in the continent are Cape Town's International Jazz Festival, South Africa, Sakifo Musik Festival, Reunion Islands, Festival Gnaoua et Musiques du Monde, Morocco, Zanzibar International Film Festival (ZIFF), Zanzibar and Port Harcourt Book Festival, Nigeria.

Conclusion

The paper was able to define the constructs of the topic which are: arts education advancement and economic development in Africa. The concept of national transformation was examined from the perspective of the various schools of thought in development, while the various arguments put forth indicate that national transformation is a range of social, economic, political and cultural

change. However, the paper has revealed that for effective national transformation through the arts education is indispensable. The role of arts education to national development is catalytic. It is the fulcrum on which society is examined and the tools used by policy makers to advance the course of society' advancement.

Thus, this paper has examined the specific contributions arts education plays in national transformation, the challenges and the strategies for repositioning arts and for economic development in Africa through arts education. In the very near future, arts education would become an instrument for effective national development in Africa. Arts education is a very important part of our educational system. Therefore, it should be given adequate consideration. This should start from the very beginning in the development of the African child, that is, at the primary school level. Arts subjects should be introduced in all schools and the prominent ones should be made compulsory subjects for pupils and students. With the dynamic nature of children when encouraged, success will be achieved.

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