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## **Empowering Youths Through Arts, Crafts, and Design; An Impetus for National Development**

<sup>1</sup>*Lasisi, L.A.*, <sup>2</sup>*Akande-Adedeji, O.T.*, <sup>3</sup>*Adeleye, A.J*

<sup>1</sup>Department of Art and Industrial Design, MoshoodAbiola Polytechnic, Abeokuta, Ogun State. Nigeria

<sup>2,3</sup>Department of Art and Design, Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, Ogun State. Nigeria

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### **ABSTRACTS**

The general expectation of every youth has always been that graduation from an institution of learning, he/she will pick up a good job and settles down to a satisfying life and contributes to the growth of self and society, the changing trends since Nigeria's independence in 1960 in education system vis-à-vis the job markets pose serious challenges to the future of the education of our youth in the area of Arts, crafts and design. Skill acquisition is a veritable tool to fast-track the overall development of its citizenry in national development. As it, every nation must involve in the training of mind and production of human capital. Its activities are dynamic and have a bearing on diverse government policies and priorities on education. People do not seem to understand the meaning or what skill Acquisition of arts, crafts, and design means in building up the manpower of the young generations. However, Art is imaginative, creative, or aesthetic. It is essentially man's creative spirit using media to express feelings or moods for either through clay, woodwork, cement, weaving, or some other media. This paper discusses empowering of youths through arts, crafts, and design as an impetus for National development.

*Keywords: Empowering youths, Impetus, Arts, Crafts, Design National Development.*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

In Nigeria, the role of creative art in national development has not been fully appreciated. Creative art for long had been treated as an insignificant aspect of the country's economic development. It is well known that education plays an important role in national development. Creative art is one of the subjects in the curriculum of education, the subject has many components namely, pottery, drawing, graphics, painting, textile design, art history, sculpture, and craft. In the final examination, the qualifying candidate obtains a certificate in creative art. Creative art could be defined as a discipline that trains man in the organization of formal elements, line, shape, colour, texture, and space to obtain certain emotional and visual effects (Adejumo, 1986).

This allows individuals to reason alongside their various fields of learning as in the visual arts to see how to solve the problems of poverty. Since the economy of the country has not achieved the desired goals, there is a need to address the possible alternatives for solving the problems. The challenges encountered at present include how to manage the economic crisis with an emphasis on some subject areas like visual arts to the advantage of a large fraction of Nigeria's citizenry. In an attempt to meet the socio-economic challenges posed by the country, visual arts would be one of the major keys to alleviating the poverty of the people. Given this, a series of questions come to mind such as; What is art?, What is poverty, What are the causes of poverty and how can poverty be alleviated in Nigeria through visual arts? The role of art, as one is prepared for its functions in society is remarkable. In education, people learn to grow up as useful members of society.

Ogunmola (2006), describes art as often considered the highest form of human expression, it is of great importance in education and thus helps the individual to fit into society. Considering the materials end art provides for society, art can be used most commercially to promote and sell a variety of products and to advertise religious programs. Art is the reflection of the ideal (Idealism); Art is the imagination of actuality or unachievable ideal (fiction)" (Osborne, 1968). As Lowenfeld (1975), stresses that promoting creative thinking to the individual especially the young ones must be considered, this shows that children were important as stated, children in education are being prepared to create and the best preparation for creating is the act of creating itself. Gage as cited in Ajayi (1985), supports the idea when he states that the development of individual creativity is essential to discover new relations to formulate ideas and feelings to device new means' Ralph (1970), stresses that "art is especially well suited to such growth because it encourages freedom of expression; emphasizes emotional and spiritual values, integrates all human capacities and universalizes human expression". Given this; one has to realize the effect of art on child development as a result of being skillful and creative which results in self-discovery and experimentation with a series of art materials found within his environment.

Nigeria is a rich country with an abundance of natural resources most of which have not been exploited and utilized for the people, social and economic development. But poverty in Nigeria remains significant despite high economic growth. Geoffrey Parker (2001) stresses that Nigeria has one of the

world's highest economic growth rates (averaging) 7.2% over the last decade, a well-developed economy, and plenty of natural resources such as oil, however, it remains a high level of poverty.

So one of the solutions to the reduction of poverty is a creative art, As Williams (1964) writes: "the existence of a work of art implies processes outside itself linking it to the life from which it has emerged and whose product it is". Even though Nigeria is rich in natural resources, the majority of its people are poor. Nigeria is the 20th poorest in the world; the poverty level in Nigeria has reached an alarming stage where 70% of its population lives below the poverty line.

Most people in our society, including the educated ones, see artists as somebody who draws and paints. These drawings and paintings appear to them as products of the lawlessness of self-expression. The recognition of the subject of fine art is not known and its importance. The average graduate is also ignorant of art. How much more is the public? It appears that the subject remains marginalized in the school curriculum and public examination. If the proper understanding of art education has been made and better instruction on art is followed in our schools and colleges much would have been done to redeem the subject from the neglect it has always suffered in our society. Due to this poor recognition, the nation has been experiencing serious hindrances in achieving its vision and mission. Art education receives neglect by policymakers may be because art research has not convincingly demonstrated its contributions to the academic performance of art education, that the society cares most about, or how long students stay in school and how well they do on a standardized test. According to Carole in Sani (2015), art education does engender positive outcomes on performance as many believe that policymakers might fund and encourage the implementation of art education programmes.

### ***1.1 Empowering youths for National development***

Without a doubt, the youth reflect the positive and negative picture of any society. Their energies, inventiveness, characters, and orientations define the pace of development and security of a nation. Through their creative talents and labour, a nation makes giant strides in economic development and socio-political attainments.

In all societies of the world, a virile youth is bedrock on which national development is predicated. The youths are the backbone and the building blocks of any nation. It is a fact that the stronger the youth, the more developed a nation is. The role of the youth in the nation-building process cannot be overemphasized as countries that develop and utilize their youth in the right direction seem to be more developed. The energy and brightness of the minds of youth act as torch-bearer for a nation. There is a confirmed connection between the prosperity of a nation and its youth development system.

The late British politician and writer, Benjamin Disraeli, had rightly described 'Youth of a Nation as the Trustees of Posterity'. It is in the reality of this that many nations have made concerted efforts in galvanizing an integrated approach in putting in place youth development structures that have a very high propensity to be a catalyst for their national growth. On the contrary, the countries which fail to realize the importance of the youth lag behind in all aspects of life.

It is, therefore, in the realization of the positive value that the youth could add to the growth and development of any society, that the United Nations set aside a week every August from the 12th day to celebrate International Youth Day. First celebrated in August 2000, the primary objective is to draw public awareness to youth-related issues and values. The 2017 edition of International Youth Day, with the theme, "Youth Building Peace", was aimed at stressing the principal role expected of the youth in global peaceful coexistence among the people and the drive for positive change for development through the transformative and resourceful force of the youths, which has been identified by national leaders globally including Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari.

Any nation that denies its youth the necessary enabling environment to enthusiastically participate in nation-building merely does so at its perils. Nation-building is a dynamic process that calls for the participation of all segments of society, including the often-overlooked and undermined youth population and youth resourcefulness that will provide invaluable speed for the progress of any society as well as its development.

As youth are brought into and connected with national issues and programs, they can participate actively and contribute to decision-making at multiple levels. As youths are engaged in more sustained positive relationships with adults, other youths, and national development programs, apart from realizing that they are valued citizens of their nations, such collaborations and participation may lead to skill enhancement, empowerment, and confidence-building traits, which will help prepare them for active interest and involvement in nation building. It is important to note that young people play a crucial role in the prospect of development and should be included in all National Development Plans and Programmes. But, the reality shows that attention to youth has not been sufficient and more needs to be done considering the practical implications of shifting perceptions of youth and the role they can play in society. These conceptual issues related to the barriers to effective youth participation in national development, such as lack of education, unemployment, extreme poverty, diverse illnesses and diseases, discrimination, and cynicism from both adults and young people themselves about participation competence and institutional resistance.

In Nigeria, the greatest challenge confronting the youth today is unemployment which has become a great challenge to national security. Despite the alleged success of various youth empowerment programs across the country, over 54% of Nigerian youths remain unemployed. The unemployment record in the country portrays an increase in idle hands across the length and breadth of Nigeria. It is often said that an idle mind is the devil's workshop, so an unemployed youth is a disaster waiting to happen. Activities of groups such as Boko-Haram, Niger Delta militants, Biafra agitators, and recently, the Badoo group have serious implications for national security in the country. Sadly, some of these rebellious groups have youths at the forefront of their nefarious activities.

It is a known fact that youths possess a transformative force. They are creative, resourceful, and enthusiastic agents of change. Therefore, the need for youth to be listened to and productively engaged cannot be over-emphasized in every context. Youths can determine whether this era moves towards a

great peril or a more positive change. Let us support the young people of our world so they can grow into adults and a true platform for more powerful leaders of the coming generations.

Unfortunately, in our clime, youth are not being given the needed platform to freely express themselves. Though they have always been touted as 'future leaders' since God knows when our nation needs a spiritual or physical veil remover for us to act the saying 'the future is now for us to stop saying the potential leaders of tomorrow are too young to lead alongside other flimsy excuses.

Around the world, there is a growing recognition of the need to strengthen policies and investments involving young people. We need a properly marshaled policy aimed at harnessing the innate and budding potential of the youth. In Nigeria, the youth almost do not have a voice in the scheme of things. Unemployment, lack of opportunities, faulty educational system, repressive political system, and dwindling economic fortunes, among others, are mostly responsible for the suppression of the voice of the youth in our dear nation.

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## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ademola (2012), a child needs art experience to exercise essential human qualities, keen observation, coordination, vision, craft, and imagination through expression. He went further to say through visual art activities, the learner develops various skills necessary for creative production, namely skills in the management of materials; skills in perceiving the qualitative relationships of things in his environment, skills in inventing forms to satisfy the user within the limits of materials, and in creating spatial aesthetic expression. All such skills are useful to future scientists, architects, engineers, craftsmen, and practitioners of any kind.

Art fosters creative self-expression as it stimulates interest and awakens the inherent creative ability in the individual. The artistic heritage is a significant part of the people because through its artistic architect, craftsman, designer, scholars, and teachers both past and present, its cultural traits can be revealed, Talabi (1979), stated that culture is preserved through art and art can be a very powerful tool in bringing about cultural change if it's so desired. Children learn about their past and related it to the present to aspire and work toward a better tomorrow.

Art is no longer just a product of appreciation for its aesthetic value and expression of its lofty ideas but also as a means of investment for profit making for example in carpentry, textile materials, ceramics, advertisements, painting, photography, tailoring, and so on. Art is one of the potent tools for achieving a national economy in areas of unity, national growth, and development. The idea here is to encourage the youths to be self-reliant by acquiring skills. In this modern technological advancement, art education ought to be encouraged to strengthen the effective means of teaching and learning to enhance a meaningful goal in the trend of modern educational technology, science, and technology. It is believed that if art is allowed to play its role in education, its impact will pave way for rapid national development in all ramifications of education. Art is a form of human behavior through which man purposely interprets and enhances the quality or essence of his experience through the things he does and creates.

### 2.1 Skills Acquisition and Poverty Reduction

Skills acquisition is simply the practice of teaching or educating people on the basic skills needed in various vocations such as in the areas of business, technology, creative arts, computers, etc. The programme is offered through outlets or media such as skills acquisition centers, adult literacy centers, adult schools, distance learning, continuing education schemes, lifelong learning schemes, and e-learning. Programmes are designed to meet the needs of a person that did not acquire enough formal education or none at all as well as those that need to sustain learning for self-development. Skills acquisition programmes are, therefore, designed under structured programmes of adult education to meet the needs of adult learners.

Skills acquisition is very important and central to the development of any contemporary society. It is one means of tackling poverty level, unemployment, and employment and affording massive job creation. With an estimated graduates turnover of over 600,000 yearly in Nigeria (Abubakar, Abdulkadir, & Sirajo, 2010) seeking white collar jobs that are not available, coupled with the large numbers of youths who do not attend formal school, there is the need to strengthen vocational skills acquisition to reduce poverty and foster jobs creation. This will engage people meaningfully thereby reducing insecurity to its barest level. When everyone is busy with one form of job or the other, there would be little or no room for heinous activities that can jeopardize the peace of the State particularly and the country at large. At this time when the world is recovering from the global recession,

He further observed that the structure of the Nigerian education system which lays much emphasis on University education needs to be re-addressed if the country must achieve its goals in poverty alleviation and employment creation. Poverty is the state of having insufficient resources. It is lack basic needs such as food, clothing, housing, water, and health services. Nigeria is having a large percentage of poor people that suffers from poverty. While every individual is expected to live a comfortable life, well nourished with a sound economic base, an avenue through which this can be realized is through vocational skills acquisition.

Skills acquisition programmes have greater potential to achieve the goal because it is geared toward skills acquisition and occupational preparedness. Coupled with the above, the present world is changing through the forces of globalization and technological advancement which require advances in vocational and technological education. To prepare for these challenges, creativity and innovation in vocational skills acquisition and entrepreneurship are highly relevant and sustainable, and living depends on the ability of the citizenry to create wealth, generate employment for others and become self-reliant through the innovative application of ideas and skills, to make them useful members of the society and to be free from deprivation and poverty of whatever forms and types (Tijjani & Aliyu, 2008).

In this regard, skills acquisition is the most viable and veritable means to equip the youths with the skills and techniques to develop their potential and create a conducive environment where individuals strive to match with the current world development pattern. It is expected in this democratic dispensation that, all efforts must be geared towards poverty reduction through vocational skills acquisition.

This, according to Tijjani and Aliyu (2008), will help in self-reliance or self-employment attitude in the individuals and the ability to develop our technology based on economic and social environmental factors. They further observed that a lot of skills can be learned through vocational skills acquisition with the potential for developing manpower to promote both social and economic growth and development. The global economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a large setback to the international community's goal to achieve SDG 1 of "no poverty" by 2030. Extreme poverty around the world is increasing, the first time that has happened this century after decades of global poverty reduction. Over 700 million people worldwide are currently estimated to be living in extreme poverty.

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### 3. THE IMPETUS OF ARTS CRAFTS AND DESIGN IN THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Hassan (2015), Art is seen as the product of creative force derived from a need or response to environmental conditions. It is a means of media to create objects. Art in its broad sense according to Anthropologists includes designs, symbols, and artifacts of religious worship as well as painting, sculpture, ceramics, textiles, and architecture. Art activities will require the child to coordinate his intellect, emotions, and perceptual and motor skills. Art activities are also crafts therefore; crafts are objects referred to more as utilitarian objects as distinguished from the arts which usually intend to produce beauty or pleasure. Craft as an object could be said to be that part of the material culture that deals with utilitarian objects and is generally characterized by its mass production through mechanical or manual means. The crafts generally concern themselves with furniture, clothing utensils basketry, textiles, ceramics, metal, and woodwork. They are commonly referred to as applied or industrial art. These arts give pleasure to the users as the objects are in use.

Winger (2015). "Utilitarian objects were often richly shaped and decorated for no other reason than to please a variety of users-many them were created for reasons variety, their primary function being to give aesthetic pleasure, weapons, drums, necklaces, bowls, and platters in wood or pottery are among the most frequently found utilitarian objects with purely artistic decoration.

Art and crafts are the products of human artifacts, created for use to express communication, embellishment for the utilitarian purpose that has been produced through skills and proficient craftsmanship. Art and crafts serve several functions in society for example they express and communicate the quality of art that is invaluable for the education and social life of the individual and the society at large. They serve in enhancing one's understanding of society through the knowledge one can gain of other societies past and present. Art as an embellishment serves as an instrument for providing beauty pleasure and enjoyment in an otherwise dull and unimpressive environment. The craft helps in aiding technological advancement through creative and manual skills thereby helping to inculcate in the individual a sense of dignity in labour. In summary art and craft fulfill educational, social, religious, and technological functions in the making of an 'educated' or a socially competent individual.

#### 3.1 The Nigerian youths

Youth constitutes large numbers in national development. Nigerian youths fall into school-age and employable groups. Therefore, the role of youths in Nation building cannot be over-emphasized. Meanwhile, Nigerian youths with great physical strength, knowledge acquisition prosperity and innovative process, and faster rates of learning and acquiring skills present better opportunities to promote Arts, Crafts, and design which can lead to opening and running studios for designing cards, Banners, emblems, logos, signposts, bill-board, engraving, name tag, Gift items, Stamps, Portraits-painting Photography, Modeling and Sculpturing, Carving, Interior and Exterior design, Graphics design, Garment making, Ceramics works, Metal decoration, Weaving and Furniture making. e.t.c

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### 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Art activities and learning should be reintroduced back to schools and also taking into consideration the following points for good implementation:

- a. Promoting creative arts as an integral part of National development policies and devoting substantial financial resources.
- b. Ensure the training of creative arts educators/ trainers and teachers.
- c. Arts, craft, and design education should be made compulsory at all levels of education.
- d. Government should set up creative arts departments in every constituency and Senatorial district
- e. They should also create a budget that will facilitate the professional integration of talented art graduates from art institutions
- f. Government should also encourage private entrepreneurs and institutions to train young people in arts, crafts, and design.
- g. A survey on the arts-education situation in the various countries should be made to determine the objectives and priority actions for National policies
- h. Seminars, workshops and exhibitions, and learning activities for the creative artist at all level is also very important and this will go a long way in alleviating poverty in the country.

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## 5. CONCLUSION

Arts, Crafts, and Design must be seen not only to prepare one for a specific occupation and functional roles in society, but it must also act as a shock absorber to employment stress because, rather than educate one another about occupations as other skills do. Art is a creative and innovative discipline that serves the needs of mankind and the preparation for life. It prepares youths to be useful members of society and fulfilled the attainment of useful goals in the areas of visual quality and accumulation of facts. Art activities or creativity are an aid for effective channels of passing and acquiring knowledge and skills during and after the process of learning.

There has never been a dearth of plans and programmes designed to address the issue of poverty alleviation, yet it is sad to note that little has been done in practical terms above all, the poor perception, short-sightedness, non-implementation of policies whatsoever, mass corruption, despotic and non – committed regimes are responsible for the plight of the poor. Unless fundamental structural changes are made both at the policy and management levels, which implies internally taking into consideration of the ideological and social imperatives, vis-a-vis overhauling the whole planning and implementation machinery, the situation may not change for the better.

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