

Book and Art Festivals as Humanising Instruments



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As a developing country, Nigeria is faced with numerous problems which seem insurmountable. Sadly, enough consideration have not been given to the development of human resources. Rather, there is crude pursuit of materialism which has ensured dearth of creativity, knowledge production and innovation. Yet there enormous gain is embedded in art and education, if they are properly harnessed. Art and education could be potent media for achieving national goals of economic growth, industrialization and the empowerment of the youths. Over the years, not much impact has been made in terms of human development by successive governments in Nigeria. The “oil-boom” experience the nation had at various times, had no visible impact on the citizen's standard of living. Academics and the creative enterprise are poorly funded and managed, as the scramble for material gains have taken a bad toll on the various facets of the nation's economy, including the creative industries. If positive ventures like art and book festivals are properly funded, poverty and ignorance will be eradicated to a very large extent. Moyibi (1977) opined thus, “education in the arts and crafts contribute to the human development what other fields cannot contribute”. Art and books can ensure that an individual attains sustainable self-sufficiency. If adequate attention is given to such ventures, the restoration of the dignity of man and the rehumanisation of society can be easily achieved in these parts.

In art, festivals and fairs have been actively used in various ways. From the traditional African setting, morality was used as a mode of humanizing members of the society during communal assembly and social meetings. The modern society with its colonial and post-colonial influences rely on texts, visual forms and other known means to communicate and structure her citizens to live reasonably well with global standard for political, economic and cultural realizations. To this extent, art exhibitions, book fairs, biennales and cultural festivals have been adopted by artists as a means of cultural and creative education. Regrettably, growing interests in materialism now negates the objective role these art fairs play in educating members of the society. Such irrational materialism and pursuit of crude power does not promote the developmental aspirations of the society.

With such attitude which has been the bane of sustainable social development in Nigeria, the reading culture has been on steady decline and the trending social media have not helped matters in this regard. Nor has postmodern postcolonial evangelisation helped with its tendentious nihilism, “cargo cult” and personality cult. The resulting psychology obviously trickles down to education, politics and the creed of leadership, all of which are logically travestied. The harsh economic environment created by bad governance in Nigeria has made most of the populace to take to wonder banks, betting houses, and internet fraud as easier means of money making. In fact, these misplaced priority and the like are now erroneously more popular thanks to the failure and bankruptcy of social institutions in these parts.

Regrettably too, the Anambra Book and Creativity Festival (ANBUKRAFT) which is one of the programmes that offer people the opportunity to participate in creative and intellectual exercises is yet to fully attain its goals. Yet ANBUKRAFT has redemptive tendencies and embody pointers to cultivating and exploring the rich cultural and creative potentials of Anambra people both at home and elsewhere. The Anambra Book and Creativity Festival should be used as a strategy for human development. Our society should be aware of the need to develop the young ones right from the formative years, through proper exposure to creativity. Art is also one of the major means of enhancing the aesthetics of our environment and is very relevant to a fully aestheticisation of life in general. That a beautiful environment encourages tourism and business enterprises cannot be over-emphasized. Nor should we rehash the impact on economic growth and nation building. The Anambra Book and Creativity Festival has the potentials to contribute to the economic growth and social development of Anambra if given the opportunity to thrive.