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# A Case for Art in Technology in Nigeria: A Need for the Intervention of International Organisations, Non-Governmental Organizations, and Relevant Professional Bodies.

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## ABSTRACT

The co-operative participation of international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and professional bodies, toward the development of visual art for technological development has become imperative in Nigeria. Presently Nigerian technological products suffer from poor aesthetic design and quality, which is seriously required in modern technology. This paper focuses on the need for international organizations, Non-governmental organizations and visual arts professional bodies' initiative in developing art for technology education in Nigerian. It also recommends the local and international organizations, Non-governmental organizations and visual arts professional bodies s should evolve novel strategies, which will enable visual art to be utilized properly for developing a viable indigenous Nigeria technology.

**Keywords**: Art, Technology, Nigeria, Intervention, International Organisations & Professional Bodies.

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## 1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The activities of international organization, Non-governmental organization and visual arts professional bodies have become more assertive in recent times. While some of these organizations have been instrumental for the development of projects that are geared towards socio-economic as well as technological development, others have directed their attention towards other areas of human endeavor. Many international organizations have continued to lend their support to developing countries. The activities of international organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children's Educations Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Education, Scientific and cultural Organization (UNESCO) are not unfamiliar. These organizations have contributed so much in terms of financial resources as well as technical support to the provision of basic health care, education and other basic amenities in many developing countries.

According to Nishimuko (2009) since the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000, wider participation by stakeholders in efforts to achieve Education for All (EFA) emphasized on the importance of civil society participation in the development process towards achieving the goal and this is relates closely to the point that aid allocation goes not only to governments but also to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and charity groups who work closely with beneficiaries

Many non- Governmental organizations are organized voluntary groups, to compliment the effort of different home governments, as well as those of the various international organizations. One such organization is the Energy Research Group (ERG) which is a non- governmental organization based in Dublin. The group has particular interest in the processes of innovation and technical changes in the construction industry. They provide technical support to designers. Their activities include devising ways to promote the transfer of information from the solar research community to the building design and construction profession throughout Europe, thereby assisting the introduction of energy- conscious architecture into the mainstream of architectural design and developing new tools and techniques in the support of building designers, constructors and third level teachers (Energy Crossroad 2006).

In Africa, various non-governmental organizations are also being organized and are contributing to various developmental initiatives. The Africa Science Organization based in Kenya is one such organization founded to promote the development of science and technology in Africa. Another non-governmental organization that has continued to make their impact in the agricultural sector is the Online Access (Energy Crossroad 2006). Professional associations are organized by various professional groups to foster the growth of members in their various field of endeavourer. As the members grow so also will their various field grow and gain prominence. Mbahi (1997) asserted that every professional group should benefit from the group as members share ideas experiences and problems. Apart from catering for the professional interest of the body, professional bodies should be able to develop research, developmental projects and grants in aide to provide support and opportunities in the field of research/creation, production, career and networking. The Federation of Finnish Learned Societies, established in 1899, is a national cooperative body for Learned Societies in Finland. The society issues statements, launches initiatives and makes recommendations relating to academic research especially where it promotes the interest of its members.

On the other hand the Association of Finnish Sculptors was founded in 1910 with the aim of promoting Finnish plastic art and looks after the professional, economic and social rights of sculptors as well as promote international cooperation and also arouse public interest. (http//eetd.lbl.gov/eXroad/oe.html .2006). Can this be said to apply to visual art in Nigeria? Although The Society of Nigerian Arts and the host of other professional body in the country were formed to cater for the interest of members, these associations are be-set with myriad problems, which continue to prevent them from achieving their objectives. (Mbahi 1997). In the light of the above, many scholars in the field in Nigeria are beginning to propose novel strategies that advocates for more Non-governmental organization involvement in the development of technology in Nigeria. Dacosta (1998) observed that the alternative to the current practice in technology education AGRICultural in the advanced countries is to develop a multi-dimensional approach that would include not just the government and the private sector but equally, Non-governmental organization, and their ingenuity, resourcefulness propose vibrant alternative strategies, while at the same time exploring and exploring new financial models for national development.

Against this backdrop, this paper believes that the involvement of the, international organizations, Non-governmental organization and professional bodies in developing an integrated visual arts programme in the development of technology is pertinent. The paper strongly believes that the co-operative participatory approach by international organizations, Non-governmental organization and visual arts professional bodies to an all inclusive technology education can be extremely beneficial to technological advancement and national development in Nigeria.

## 2. VISUAL ARTS FOR TECHNOLOGY, AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF RELEVANT ORGANIZATIONS.

Although visual arts education continues to occupy a peripheral position in the educational system in Nigeria, and continue to enjoy little attention on the school time curriculum, its value to national development cannot be overemphasized. Many art scholars have written about its immense value to technology. Mbahi (2000) saw visual arts as an essential component for the nation's technological growth. He observed that all the basic needs of life such as shelter, clothing, communication and transportation would have been impossible without the application of visual arts. Nuhu(1997) also observed that the aesthetic values have always been applied to utilitarian objects such as cars ,clothes, carpets, guns chairs and knives as well as many other utilitarian objects. Oloidi (as cited in Ikponmwosa 2011) asserted that technological development started with the creative work of artist and craftsmen, whose activities became more pronounced and indispensable with the development of civilization.

Lawal (as cited in Ikponmwosa 2011) further asserted that it was this strong relationship between visual art and technology in our modern times that have brought about the development of a new field of visual arts education referred to as industrial design. He however observed that in Nigeria, the course content of industrial design is highly inadequate to fully cater for the nation's modern industrial requirements. The art educators mentioned above strongly believe that the present status of visual arts in the Nigerian educational system cannot in any way assist to contribute adequately to technology and national development.

They believe that for visual arts to effectively contribute to the nations technology drive would require more than a reorientation about the value of visual arts, or the proper implementation of the present school curriculum, which Mbahi (as cited in Ogunbor, 2010) believes emphasizes a philosophy that is derived from the learners rather than the society; self expression. He therefore supports the idea that visual arts be made to develop technology.

This position would require much more than a change in policies. It certainly requires a shift in this perspective of the objective of visual art education in Nigeria, from that of cultural development to that of technological development. In order words visual arts should consist of a well rounded and a well-articulated curriculum, which would allow it to be taught for its extrinsic value, and that, is to develop the technological industries. Against this background it becomes obvious that visual arts for technology requires the development of new curriculum, course contents, the professionalism as well as relevant institutions to provide enabling environment for visual arts and technology as an integrated study. The whole idea is therefore integration or the incorporation of visual arts into technical and science subjects, so as to help achieve aesthetic inputs industrial objects. The role of relevant international organizations, Non-governmental organization as well as relevant professional bodies becomes extremely valuable in this regard.

The inputs and the committed efforts geared towards a cooperative participation of both the government and private sector, as well as the goal oriented initiatives of international donor agencies, relevant Non-governmental organization as well as relevant visual arts professional bodies, in the development of a wholistic and an integrated technology education programme in Nigeria have become highly imperative.

## 3. THE RATIONALE FOR SUCH INITIATIVE IN DEVELOPING VISUAL ARTS FOR TECHNOLOGY IN NIGERIA.

The cooperative participation of relevant governmental and Non-governmental organizations in the development of a viable visual art for technological development especially as the nation aspires to compete favourably with the international market. Mbahi (1999,) observed that the issue of aesthetic design is not seriously considered in industrial production in Nigeria. Uzoagba (2000) however observed that the desire to make things beautiful must be as strong as the desire to make them useful. This relationship is not fully utilized in Nigeria for technological development. This in part may be responsible for many things made in Nigeria not to be able to compete favourably with foreign made ones.

True independence, influence and affluence among great nations have always been derived more from technology than from, the mere possession or endowment of abundant mineral and agricultural resources. It is therefore imperative that Nigerian develops a viable technology programme, which would make her out amongst nations. To this end therefore, Abdullahi (1995) suggested an active curriculum development and re-development through reviews, legislation and cooperative approach towards attaining technological advancement emancipation. There is need for Visuals arts to promote Nigeria's industrial and technological development. Anikweze(1995) decried the total dependence on foreign products as well as technology, and called for the adoption of an indigenous-based technology education that would enjoy the patronage of relevant governmental and Non-governmental organizations and strongly supported by viable educational structure and relevant professional bodies.

Obviously, there is need to reappraise the present technology education in Nigeria so as to see how it can better be developed so that it can meet the required standard. Certainly the cooperative participation of these relevant organizations becomes necessary in this regard.

## 4. PROSPECTS OF GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS PARTICIPATION IN TECHNOLOGY THAT INCLUDES VISUAL ARTS IN NIGERIA.

Dacosta (1998) asserted that the problem in education and the future practical training needs of individuals and the need to respond to the dynamic nature of the world of work and the whole society at large has called for a deliberate mapping of the approaches and frontier of a virile and sustainable technology education. He believes that this approach should involve the participation of all stakeholders (weather governmental organizations, Non-governmental organizations or relevant professional bodies). Non-governmental organizations have been known to commit financial as well as human resources to the development of projects in most developing countries (Gomwalk 2000). The participation of all the relevant stakeholders in technological development in third world countries was equally well stressed by Ajetunmobi (1995) who called for stronger partnership of Non-governmental organizations in technology education in the area of physical financial and institutional input into the overall development of the technological and industrial development in Nigeria.

He equally observed that there has been some concerted effort made by some international donor agencies like the United Nations Development Programme towards the introduction of science and technology project which seems relevant to developmental objectives which are equally comprehensible to the population as well as relevant to their needs. Laudable as their initiatives might seem on the surface, it would have been more desirable for such donor agencies to help develop a technology education, which is some worth indigenous, as well as equally acceptable to the modern society. This would in no small way help improve Nigeria technological status. The development of visual arts in this regard would be desirable especially with the increasing desire for modern technology in the developing countries, and more specifically Nigeria. Non-governmental organizations also need to participate in developing a sound technology programme that is wholistic and all-inclusive. There is also an urgent need to provide a futuristic approach to integrating a systematic and a wholistic technology education in Nigeria, which embraces visual arts, science and technology, thereby emphasizing the concept of aesthetics, in product design.

Visual arts can contribute in developing a technology education that emphasis the practical and the utilitarian end products, paying adequate attention to the aesthetic as well as the cultural dimension of these products. For this to be successful however would require exploring novel ideas and possibilities especially where it concerns Non-governmental organizations initiatives in designing, developing and implementing such a wholistic technology education content. This idea is supported by Dacosta (1998) who observed that it was important to explore and exploit the involvement of Non-governmental organizations, in the formulation, development and the implementation of a well-rounded technology education curriculum in Nigeria. Indeed it is imperative for all the stakeholders discussed in this paper to begin to make directed effort towards meaningful contribution in this wise, more specifically the development of an integrated and a wholistic technology education in Nigeria.

## *5.* CONCLUSION

Obviously the desire for Nigeria to achieve technological growth is a function of several factors, one of which is the contribution of relevant field like visual arts. Visual arts should be integrated with science in developing a viable indigenous technology needed in a modern society. The re-designing of curriculum of visual arts to reflect the trends of technology as well as that of technology education to reflect the aesthetic aspect has become imperative. The role all stakeholders (weather governmental organizations, Non-governmental organizations or relevant professional bodies) should therefore be that of a cooperative participation in developing such a programme in Nigeria to enable Nigeria's indigenous technology compete favorably with international standard. In doing this however, it is imperative that Non-governmental organizations and relevant professional bodies, should make concerted effort to work hand in hand with the appropriate government agencies in developing the country's technology education.

## 6. RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendations are hereby provided:

- Attention should be focused on technology education management system, which would harness local, international, bilateral, multilateral and Non-governmental organizational efforts, towards an integrated and wholistic technology education programme in Nigeria.
- Nigerian government should encourage more international and local Non-governmental organization participation in developing visual arts for technology in the country.

- Non-governmental organizations and relevant professional bodies should encourage more research on the role of visual arts in the development of technology in Nigeria.

International and local Non-governmental organization as well as professional bodies, should evolved novel strategies, to maximally utilize visual arts to develop Nigeria's indigenous technology to enable her compete favourably in a modern technological society.

- International donor agencies should be more involved in developing visual arts for technology in Nigeria, more specifically in the area of funding and technical support.
- There is also need for further studies that would be used to examine the role of not only Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) but Community-Based organizations (CBOs), in the development of projects in Nigeria that would focus on the integration of visual art in the development of science and technology

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