

CREATIVE ART: A PANACEA FOR EMPOWERING THE WOMEN/GIRL-CHILD IN CREATIVITY.

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Abstract

Nigeria as a developing country desires to empower the women and the girl child to be creative and self-reliant, because we face different problems ranging from high rate of unemployment, inadequate education system, poverty, environmental pollution, and undeveloped economic standard. This paper tried to define Creative Arts Education as a means of creating job opportunities. It also identifies some areas of creative arts such as drawing, painting graphics, ceramics, weaving, tie-dye, beads works, and so on as areas for creativity, self employment and self-reliance. The paper concludes that women and girl children should be creative, empowered and encouraged to train in creative art for self-reliance.

Keywords: Empowering and Creativity

Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, Educational strength of an individual or community. According to Oxford Advance Learners Dictionary (2005:150) Empowerment means to give some power or authority to act or to do something which gives him or her confidence about him or her. This then means that the process of obtaining basic opportunities or help either directly from people or through the help

of non governmental agencies (NGO) can also be referred to as empowerment, it is also a help to people who lack self-sufficiency to become independent. It helps them to achieve self-confidence and to become self supporting.

This is where self-reliance education becomes necessary. Self-reliance, can be seen as a state in which an individual is capable of living and tending for himself or herself effectively and efficiently in the human society. Self-reliance education is the education

that is made up of the general education as well as the acquisition of practical skills which will help the individual after leaving training to be able to set up their own business and also be in a position to employ others. Education of such people should aim at producing citizens who will not be completely dependent on white collar Jobs, but who will not only be self employed but employers of labor and competent entrepreneurs. It is in this direction that the emphasis of empowering women and girl child in the areas of creative art becomes necessary and important to the development of a nation.

Creativity: According to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, to be Creative means to make something happen or exist. It is the act or process of using skill and imagination to produce something new. Similarly the council of the European Union (2009) sees it as a process of generating ideas, expressions and forms which can in essence amplify knowledge and lead to new way of using the knowledge. The writer see creativity as the bringing into being of something which did not exist before, either as a product, a product of thought, or working on the old with a view of producing something.

Creative Art: Creative Art is one of those occupational culture subjects with various vocational opportunities which prepare individual of any nation, for technological growth if well directed.

Nalah (2000:10) defined Creative Art as an intellectual and emotional recording of experience, presented in an individual manner. It is an application of skills to produce work of creative things and imagination. It is anything created by a man through his own creative thinking, ideas and skills for the use of man. Similarly, Mbah; (2000:36) sees Art as doing, making, fashioning and so on, accomplished by human skill. Art is a product, a process and a way of life.

In agreeing with this statement, Art can be described as the expression of the inner most feelings, a product of creative human activity in material shaped or selected to convey an idea, message, emotion, or visual interesting form. Art as “the writer see it is man’s desire to provide and improve upon what nature has not provided”. It equally means acquisition of skills by the use of hand. Creative Art is the work of man which he produces through his skills in imitation of nature. This always results to Aesthetics. Aesthetics from the context of this paper is that which appeals to the sense of “beauty” or which is good. Beauty as the saying goes lies on the eyes of the beholder.

Education: Education on the other hand can be generally defined as a process of teaching, training and learning in schools or it can be the process of acquiring knowledge and also development of skills. Azikiwe (2008:10) stated that Education is one of the major tools for the realization of the

needs goals, because it is naturally an instrument for excellence for socio-economic reformation and reconstruction. In a like manner, one can safely say that education is an instrument for national development. This also means that there is need to empower and educate a woman and girl child, this is in line with the popular saying: “when you train a woman to be creative or educate a woman you educate a nation”. This however brings to the conclusion that formation of ideas, their integration for national development, and the interaction of persons and ideas are all aspects of education.

Areas of Creative Art

Creative Art is one of the core (elective) subjects in junior secondary schools in which all the activities in the visual and performing Arts are carried out. There are three forms of Creative Arts. These are: Visual, performing, and craft arts.

Visual Art: These are works of art designed primarily to the sense of vision. It is the art of beauty and emotion. They include Fine and Applied Art, painting, textiles, ceramics, music dance, and sculpture.

Dramatic or Theatre Art (Performing).

Dramatic Art is also known as Theatre Art, it deals with the expression of thought, ideas, feelings, immaterially. They are referred to as performing Arts because of their characteristics in action,

example, music, drama, dance and poetry.

Craft: Craft also serves as occupational therapy, many people even the blind and the permanently bed ridden take part in hand craft programs which they do as leisure or a means of livelihood. Craft according to Uzoagba (2000:36) is “The art of any country and is also the exponent of its social and political virtues. He further stated that there is no better avenue for understanding of the past and present culture of people than arts”. Art today is a testimony to our culture, a witness to its position, qualities and its limitation, just as the arts of the past are to the culture of the past. Arts expresses the mentality of its own generation, civilization and culture. Some examples of craft are: tie and dye, batik weaving, beadwork, leather work, pottery, basketry to mention a few.

1) **Tie-Dye and Batik:** Uzoagba (2002) stated that, the position of tie-dyeing as one of the most important crafting today is being practiced by men in the societies: the Hausa Fulani and the Yoruba are the most famous for their tradition of cloth dying. Tie-dye is a process of dying, sewing, pleating or squeezing of fabric and dipping it into a dye solution to make a design, it is commonly known as “Kampala”. Batik is the using of wax on fabric to make a design. This area of craft offers vocations to self-reliant individuals and to people who can develop skills and competences.

2) **Weaving:** This is the interweaving of fibers to make a fabric using thread or yarns. There are different types of weaving; examples are mat weaving, bags, basket and so on. A career in weaving helps the individual in producing objects mentioned above for sell.

3) **Bead work:** According to Nalah (2003:37) "Beads are small round cylindrical wood, glass, or plastic disc with holes through them for treading together". Beads have been used for body decoration for hundreds of years in West Africa. This is an act of using beads for decorative designs and patterns. The art of bead work is a highly developed craft in Nigeria, often the standard of bead work is very high, and intricate designs are made with beads on a great variety of articles. Career in bead work helps an individual to produce flower vases, necklaces, purses, bags, frames, bangles and so on.

4) **Leather Work:** According to Uzoagba (2000:173) "Leather works comprise the making of shoes, bags, and so on from hides, sheep, lizards, snake, and goat skins". Generally, the skin of most reptiles and other animals are used for these purposes. The craft is practiced more in the northern part of Nigeria among the Hausa-Fulani and the Kanuri, where cattle rearing is one of their basic occupations.

5) **Ceramics:** As a vocation offers opportunity in production of pottery

wares and items in clay which can be fired and glazed for usage at homes, industries and other places.

6) **Pottery:** Nigeria Association of Vocational and Technical Education (2007) indicates that pottery is an ancient craft in Africa. This is because of the important role the products of pottery play in the life of the people. The pots and dishes are the commonest products. The pots are used for cooking and for eating food. Pots are sold in the market by every society to earn money.

7) **Basketry:** Mbahi (1997:18) stated that, "Baskets are valuable assets in Nigeria". They are used to carry fruits, grains and vegetables and to catch and store fish, transport and store dry products such as corns and groundnuts, flat woven trays are also made for drying food in the sun, and winnowing of dried food.

8) **Graphics:** Graphics is the act of construction of letters on paper or beam boards in order to communicate an idea. Vocation in graphic art includes: cartooning, illustration, printing, photography, calligraphy, caption, book designing and so on. Graphics is the greatest artistic expression and draughtmanship. In some areas it is called "Commercial Art" it is a field of art directly connected with the immediate needs of industry, Uzoagba (2002:131) in Ubugadu (2011:234).

Encouraging and empowering of women and the girl child in acquiring

these skills in craft will go a long way in promoting self-reliance in the society, when creative arts are promoted and empowered, one can see that women and girl child will assist in the development of the nation.

From the above characterization of creative arts and its uses to an individual, it can be seen that education in Creative Arts is necessary in the quest for empowering women and girl child to be self-reliant. Creative Arts provides vocation and employment opportunity and career for women and girl child who are not employed. Creative Art can equip the individuals with business knowledge and skills that can make them highly functional in the society. Imagine a society without creativity; it is just like a bush that has been laid fallowed. Hurlock (19978:36) opined that creativity is the process by which new ideas or an object is produced. Such an activity is goal directed in that it could be for the purpose of deriving pleasure or having a sense of achievement from what is produced.

In order for the women not to be totally dependent to their husband, which is commonly, referred to as "Complete house wife" it is important to educate and empower such women with a skill acquisition program such as: craft or creative art education, which provides job opportunities for different categories of people especially women and girl child. Creative Art increases and also widens the imagination of the self-reliant citizens.

Reasons for Empowering Women/Girl Child

The goals towards the empowerment of women and the girl child are as follows:

- To increase women and girl child's awareness of their value as creative human persons.
- To unite women and girl child in solidarity and community across social division of class, race, religion, age, culture and sexual orientation.
- To encourage and support women in becoming able and responsible agents for social change.
- To help women and girl child to gain their public/social, political and theological voices.
- To defend feminist theologizing.

Conclusions

This paper examined the empowering of women and girl child to be creative and self-reliant through craft and Creative Art Education for the development of Nigeria. It has been shown that when women are empowered to be creative and self-reliant in Nigeria, the development and advancement that has been long looked for will be achieved.

Empowering women and girl child is aimed at developing creativity and self confidence, self sufficiency, self employment and, freedom to be independent for national development. Nkom (2007:116) remarks that "the

cultural background of African women has endowed them with many responsibilities, they have accepted as divine and immutable the prejudices, limitation and inequalities entrenched in the society concerning them. In spite of the nature of their roles in the society, they also ensure the survival and continuity of the society's system.”

Enhancement of women productivity is the only way out; otherwise they will find it difficult to cope with the societal demands, women and the girl child should be adequately developed and empowered, because they occupy a key position in every community. The cultural background of women and the girl child has always stood as stumbling block to their progress; though to some extent the situation is better today.

This is in line with the most regular verbal statements of Nkom (2010) to her female students, the need for one to be educated and even compete with the male counterpart in the academic pursuit. Creative thinking is the engine of growth and development, and when a woman is not creative in handling her home, it causes laziness and poverty, but when she is creative and can think fast in her home it reduces so many things in her life.

Creative Art is an ideal way to enhance and empower women and the girl child productivity. In Creative Art there is freedom of expression and its products come in practical form. Everyone enjoys watching the product of his hands.

The women and the girl child can advance in National development if she is motivated. Motivation is a necessary ingredient for every individual; it can help bring about maximum production of creative abilities. Empowering the women and girl child in the area of Creative Art, it should form the basis for the struggle to uplift and enhance the statue of women and girl child productivity and advancement in the development of a nation. The statue of women and girl child cannot be raised unless equal access to the different amenities available is given to them.

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