PROFFERING SOLUTION TO INSECURITY AND UNEMPLOYMENT THROUGH ART IN NIGERIA

Muyideen Adio Jaji
Department of Fine Arts, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria
E-mail: muyideenaji@gmail.com +234-803-3626-801

Abstract

The siege on Nigerian cities by unemployed youths is illustrated by daily violent tendencies that result in insecurity. Insecurity therefore, may be partly linked up with unemployment. Art is an employer of labour. Its utilization by a nation can lead to effective engagement of citizens in worthwhile activities for economic benefits. This paper explores the contribution of art to economic viability in engaging the menace of insecurity and unemployment issues that lead to delinquency, armed banditry and terrorism such as the “Boko haram.” In the search for national security and gainful employment through art, it comes to light that there were contradictions in the implementation of the National Development Plan. Finally, it concludes by seeing art as a major option in the realization of employed and secured citizenship.

Keywords: Art, insecurity, unemployment, economic viability

Introduction

Today, Nigeria is rated the most viable economy in Africa, yet it has over 50% of its citizens living in abject poverty. ‘Almagirin’ system in the north where children are thrown to the streets to fend for themselves is an offshoot of poverty and unemployment. According to Iyke (2010) the most dominant feature of Nigerian economy is unemployment and poverty. ‘The siege on Nigerian cities by these unemployed youths is often illustrated by violent tendencies that result in insecurity. Unemployment is therefore a bane to national security.

When zeroed to individuals, security constitutes the assurance of good life or welfare, absence of fear, risks and intimidation setting pace for a conducive business atmosphere. The Arts are employers of labour. Their utilization by the nation can lead to effective engagement of the citizens in worthwhile activities for economic benefits. The Arts hear include Music, Drama, Craft, Fine and Applied Arts.

This paper explores the contributions of Arts to economic viability by engaging the menace of insecurity resulting from unemployment issues in Nigeria. It examines the monumental decay in security issues that led to delinquencies, armed robbery, banditry and terrorism such as “Boko Haram”. In the search for national security and full employment through Arts, it came to light that there were contradictions in the implementation of National Development Plan and objectives that were inimical to the utilization of the Arts in nation building. Finally, it concludes by seeing Arts as the major options for the realization of employed and secured citizenship.

Unemployment

Unemployment poses a threat to national security. It is a situation of lack of paid job despite one’s qualification for it. Okereke (2012) notes that unemployment and lack of record of criminals in Nigeria contributes in no small measure to instability and insecurity. Little wonder the saying goes that a hungry man is an angry man.

Parents and guardians are apprehensive of having to cope with their unemployed wards that are thrown into the labour markets on yearly basis in anticipation of jobs that are not forthcoming despite the promises from governments. In order to prevent uprising from unemployed people, many western countries’ governments pay stipends to them. Okereke (2012) posits that some of these unemployed people take to wheeling-dealing while other ones inadvertently go into crime to survive. So goes the saying that “idle hand is the devil’s workshop”.

Unemployment ratio serves as an index of economic activity. It reveals the proportion of human resources that are actively in use in any economy. Goldstein (2008) describes a situation where workers change jobs and wait for a new
one as frictional unemployment. Periodical unemployment is referred to as seasonal. This occurs especially with farmers who depend on changes in whether conditions for growing their crops. This may also occur when students graduate and search for work. A situation where employers give preference to workers based on certain characteristics, skills and location of industries is referred to as structural. Goldstein (2008) asserts that employers practice illegal job distribution against groups based on sex, race, religion, age, education, and nationality among others. In a case like this, governments provide training programs for workers and subsidize education.

Last but not the least is the cyclical unemployment that occurs when business cycle turns down. The demand for goods and services therefore, drops and workers are laid off. The result leads to economic recession. In order to reduce this situation governments usually issue out decrees in the level of consumption and investments.

**Insecurity**

Nigeria is undergoing all forms of insecurity. Adejumo (2014) observes that internal insecurity is not peculiar to Nigeria. Developed nations like United States (US) and United Kingdom (UK) also have their own share of it. National Internal Insecurity is the general lack of wellbeing of lives and properties of a country. It could be economic insecurity, social insecurity, political insecurity and institutional insecurity. National insecurity is economic when perpetrated as organized crime targeting business interests and committed by delinquents and robbers. According to Onikosi (2008) these manifest as intimidation and violence in street theft, robbery and crime, kidnapping, armed robbery, drug trafficking, car theft and other contraband activities such as smuggling, assault such as killing and rape in the process of committing economic crime, trafficking in prostitutes and conflict over scarce resources. Social insecurity is perpetrated by gangs, street children (boys and girls) and as ethnic violence. These manifest as territorial or identity-based "turf violence, robbery and theft: pettytheft, communal riots.

Social violence are perpetrated as intimate paternal violence inside the home, sexual violence including rape in the public place: child abuse involving boys and girls; intergenerational conflict between parents and children; and gratuitous/routine daily violence. These manifest as physical or sociological male-female abuse; physical and sexual abuse, particularly prevalent in the cases involving not only step-fathers but also uncles; physical and sociological abuse, in activity areas such as traffic road rage, bar fight and street confrontation and argument that get out of control.'

Onikosi (2008) further posits that in the political category of insecurity, perpetrators and/or victims are the state and non-state violence, while the manifestation include guerilla conflict, paramilitary conflict, political assassinations and armed conflict between political parties. Institutional insecurity is perpetrated by the state and other informal institutions including the private sectors. The manifestations of this include extra-judicial killing by police, physical and sociological abuse by health and educational workers, state or community vigilante-directed social cleansing of gangs and street children, and lynching of suspected criminals by community members.

**Historical perspective of national insecurity**

Insecurity in Nigeria reached an alarming dimension with the election of President G. Jonathan. Adejumo (2014) observes that it was a driving issue in the President’s campaign following bomb blasts by Niger Delta militants and attacks by the extremist Islamic group, Boko Haram from the north. Given the centrality of peace and harmony, it is practically impossible to think of national development without resolving these issues. To say the obvious insecurity is not new to the nation. The Western Nigerian political history witnessed large scale violence in post independence Nigeria and the events of 1966 military coup that eventually culminated in a bloody civil war.

The most common post war features were the well-known armed robbery that got popularized with the execution of the likes of Oyenusi in 1971. Armed robbery spread rapidly across the country from Lagos to Onitsha to Benin, and other major cities. With the hash death penalties and the decisive
state action the issue of armed robbery remained with us especially as the economic fortunes of the country tumbled. Other violent activities included cross border crimes, smuggling and drug activities. The threat posed by the Maitatsine violent clashes can only be surpassed by the 1966 communal clashes and the Nigerian civil war. Over 5000 Nigerians died in 1980 before it spread to Bulunkutu in 1982, Jimeta, Yola in 1984, Gombe,1985, Funtua, 1987 (Onikosi (2008).

He further posits that not much emphasis was placed on the security issue until in the period between 1983 and 1999 when the prolonged rule of the military and their many transitions that a state dimension was added to insecurity in Nigeria. From the death of Dele Giwa, Editor of the Newswatch to the assassination of some key politicians like Shehu Yar Ardua and M.K.O. Abiola, Kudiratu Abiola and several attempted murders, the story of insecurity in that era later appeared insignificant when compared with the events of today. However, it must be noted that the foundation of the crisis was laid during 1983-1999 military rule.

A major fall out of the mis-governance of that era was the progressive decay of institutions across all sectors. Nigeria witnessed an unprecedented display of arbitrariness in -governance that undermined laid down procedures, dis-organized existing structures at the Federal, State and Local Government levels of administration. The Nigerian Police, the Armed Forces, the judiciary and other important state apparatuses suffered set backs due largely; to the under funding of institutions and looting of the little available funds. The predatory nature of the military inspired a culture of impunity, lawlessness and unending appetite for accumulation through state resources, diverted directly or through cronies. The second factor is the SAP induced budget reduction and its multi-dimensional affect on urban life in Nigeria:

Persisting state failure and institutional decay have simultaneously been brought into the limelight by the explosion of insecurity across the country. The soldiers retreat into their barracks in May 1999 signaled an expansion of criminality within urban areas along highways and in the borderlands. Homes were broken into, banks raided, cars and at times buses were seized by gangs of thieves often better armed than the police. ‘

**Arts**

Art is the transformation of human thoughts into tangible pleasing forms. It could be in music, drama, craft or visual arts. The art forms that appeal to us basically through the eyes, though not in totality are referred to as visual arts. These works include drawing, painting, ceramics, graphics, sculpture and textiles. Art of course is difficult to define because its concept is open and subject to change, Amao-Awogbade (2002). Whichever way it is defined it must exhibit skill and talent. Scholars have defined art by describing its facets; conceptual elements, operational elements and the synthetic elements. Conceptual element is concerned with personal realities, concept formation, response to sensations and experience and the realization of phenomena, symbols, myth and fantasies. To philosophers it operates through sensation, emotion, reminiscence, association and inference. The operational element is concerned with the physical nature of the world, the way of using it as means of developing and understanding it. It is through the manipulation of the environment that we are able to control it for our personal or social needs. The synthetic element is concerned with the structure or visual form that is used to convey the concept through materials.

Art from inception had a very rough beginning in the location of space in the school curriculum in Nigeria. Thanks to the singular efforts of Chief Aina Onaboluwho persuaded government to introduce it into the school curriculum in 1923 after his training in Paris. Before then, arts were viewed as fetish and pagan images by the missionaries, (Wangboje (1969) lamented in Mbahi (2001) that despite the usage of art since 500BC as revealed by carbon dating process in Nok Village (Danjuma, 2002). The Missionaries' contempt for traditional art accounts in part, for lack of enthusiasm to introduce the subject in schools. This has resulted to wrong traditional and academic attitude towards art (Uzoagba, 2000). Many principals and teachers do not considered art as important as science, mathematics or other commercial subjects. But arts importance in educational curriculum cannot be over emphasized. Art education aims at developing human personality intellectually, socially, spiritually and physically. Its process and practice give unity of
consciousness and co-ordination of eye and hand, thereby involving physical, intellectual and emotional dimensions of the human body. Ohambele (2009) quoting D’Amico in Olorukooba (1991) states:

If the aim of Art education were to expressed in a few words, it would be to seek the highest development of the creative spirit of every man, woman and child. In this scientific age, Art may be a salvation of modern man, but only if children, all children have the benefit of true aesthetic experiences…. Art is more than fad or frill, more than cultural enrichment. It is in these days of hot threats and cold wars, a human necessity.

Art and unemployment

Nigeria’s population and the oil wealth make it a great location for labour intensive market capable of providing employment for the masses yet Nigeria experiences unemployment problems. A scenario that will continue to be devil the dream of the development of a viable economy if not nibbled in the bud. This is why it is disheartening to listen to educationist express doubtful agenda on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) hinged on the development of human resources.

Training Nigerians in any of the arts is one of the affective ways of reducing unemployment rate in the country. Art has so many branches that can accommodate different professional practices. It is an employer of labour, be it craft, music, drama or visual art. According to Iyke (2010) Nigeria’s population is estimated to be 129,934,911 in the year 2002, making it a significant proportion to context for landmass of 923,768 square kilometers for agriculture. A redirection of efforts in the arts towards its utilization will augment the strategies used in tackling unemployment.

Mbahi (2005) standing on Plekhaiov’s (1979) belief that art must be purposeful and not fruitless pleasure sees art’s function as the development of human resources to improve the social system. Advanced nations realized the importance of art in the setting up of industries by providing training in Art and design. Examples of schools of design set up during the Industrial Revolution in Europe include School of Design in London and Bauhaus in Germany. No wonder (Mbah, 2005) quoted (Adejuno, 1985) that ‘our future depends on an efficient and competitive manufacturing industry. Design provides us the means to achieve this ‘…

Nigeria’s reliance on oil for foreign exchange earnings will dwindle with the utilization of art. If artistes are empowered financially they would produce works capable of attracting tourists to augment our foreign exchange earnings. If more Nigerians are trained in the production of the arts, the problems of unemployment will be reduced. Iyke (2010) observes that organizations and businesses in Nigeria are yet to invest in significant amounts in development of non-petroleum industries as a strategy for economic development.

Entrepreneurship is developed through Art since Art involves a lot of processes and engagements. A lot of poor Nigerians without skills, knowledge, tools and values to seek employment in other industries can develop themselves through art. As put by Iyke (2010) people who lack skills and values to perform financially rewarding activities are usually unemployed. This results in a lack of employment opportunities, since employers tend to locate their businesses where appropriate human resources are available.

Nations develop through the provision of employment opportunities to their people. This ensures the involvement of the citizens in the development process. Inability to procure employment leads to crime, which constitutes insecurity to an economy.

Art and insecurity

Insecurity in Nigeria has reached an alarming state. The nation is completely deprived of its tranquility. Violence, crime and fear are everywhere. Cattle rustlers killing and maiming innocent Nigerians, kidnapping, armed banditory culminating in militarized groups like “Boko Haram”, Bakassi and Oodua Peoples’ Congress. The nation is obviously sitting on a timebomb.

A major contribution to insecurity is unemployment. As the saying goes “idle hand is the devil’s workshop”. In order to ameliorate this canker worm the governments need to embrace a
policy that would ensure serious commitment through the provision of employment. This will create a state of wellbeing and restore the hopes of Nigerians. Individuals will become law-abiding and self-accountable.

Historically, Nigeria’s spate of unemployment must have had its root in the 1970s led to the siege of rural Nigerian youths to urban areas in search of greener pasture. These young rural Nigerians dumped their jobs such as cloth weaving, basketry, blacksmithing, wood-carving, pottery, textile design, music making, dancing among others. This coupled with job seekers after the civil war led to unemployment in the country.

The influx was contained by the Federal government’s acceptance to host the World Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC, 1977). Since these rural Nigerians were experts in different art activities and crafts, they became proud employees of the various Arts Councils set up in the state capitals fishing out for talents. After the festival, the nation experienced a drop in oil revenue leading to a fall in foreign exchange earning. Many of the appointed staff were laid-off. The urban areas became decimated by hangers-on creating sources of violence and security decadence. Empowerment of these individuals financially by the governments would have augmented the foreign exchange earnings through the exportation of their proceeds and tourism.

Security is the collective responsibility of all Nigerians. More Nigerians should be encouraged to learn anyone of the Arts as an option to government work since Art is a provider of job opportunities. Okereke (2012) admonishes the governments not to push the citizens to resort to criminality, violence and terrorism.

Conclusion

Art has several branches that can be utilized in resolving insecurity issues resulting unemployment. It took the arts to safe Nigeria from the problem of unemployment during the FESTAC Apart from Fine and Applied Arts with its numerous branches of Sculpture, Painting, Graphics, Ceramics, Textiles and the theoretical aspects of Art, Music and Performing Arts also have their own branches. Experience in any of these branches leads to the production of self-reliant, resourceful and creative individuals.

Another advantage that may accrue to such individuals includes the development of aesthetic awareness through theory of Art. As noted by Jaji (2008) apart from being an employer of labour, Art develops human personality intellectually, socially, spiritually and physically. With any of the Art activities, entrepreneurship is ensured.

Other advantages that accrue to the training of individuals in the Arts as listed by Mbahi (2005) are: 1. Demonstrate graphical and other communication skills necessary to give in clear and appropriate form information about an objective or a system; 2. Identify problems that can be solved through practical technological activities; 3. Analyze problems which they have identified or which have been posed for them and produce appropriate design specifications taking into account technical and aesthetic aspects; 4. Identify to the resources needed for the solution of practical or technological problems; 5. Gather order and assess the information relevant to the solution of practical or technological problems; 6. Produce an interpret data e.g. diagrams, flow charts, graphs, experimental results; 7. Plan the production of selected solutions of problems; 8. Demonstrate appropriate skills and 9. Understand the relationships between art, science and technology.

References


