

ARTS AND CRAFTS AS VERITABLE SOURCES OF ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT FOR MARGINALIZED PEOPLE IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *Man is an imaginary individual created by God in classical economic milieus and he is conceived of as behaving rationally, regularly and predictably in his economic activities with motives that are egoistic, acquisitive and short-term in outlook. From the beginning man was endowed by God with skills to adapt from objects in the natural world for his social, economic, political and material needs. Therefore, working for survival and meeting immediate needs are natural phenomena in human existence. Despite the natural endowment of God some people are still perceived by the human society as lacking desirable traits or deviating from the societal norms and therefore they tend to be excluded by the wider society in the scheme of things and they are ostracized or marginalized as undesirable. These marginalized people who are not self-sufficient become, at a minimum, burden to their immediate milieus, family members, friends and the society, at large. They lose their self confidence because they cannot be fully self supporting. The opportunities denied them also deprive them of many developmental projects that others, with greater opportunities, have accomplished over the years. This has, however, given many of such under privilege individuals psychological, social and even mental health problems. Economic empowerment through arts and crafts is the only means available for these marginalized people to obtain the basic human needs, either directly by themselves, or through the assistance of those who have access to funds that can be used to encourage and develop their skills for self sufficiency.*

KEYWORDS: Arts and Crafts, Economic Empowerment, Economic, Milieus, Marginalized People, Self Sufficiency

INTRODUCTION

Arts and crafts are the foremost traditional African occupations that can easily be learned through workshop experiments. Scholars such as Beier (1968), Kennedy (1968), Willet (1971), Fosu (1986), Oloidi (1993), Adepegba (1995), Kasfir (1999) and Buraimoh (2000) who wrote extensively on experimentations in African art and craft focused mainly on history, styles, techniques and artistic developments through workshop experiments. They seem to have ignored discourse on the benefits and economic empowerments derivable from art and craft and their impact in breaking the cycle of poverty, in transforming the quality of life by providing the bridge to self sufficiency through workshop experiments that can build self awareness; that can examine social and economic values and through which participants can acquire enhanced integrity. It is as a result of the insufficient materials on this subject that these researchers deemed it fit to embark on a research project that focuses on *arts and crafts as means of economic empowerment for marginalized people*

The major objective of this study is to position arts and crafts as veritable sources of economic empowerment for Nigerian youth, women, and disabled as well as under privileged people.

Other objectives include the following: (1) to define the terms art and craft operationally (2) to clarify the two terms conceptually and (3) to describe them as pristine primordial cultural products produced for human delight and appreciation. This study of arts and crafts as veritable sources of economic empowerment is imperative because it will highlight the conscious use of artistic skills in the production of beauty and creation of wealth and it will describe the technical development of man's immediate environment through creative innovations.

The salient significance of the study is the need to examine the two creative subjects: arts and crafts in order to determine their overall impact on contemporary Nigerian society. The data for the study were collected through two basic sources: primary and secondary. The primary data were collected through interviews with stakeholders in the art profession and the secondary data were information gathered from books, journals, magazines, catalogues, newspapers and the internet. The data were synthesized and interpreted using discursive, content and textual analyses.

Art: Definitions, Conceptual Clarifications, Types and Functions

Many artists, anthropologists, psychologists and scholars in other professions have described the term art to suit the terminologies used in their respective fields, and in the process they gave it operational definitions that vary considerably. Art is seen by Holt (1957) as a subject of constant contention. According to him, "the basic meaning of art has changed many times over the centuries and has continued to evolve during the 20th century...Many authors have published arguing over the basics of what is meant by the term art". He also clarified that "it is self evident that nothing concerning art is self evident". Buser (2006) opined that "no one has ever come up with an entirely satisfactory definition of art". He stated that "people have proposed all kinds of descriptions of the term art, with so many new definitions continually put forward and so many old ones rejected while artists themselves are often a bit reluctant to answer the question "what is art?"

In an attempt to answer the above question, Buser analysed the characteristics of the objects created by many great artists in Europe and concluded that "artists created a special class of objects that are inherently beautiful". He finally came up with a definition that "art is a beautiful thing created by artists by combining representation of things that are real and conceptually ideal". This implies that artists make a special kind of object by depicting in it what they actually see (the real) and, at the same time, depicting something they know or imagine (the ideal). For an example, Ben Enwonwu painted the portrait of *Tutu* a princess of Ile-Ife in the year 1973 and through the vigour of his brush and the vividness of his colour, he depicted in the painting the idea that *Tutu* was potent life form bursting with the energy of living being. In the painting Enwonwu was able to transform the specific into a universal truth by combining the real and the ideal.

Lazzari and Schlesier (2008) opined that "no definitions of art are universal, timeless, and absolute". According to them, "all definitions are framed within larger systems of knowledge, and these systems shift and evolve". While trying to describe the term: art they said "answering the question: "what is art" would mean asking "*What is art? For who is it created? When can it be created?*" In their final analyses they concluded that "art is primarily a visual medium that is used to express ideas about our human experiences and the world around us".

Arnason (1986) has postulated that "no definition of art is possible anymore; perhaps art should be thought of as a cluster of related concepts in a *Wittgensteinian* fashion". Lazzari and Lee

(1990) divided art into a sociological category: *procedural* and *functional* and stated that “whatever art schools and museums and artists define as art should be considered as art regardless of formal definitions”. Blunt (1975) has it that “it is the process by which a work of art is created or viewed that makes it art, not any inherent feature of an object, or how well received it is by the institutions of the art world after its introduction to society at large”. Lucie-Smith (2004) claimed that what decides whether or not something is art is how it is expressed by its audience, not by the intention of its creator.

From the fore going, the word art can be defined operationally as an abbreviation for creative art or fine arts, which implies using skills to express the artists’ creativity, or to engage the audiences’ aesthetic sensibilities, or to draw the audiences’ attention to the world of artists’ creativity and visual aesthetics. It can also be defined as human activity, in which one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others, feelings he has lived through and that other people are infected by these feelings and also experience them. Art can act as a means of activating special type of knowledge. It may give insight into the human condition. It relates to science within the context of western technology and religion in the context of African culture. It serves as a tool of education, or indoctrination, or enculturation. It makes humans to be morally upright and it can lift them spiritually.

There are two types of arts. They are fine arts and applied arts. The fine arts’ subjects include the pictorial art such as painting and the plastic art such as sculpture. The applied arts’ subjects include graphic design, textile design, metal design, fashion design, ceramic design, glass design, printmaking and photography. The umbrella name for these two aspects of art is visual arts. There is an argument by Mayer (1991) that “the difference between fine art and applied art subjects has more to do with the actual function of their objects than any clear definitional difference”. To him, “art performs no function other than to convey an idea and to express beauty, and any creation that is devoid of these functions could not be regarded as art”.

The early art movements such as *Cubism* and *Dadaism* have disregarded the notion that beauty is central to the definition of art and that is the reason why Roy (1992) concluded that “beauty had disappeared not only from the advanced art of the 1960s, but from the advanced philosophy of art of that decade as well”. Subsequently, some notion like *expression* in Croce’s theory or *counter-environment* in McLuhan’s theory replaced the previous role of beauty in art creation. Turner (1996), however, brought *beauty* back into reckoning in artistic jargons together with *expression*.

Richter (1994) elaborated on the word *sub-lime*, which is another term that is important to the philosophy of art as *beauty* in the 20th century. A further approach was elaborated by Piper (1988) who said that “art is fundamentally a response to a metaphysical question”. He argued that “art is anti-destiny...it has sometimes been oriented towards beauty and the sublime” He concluded that “beauty and the sublime are by no means essential to art”. Kleiner (2009) has, however, argued that “whether or not a piece counts as art depends on what function it plays in a particular context”. For an example, an anthropomorphic vase may play a non-artistic function in one context (carrying flower) and an artistic function in another context (helping to appreciate the beauty of human figure).

Art is made to perform certain functions in the society such as promoting spiritual and physical well-being; communicating thoughts, ideas, and emotions; commemorating the dead; glorifying the power of the state and its ruler; celebrating war, conquest and peace; protesting political and social injustice; promoting cohesion within a social group; recording the likeness

of people and the context in which they live; informing people about their cultural values; educating humans about themselves and the world in which they exist and a means of entertaining them.

More importantly, art can function as a cultural document of present and past culture. It gives details about how the culture of a particular society was structured, what the culture valued, what was considered an ideal culture of the society, what the society looked like, the type of occupation that was prominent in such a society and what roles men and women played in the society. For an example, the print below by Tunde Ogunlaiye, a Nigerian artist, is depicting images from Nigerian past and the sources of inspiration are Nok terracotta heads and Ife naturalistic images.

The function of this print is to visually reinforce the cultural past of the Nigerian society. At the background of the images is an idyllic scene of illusionary faces surrounded by geometric and floral motifs. The naturalistic image depicted on the far right of the picture symbolizes the authority, power and strength of a royal figure from the ancient Ife City in Yoruba land. The print was made in order to educate the general public about Nigerian past, to provide visual aesthetics and to entertain. Ogunlaiye studied these works that are now displayed in Nigerian museums to glean considerable information about the pasts of his people.



Tunde Ogunlaiye. *Images from the Past* Deep-Etching measuring 56.5x45.5cm produced in 1981.

Craft: Definitions, Conceptual Clarifications, Types and Functions

Craft is a profession that requires some particular kind of skilled work. The term craft is usually applied to people who are occupied in small scale production of goods. The craftsmen are mostly referred to as artisans or petty-bourgeoisie and petty traders who are found in the urban city, but also significantly in the rural areas. They are small operators with little capital, restricted skills and limited education. “Unemployment has expanded their ranks in areas like tailoring; hairdressing; carpentry and joinery work...lack of capitals restricts them to using their labour of hiring relatives, apprentices and lumpens” (Ate, 2008:50).

The artisans or craftsmen always abhor the monopolization of the government patronage, credit and other business opportunities by the bourgeoisie and formal economy that is mainly reserved for people with education and formal skills. However, wage increase in the formal economy has benefitted some of them who had participated in organized workshops and had become well known in their chosen crafts. This group of artists who were encouraged and fossilized during workshop experiments has followed ‘tricksters’ popular leaders in the hope of sharing the national cake appropriated by the national assembly. They have sought advancement from the ruling class through relations of clientele. Since they are unorganized and lack resources to articulate and enforce demands on their own accord, they have, most times, been relying on their subordinates to do most of the works commissioned by the clients.

The term craft is often used to describe the artistic practices within a family setting. A good example of this practice is found among the famous Fakeye family of Ila Orangun in Osun State, Nigeria. Adesanya's (1999) thesis supported this fact while she was saying that "almost all members of Fakeye's family are practicing woodcarving and they are successful in this craft tradition". In the traditional Fakeye's family the art of wood carving was gender specific, but the opportunity to practice the trade has been extended to some female members in the Yoruba society who had the privilege of studying art in the formal art schools.

Lamidi Fakeye was the most popular in the Fakeye's lineage of wood carvers: the *gbenagbena*, his participation at the Oye-Ekiti workshop experiments in the 1940s contributed immensely to his success and popularity; the workshop experiments gave him the opportunity to build upon the pristine primordial Yoruba forms that he applied to his new artistic repertoires. The traditional term *craftsman* used in qualifying the products of Oye-Ekiti experiments has been today replaced by the art critics: the *gbenugbenu* with the words *Neo-Traditional Revivalists*. The types of work they produced have been distinguished from the crafts. It is worthy of note that most craftsmen in Nigeria today like the Neo-Traditional Revivalists reside and work in the urban centres where they organize themselves into guilds. A good example of a guild system in an urban area could be found at Igbesawan and Igun Streets in Benin City Edo State Nigeria.

The stepwise approach to mastery of a craft, which include the attainment of a certain amount of skill, has survived in most parts of world. Therefore, the skill required by the profession and the need to be permanently involve in the exchange and sales of craft product demand a higher level of informal training. Despite the fact that this method of knowledge impartation is still extant, craft as an end product of traditional occupation had undergone deep structural changes during the era of the Industrial Revolution in Europe. Subsequent to this revolution mass production of goods by large-scale industry has limited crafts to market segment in which industry's patterns of operation diminishes the preferences of potential buyers of craft products. As a result of these changes, craftsmen started to use semi-finished materials and adapt them to their customers' specifications; they thereby engage in a certain division of labour between the industry and the craft.

Today, craftsmen are in a more privilege position than the peasantry in societal hierarchy, but their household is not as self-sufficient as those of people who engaged in agricultural work and therefore they rely more on exchange of goods. The craftsmen produce decorative arts that are traditionally defined in terms of their relationship to functional or utilitarian products such as sculptural forms in the vessel tradition or by their use of such natural media as wood, clay, ceramics, glass, textiles and metal. Craft making began from the inception of civilization when humans were creating weapons and tools for hunting; when they were sewing skins and weaving fibres for clothing; when they were making baskets for transporting goods and when they were shaping clay pots for cooking and storage.

The term: craft according to Buser (2006) "derived from the German word for power, *Kraft*". This particular word is, however, used to refer to craft because the makers exercise a kind of energy or magic power to produce from nature. Till date, craft remains an occupation, trade or pursuit that requires manual dexterity or the application of vigour and skills. It involves making objects, rather than making images or manipulating figural subject; it always involves surface decoration.

Craft objects, sometimes, have a utilitarian purpose or evolved from a utilitarian origin. They display aesthetic and/or conceptual dimensions that go beyond ordinary use. The pottery made by Ladi Kwali and thorn carvings by J. D. Akeredolu are good examples of art objects that might be categorized as crafts. Kwali was trained in the traditional apprenticeship system from about the age of nine. She has been producing functional and non-functional pots through the traditional techniques she learned in her parents' atelier. In her craft tradition, Ladi Kwali trained a great number of illiterate women and through her workshop practice she and the participants have created pots that are not purely sacred or wholly utilitarian, but they are simple pots made for the fancy of connoisseurs and collectors. The high demand of her pottery collections is an indicator that the traditional method of making pots in Africa is not extinct.

Akeredolu was the progenitor of miniature thorn carving in contemporary Nigerian society. "He trained at Hammersmith School of Arts and Crafts in London and he was an instructor in arts and crafts at Methodist School in Lagos" (Stanley, 1993:78). He also carved house posts, wooden panels, ivory bracelets, hip masks and fan handles that were sold in Nigerian art markets. The miniature thorn sculpture introduced by J. D. Akeredolu into contemporary Nigerian art has also become "a major attraction of many road side artists who produced similar crafts for souvenir markets" (Fosu, 1986). The types of craft made by these two creative Nigerian artists: Kwali and Akeredolu demonstrates that the term *craft* can be simply defined as the making of *art for life* (objects that are useful) as opposed to the creation of non-functional art objects for their own sake (*art for art sake*).

The types of craft made in African society include ceramics/pottery making, basket weaving, fibre craft, metal work and wood crafting. These craft works can either be functional or non-functional and they can be decorative in nature. *Ceramics/pottery* is a one of the oldest crafts synonymous with civilization because it grew out of humans' needs to store and carry food and drink. At one time it was made by hand with the help of round stones or shaped within wicker baskets, the wheel has replaced this earlier techniques and it enables the potter to achieve greater regularity of form.

Basket weaving came before pottery, which implies a sedentary existence. Baskets have been woven for storage or transportation of goods. In basket weaving materials are obtained in the immediate milieu of the weaver, who works with nature and the season. The weaver mostly gives shape to the three dimensional shape of a basket that he or she has in his or her imagination by twining, plaiting, or coiling the vegetable materials being used from the centre out. Women are the main basket weavers within the context of Africa profession.

Fibre craft has been done by craft artists since time immemorial. The craftsmen used different shades of fibres to weave works that range from cloth to carpets, quilts, embroidery and other allied products. Examples of embroidery could be found on the *Babariga* of the Hausa people in Northern Nigeria and the *Aso-Oke* of the Yoruba in the South Western Nigeria. Intricate and complex designs are stitched into the local and synthetic fabrics. Some female artists in Nigeria have used the craft of quilting as an art medium to express their view on traditional African culture.

Metal Work has been in existence since ancient time. The craft has been associated with the Benin court in the production of royal objects such as ceremonial swords: *Eben* and *Ada*, vessels, jewellery: necklace and pendants, and other valuable materials for human usage. The method used in the production of these items is called *Cire Perdue* or lost wax. In some instances, hot metals are poured into moulds, beating into forms, or hammered into shapes. The

ceremonial swords serve as symbol of authority in Benin Culture while jewellery served myriads of functions in human epic from expression of personal vanity to marking important stages in the users' life: birth, marriage and death, expressing status in the society and indicating wealth and power.

Wood is the major medium used by traditional African carvers, sculptors or craft artists. Wood has been used to carve various utility objects for individuals and the royalty. Many of these objects represented the monarchs' genealogies and were designed to explain activities of everyday genre in the traditional African setting. In the traditional African society, wood crafting includes furniture making and art museums in the continent of Africa are now housing many exquisite wood works from different black cultures.

An abundance of natural resources had played a key role in many types of craftworks produced in Nigeria. The woods, earth, plants and animals have provided the resources for craft produced by the indigenous people, but the introduction of new cultural ideas and materials, and access to trade has increased the variety of natural, cultivated, and imported resources used for the production of crafts. The manufacturing industries have created a secondary industry of refuse and by-product materials that became available resources for crafts fabrication.

Distinctions between Arts and Crafts

If artists used their skills on functional objects, people will consider their creations as crafts instead of *arts* or *fine arts*, but if the skills are being used in commercial or industrial sense their creations may be considered *designs* or *applied arts* instead of fine arts. The distinctions of craft, like it is in the art, are culturally specific and in flux. The distinction between these two creative endeavours: craft and art has, however, been traced to the period of low and high Renaissance in Northern and Southern Europe by Buser (2006). He stated that "some artists of this period made frantic effort to improve their social status by insisting that they were not mere labourers who worked with their hands but intellectuals who employed their mind". The formally trained artists in contemporary Nigerian society are also operating based on this principle because they assume that they are skilful and independent artists that are not restricted by traditions of handiwork. They have the belief that craftsmen work alone or in small groups in their craft studios producing studio pottery, metal works, weaving, woodturning, and other forms of woodworking, glass blowing and glass art.

Another major distinction between visual arts and the crafts is economic. For an instance, crafts have disadvantages in the areas of exhibition, attention and price. The craft is a trade that is done mostly by less privilege people in the society because it serves as an alternative way for people like them who are seeking self fulfilment in life. It is a trade that satisfies immediate needs of craft practitioners and it has been used over the centuries to protest the alienation of pristine primordial culture of human beings. It had been used from time immemorial to reveal the skills of the individual who makes personalized items for peoples' consumption. The craftworks are mostly displayed in craft fair/show organized by a number of exhibitors. There are craft shops where craft works are sold and also there are craft communities such as *craft ateliers*, where expertise is shared. A good example of such crafts' community could be found in *Igun Street*, Benin City, where we have "a guild of castes known as *Iguneronmwon*" (Layiwola, 2004), who have been practicing the art of casting for several centuries.

While some crafts are made by elderly individuals who live in rural settings with little formal education, they are also made by individuals of all ages with formal educational and economic

backgrounds no matter where they live. While some crafts look rustic and crude to the informed eye, they are not idiosyncratic. In fact, crafts vary a little from established patterns set by the communities in and for which it is made.

While some artists are skilled in the technical aspects of crafts production or mimicking crafts designs, unless they have leaned their arts along side or under the long-time tutelage of those with more mastery of crafts and if their art is not connected to a clearly defined community of individuals who understand, value, find meaning in and help to perpetuate this work, the artists could be regarded as mere skilful imitators of crafts.

The designation of a craft, like any object, as art is inextricably woven to its cultural context. For an example, the perception of beauty and meaning is very much tied to a comprehension of the context in which the craft is made and used. What is beautiful in terms of design, hue, style pattern and technique in one cultural context may not be regarded as beautiful in another context. In some context, how and why an object is made and used may be more significant elements than hue, design, pattern and method in determining whether an object is art or not. Crafts can be termed as traditional arts only when one has the knowledge of how the artist learned his techniques and from whom he learned his techniques; why the object was made, how it was used, and who set the standards by which it is judged; when this data are available and the contexts are clearly stated it then that one can determine whether or not any object is either craft or art.

Economic Empowerment of Marginalized people through Arts and Crafts

Empowerment refers to “increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economic strength of individual or community” (Kirkpatrick, 1983:436). The term covers a large expanse of etymology, definitions, interpretations and disciplines that range from Psychology, sociology and philosophy to the highly commercialized self help industry and motivational sciences. Of all these areas of human endeavours mentioned above only the sociological aspect is *apropos* to this present study because it addresses members of groups such as youth, women, and others that social discrimination processes have excluded from decision making processes through discrimination based on gender, race, age, disability, religion, ethnicity or race.

However, economic empowerment differs in meaning to the empowering factors mentioned earlier; it is, in its own case, the process of obtaining basic financial opportunities for marginalized people, either directly by the method of self-help or through the assistant of non-marginalized others who share their own access to basic opportunities. It also includes actively thwarting attempts to deny the marginalized people their basic rights by encouraging, fossilizing, and developing their skills for self sufficiency with focus on eliminating the future need for seeking charity for the individuals in this group.

Empowerment in its entirety includes the following: ability to make decisions about personal or collective circumstances; ability to access resources for decision making process; ability to consider a range of options from which to choose; ability to learn and access skill for improving personal or collective circumstances; ability to improve others' perception through exchange, education and engagement and ability to improve one's positive self-image and overcoming stigma. Blanchard et al (1996) have summed up this discourse on economic empowerment by saying that “empowerment is not giving people power, people already have plenty of power, in the wealth of their knowledge and motivation, to do their jobs magnificently; the

empowerment programme is only a vehicle or the springboard that let out the power in the individual”.

Workshop Experiments: Mentoring Strategy for Acquiring Knowledge through Arts and Crafts for Economic Empowerment of Marginalized People

One economic empowerment strategy that can be used to create opportunities for marginalized people in Nigerian society is to mentor them through regular workshop experiments on arts and crafts. The marginalized people within Nigerian context include the youth, women, disabled, street urchins, lumpens, garage touts and other under privilege masses in the society. There are many examples of such economic empowerment projects, which were based on arts and crafts organized in the past by foreign and indigenous art enthusiasts, art connoisseurs and promoters that have succeeded. The projects include the *Oye Ekiti*, *Mbari-Mbayo*, *Ori-Olokun*, *Abayomi-Barber* and *Agbarha-Otor* workshop experiments.

The Oye-Ekiti workshop was established by Fathers O' Mahoney and Kevin Carroll in the year 1947. The workshop was opened for craftsmen who could revisit and adapt traditional African art forms to produce new art forms for Catholic churches to use in their liturgical practices. The participants followed the abstracted humanistic and ethnographical styles of the Yoruba sculpture that are characterized by angular and plane forms. The most popular theme used by the participants is the *equestrian figures* that are represented alone, but mostly surrounded by other figures that add to the overall designs and reduce the open space to a minimum in order to have a rich artwork that is not overcrowded.

The *Mbari-Mbari* workshop centre was established in the early 1960s at Osogbo by Ulli and Georgina Beier. The workshop was organized as an avenue to develop a new form of African art. The participants were drawn from street urchins and under-privileged members of the society while the organizers encouraged and fossilized them. They experimented with myriads of materials and many of them have continued to practice on their own. After the workshop experiments some of the participants still relied on the organizers for support and survival. Their artistic productions showed simplicity forms and child-like expressions. This is one of the reasons why Adepegba (1995) referred to them as *naive* artists

Ori-Olokun workshop centre in Ile-Ife had a nexus with the Ibadan-based *Mbari* club that was established in 1961. The participants at the workshop were also products of *Mbari-Mbari of Osogbo*. The centre was established by Solomom Irein Wangboje. The participants adopted a distinguishable style of delineating human forms with strong outlines. Their style of composition is similar to the plane recession of depth common in the traditional Yoruba sculptures. A prominent member of the workshop centre: Yinka Adeyemi later established *Oguntimehin* workshop centre in Ile-Ife after its collapse

Abayomi Barber School was a fragment of the former Centre for Cultural Studies at the University of Lagos, Nigeria. It was a government sponsored workshop centre under the tutelage of Abayomi Barber: a prolific Nigerian artist. The workshop was opened to holders of primary school leaving certificate, senior secondary school certificate and industrial trainees from the Polytechnics and Universities. They were trained through the informal method of the master/apprentice system and followed various stylistic tendencies such as naturalism, realism, surrealism, stylization and abstraction. The centre has been converted to a formal art school: faculty of creative arts, University of Lagos.

The Harmattan workshop centre at Agbarha-Otor in delta State, Nigeria was established by Bruce Onobrakpeya: the Nigeria's master print-maker, in the year 1980. This workshop experiment brought together the laymen and masters in the field of art and the coming together of people with different background in a workshop centre of this kind portends bright future for the development of arts and crafts in contemporary Nigeria. The significant contribution of Onobrakpeya to the development of arts and crafts in Nigeria is, however, located within the frame work of his informal method of imparting knowledge and mentoring Nigerian youth. He used the workshop experiments to transfer his artistic skills and techniques to the under-privileged in the society.

All these afore-mentioned art workshop experiments have produced myriads of Nigerian prolific artists; among them are Lamidi Fakeye of Oye Ekiti Experiments, Jimoh Buraimoh, Taiwo Olaniyi a.k.a. Twins Seven Seven of Mbari-Mbayo workshop at Osogbo and Muri Adejimi of Abayomi Barber School in Akoka, Lagos. The workshop trainings, which were organized in various Nigerian cities, have caused structural changes in the lives of the participants and most especially the experiments have greatly reduced their need for economic dependency. The organizers of the workshop experiments set their agendas, made their own plans, sought the resources, encouraged and fossilized the participants, did as much of the work as they could, and took responsibility- and credit- for the success of their projects.

Mentoring Strategy for Marginalized People through Voluntary Organizations' Crafts Training

There are organizations run by one person that invite people to crafts training in their homes. Examples of such are those organized by two prominent female artists in Nigeria. They are Nike Okundaye Davies-*Tie/Dye training sessions* and Peju Layiwola-*the initiator of WYArt Foundation*. The two artists operate on the fact that items can be made at home and then posted off to a central address, from where similar items all made by independently home based crafters are collected together and shipped off to benefit a worthy cause- all which contributes to local self reliance and strengthens community co-operation.

Their creative programmes have provided a means for people to share their culture with others, thereby promoting harmony, understanding, tolerance and co-operation between participants. The programmes have encouraged sociability in areas where social connection has been eliminated by poverty, crime and mistrust; they have played significant role in celebrating and preserving local cultures, traditions and heritage, which help to strengthen local identity. Residents who feel good about where they live are more likely to become involved in new community schemes including environmental improvements.

The benefits of participating in these varied workshops are so obvious because the experiments on arts and crafts have helped in underpinning a more sustainable way of living for the participants. The pleasure gained from participating created a sense of economic well-being and happiness, reduced stress and anxiety and helped in times of ill health. The participation has increased self confidence and self esteem and improved personal lives and ability of participants to make social connections.

Arts and crafts within the Context of Cultural Commodities

“Arts and crafts became cultural commodities in the mid 19th century as the artists were freed from feudal ties” (Proyect, 2008). Before then, the artist or craftsman needed support from the king's court or the church to survival. They needed royalty or papacy for assistance because

the materials used in accomplishing most plastic art forms were expensive and skills and efforts put to complete the artworks needed compensation. As for pictorial art forms, fixed capital was fairly minimal; a canvas and some tubes of paint, but since such paintings were non-reproducible there had to be a wealthy backer: like the *Medici* family of the Renaissance period to support the artists' efforts.

From the 19th century the artists were fully freed from feudal dependency when a new bourgeoisie began to emerge. Since then the artists no longer think within the context of *art for art sake*, but in the realm of *art for life* and commercial gains. Now, value and exchange of value come to mind when artists and craftsmen produce artworks and this makes their creations to be seen in the context of a commodity. Subsequent to this development a crop of wealthy people started to acquire arts and crafts for their compeers to know who they are and to show posterity who they were. Landscapes, still life paintings and other small scale crafts are now being bought or sold as commodities and wherever bourgeoisie emerged there is always an art market.

The above analysis indicates that arts and crafts are now going through commodification process, which implies a transformation of cultural goods, ideas or other traditional entities that were not normally regarded as commercial goods into a commodity. The term commodification is used to describe the process by which something that does not have an economic value is assigned a value and hence market value replaces other cultural and social values attached to it. Cultural commodification, therefore, means that cultural expressions can be sold to dominant culture: cultural arts and crafts can be sold and traded in a variety of social and cultural settings, and in that instance focus will be on culturally defined aspects of exchange and socially regulated processes of the cultural commodity circulation.

Going by the this discourse of cultural commodification it can be summed up that beneath the seeming infinitude of human wants, and the apparent multiplicity of cultural forms lie complex, but specific social and political mechanisms that regulate taste, trade and desire that form cultural basis of human economic life and the sociology of culture. Then "If the soul of the cultural commodity that Karl Marx occasionally mentioned in his theoretical postulations existed, it would be the most empathetic ever encountered in the realm of souls, for it would have to see in everyone the buyer in whose hand and house it wants to nestle" (Walter, 1983:55).

Production of Arts and Crafts: An Explanation to Marginalized People

The production of arts and crafts involves conscious planning in which the *raw idea or material* developed by the artist or craftsman is positioned as the *input (form and content)* that he or she processed as *output (finished product)* to be consumed by the *end-users* who give *feedback* on the *quality* of the *production*. The planning during production is accomplished "with the aid of drawings: making rough sketches, using models and allied devices" (Myers, 1958). In planning to produce a work of art, the artist or craftsman must study both the internal and external environments of his or her studio location by using the management SWOT concept to analysis the *internal* Strength and Weakness, and *external* Opportunities and Threat as this will give him or her the competitive advantage over the competitors in the art market.

The plan and design of the arts and crafts will involve the application of the *tools or language* of art that the artist or craftsman manipulates in forming certain *elements* that he or she will use according to definite *principles of design*. These tools of art consist of value (light and

dark), *Chiaroscuro* (light and shade), texture, colour, and form. The manipulations, arrangements and interrelations of these tools will result in the Elements of design. The elements include solids and void, geometric areas, light and dark areas, and space, which are disposed in accordance with design principles. The principles include dominance, unity, balance, rhythm, and proportion.

The application of these factors is for both intellectual and emotional reasons, and it is worthy of note that the factors constitute the design and quality of the artworks that are produced. This systematic approach discussed in the light of the factors involved in the arts and crafts production is to enhance the understanding of would be participants in any workshop experiment as they move from the elementary aspects of the tools, or components, to the more complex meaning of the element, and finally arriving at the importance of the principles of design.

Avenues for Marginalized People to Merchandize their Arts and Crafts Products

After the emancipation of the artists from feudal dependency, a new demand for arts and crafts surged all over the world. Most importantly, after the overthrow of colonialism, African arts and crafts became international cultural commodities that are in high demand in Europe and America. In response to this new development, museums, galleries, souvenir and curio shops were opened in African towns and cities, and these varied organizations engaged in the selling of African arts and crafts products within the continent and across the sea.

To promote these artistic products of Africans, “The *African Arts Magazine* was established and published by the University of California; it carried commercials for galleries and art shops in Europe and North America, which served as avenues for merchandizing the arts and crafts produced by African craftsmen and artists abroad” (Fosu, 1986). The demand for pristine primordial arts and crafts of Africa, however, encouraged foreign art enthusiasts such as Fathers Carroll and Mahoney, and Ulli Beier to organize myriads of workshop experiments in which they encouraged and fossilized many Nigerian artists. Also many African governments and indigenous entrepreneurs made frantic efforts to revive artworks produced by traditional African artists and these were used as sources of economic empowerment and revenue generation.

The traditional arts and crafts of Africa produced by traditional artists served as archetypes from which new ideas were developed by modern artists at various workshop centres and the copied models were disseminated as cultural products to different countries of the world. For example, the guild of artists operating in Benin City Nigeria has been supplying the European, Asian and American tourists with some duplication of the royal court arts of the old Edo kingdom for decades.

It is equally worthy of mention that Oyo town in Oyo State, Nigeria remains the major operator of souvenir shops that serve as major outlets for indigenous crafts production. Many five star hotels in major African cities such as Lagos, Kano, Kumasi, Ilorin, Accra, Cairo and Ibadan are also important distribution centres that control much of the reproduction business of traditional arts and crafts. Some of the works purchased at these centres by the European and American tourists have found their way into major art exhibitions mounted in London, United Kingdom and New York City, United States of America. Fosu (1986:46) has noted that “the most impressive and unique example of souvenir art in the 20th century is the Makonde art of Tanzania and Mozambique in East Africa”. According to him, “the revival of this ancient art

by modern African artists in the 1960s gained international attention and reputation and it has become sufficiently and widely diversified enough in its presentation to deserve world-wide acclamation and patronage”

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study has established the fact that the youth and other less privileged people in Nigerian society can benefit from the implementation of programmes and policies that adopt the notion of economic empowerment through active participation in workshop trainings on arts and crafts. It should be borne in mind that the economic empowerment of our youth is one of the main procedural concerns when addressing the issues of poverty, corruption, nepotism and other negative vices. Human development through artistic approach, therefore, should be seen as a necessary step if Nigeria is to overcome the obstacles associated with political progress, social re-engineering and economic development.

It is recommended that a town centre space be organized for young people to learn and develop their skills in arts and crafts practice and productions. The centre can be equipped with professional art materials and cater for a number of youth. The method will be fundamental in increasing confidence and providing a productive focus on the youth that use it and it will be directly responsible for reducing anti-social behaviour among the youth. Art project like this will produce benefits not only for the people directly using it, but for the wider community.

The high profile cultural venue called *cultural studio* established in the 1960s by Demas Nwoko, one of the foremost Nigerian artists, can be turned into a vibrant and exciting workshop centre where Nigerian youth can be creatively empowered. Government can use arts and crafts activities in a therapeutic way to support clients who are suffering from mental health at *Aro* and *Yaba* Psychiatric Hospitals both in Lagos and Ogun states of Nigeria. Activities such as painting, sculpturing and mosaic designing can go a long way in providing positive experience for these mentally unstable people and therapeutically addressing their health problems. The government can exhibit and sell their works to empower them for future engagements.

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