

Contemporary Issues in Fine and Applied Art Education in Nigeria and the Way Forward

Saibu Alasa

School of Art and Industrial Design, Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, Edo State, Nigeria

Abstract: *The paper, "Contemporary Issues in Fine and Applied art Education in Nigeria and the Way forward, identified and addressed issues militating against the effective and efficient teaching of fine and applied art in Nigerian tertiary institutions with particular reference to Polytechnic education. In the discussion, major concepts were explained and suggestions were put forward to avert the problems which were identified as barriers for the effective and efficient teaching, learning, production and practice of art in Nigerian tertiary institutions.*

Keywords: Applied art, Fine art, Education, Audio-visual instructional media

1 Introduction

Fine and applied art education generally is faced with several issues some of which have militated against the effective and efficient teaching and learning of art at the different levels of education in Nigeria with the resultant effects of training incompetent and skilled job seekers instead of job creators and employers of labor. Art as a concept has been defined as the totality of a man's creativity while creativity is the use of ones imaginative skills to produce a physical object or develop ideas that impart positively and bring about a radical change in an organization or society [1]. Fine art also known as visual art is a branch of art concerned with conception or imagination, and creation of art works employing different resources and techniques for the production of objects of aesthetic or beautification values. Painting, sculpture, drawing and printmaking fall within this category. This category of art encompasses all activities involving the application of aesthetic designs to everyday functional objects [2]. Applied art on the other hand, involves the conception, design, and production of art objects using variety of resources and techniques for beautification and utilitarian purposes. Ceramics, textile design, photography, architecture, computer art, industrial design, graphic design, fashion design, interior design, as well as all decorative arts are included in this category. While fine art provides intellectual stimulation to the viewer, applied art creates utilitarian items such as a cup, bowls, water closet, a couch or sofa, a clock, a chair or table using aesthetic principles in their design. Imparting artistic knowledge, skills and competence, is dependent on several educational variables.

Education according to [3] is the process of human learning by which knowledge is imparted, faculties trained and skills developed. From the above interpretation of education, fine and applied art education can be said to involve the processes of inculcating knowledge or developing intellect, manipulative skills and competencies of the learner to use variety of resources to evolve a new product through high sense of imagination, innovation, design and creativity.

The acquisition of knowledge and creative or manipulative skills for the creation of tangible objectives, in which the various aspects of art have played enormous roles in the

society, have consistently experienced problem or have been hampered by several factors which are addressed from the contemporary trends in Nigerian educational system. This paper is tailored towards identifying, discussing and suggesting ways and or means of averting some of the contemporary issues or problems facing effective and efficient art instruction or education in Nigeria for individual and societal advancement.

2 Contemporary Issues Facing Fine and Applied Art Education

Several issues appear to be facing fine and applied art education in Nigeria. These issues which have also become prevalent and cut across all facets of education in Nigeria are identified from several angles and discussed below in this paper. The issues include:

- Art Curriculum Design and Implementations
- Availability of Resource Persons
- Admission Requirement/Certification
- Admission Procedure
- Extra curricula activities.
- Infrastructural facilities
- Availability of Instructional Media (materials, tools and equipment)
- Accessibility of Instructional Media
- Power Supply

2.1 Art Curriculum Design and Implementations

As a skilled profession, art curriculum should reflect a system approach to instruction with the recipients combining the knowledge of materials, tools, equipment (media), people, facilities, environment and imaginative reasoning to create objects of utilitarian or functional and aesthetics values for self-reliance and employment generation. Corroborating this, [4] stipulates the need to gear education towards producing practical persons with the course content (curriculum) reflective of our national needs not just hypothetical standard.

Changes in terms of technology, downsizing and

restructuring in work place today, require students to possess different skills -academic, vocational and workplace skills [5]. To integrate academic, vocational and workplace skills, the development of applied and integrated curriculum is necessary in art. This will strengthen vocational education by improving the reading, writing and computational skills and make learning more relevant and would demand making the academic curriculum more vocational relevant. The inclusion of more liberal courses which are not vocational relevant as is being presently witnessed in fine art education, is detrimental to practical skills acquisition and job creation.

In addition the inadequacy of the workplace skills acquisition by way of industrial training, the lack of places for primary assignment, and the improper placement of students in relevant areas for such training, have negatively affected the self-sustainability of the artists and their performance in workplace. In another vain, the non-implementation of the curriculum vis-à-vis the absence of syllabus in most of the art schools and departments in the Polytechnic sector, has negated the proper implementation of the curriculum currently in use as most teachers, lecturers, instructors and art technologists impart knowledge and skills without recourse to the syllabus thereby teaching out of context. The supervisory body of polytechnic education in Nigeria, has abandoned her role in reviewing and providing up-to-date integrated curricula in most of the programmes run in the polytechnics, rather her interest seems to be focused on accreditation and resource inspections of programmes where much gratifications are involved to the detriment of achieving meaningful, developed and result oriented technical/vocational education.

2.2 Availability of Resource Persons

The calibre of academic and technical staff in academic institutions determines the quality of instructions and output there after. Under-staffing has become rampant in Nigerian tertiary institutions, this includes art schools. Instances where recruitment is done, it is basically conducted without consideration for merit, competence and experience, rather issues of relationship (tribal, religious, social affinity as well as sponsorship by people considered to be of importance in the society (God-fatherism) has dominated the employment scene. Instead of qualitative employment, instances of quantitative employment, whose products breed incompetence, truancy, non-productivity and corruption, abound in our institutions and art schools. This situation, without gain-saying is unhealthy for effective and efficient teaching and learning, result oriented and entrepreneurial education.

2.3 Certification/Admission Requirement

Emphasis on certificates rather than productive skills, have resulted in the unquantifiable quest for academic certificates by whatever means in Nigerian setting today. This has led to all forms of mal-practice in our institutions – primary, secondary and tertiary. However, these certificates which are not geared towards integrated education fail to address the vocational courses such as fine and applied art at the primary

and secondary levels of our educational system where art teachers or instructors are virtually absent. The non-teaching of fine and applied art, caused by the dearth of art teachers at those levels of education, has greatly hampered students' enrolment for art courses at the tertiary level of education so much so that fine art is no longer a compulsory requirement for admission into most art schools. This is to salvage the course from extinction and those gainfully employed thrown out of job.

2.4 Admission Procedure

In spite of the standardization by the admission body (JAMB) and the post UME examination conducted for admission into tertiary institutions by the universities, the admission procedure is beset with a lot of irregularities particularly in the Polytechnic sector. Experience shows that the post UME screening in some of these polytechnics is a mere formality and that rather than admission being based strictly on merit/the laid down criteria, it has become a thing for the highest bidder with admission being tactically delayed to accommodate such corrupt practices. The aftermath of this is wrong placement, non-performance, denial of admission to those who rightly deserve it, frustration, different faces of corruption etc.

2.5 Extra-curricula activities

In time past, extra curricula activities such as sporting competitions, students' week for all sorts of merriments were organized to unwind the body, allow for intellectual development, socialization etc. but today students tend to seek more of fun than academic pursuit. Most disheartening is the emergence of dreadful secret cults in most secondary and tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Their activities have made teaching and learning unproductive with constant disruption of learning, insecurity and diversion of students to ugly activities that consume their finances, time, endanger their lives, and hinder vocational skills development and acquisition in such area as fine/applied art, engineering etc.

2.6 Lack of Infrastructural facilities, Materials, Tools and Equipment

Lack of infrastructural facilities like classrooms, lecture theatres, laboratories, studios and workshops are major hindrance to students' enrolment, effective/efficient teaching and learning in schools at all levels of education in Nigeria. The edifice inform of structures which we find in most of our institutions of higher learning particularly in some Polytechnics are such that are meant to accommodate within thirty – forty students. These structures are grossly inadequate in terms of number, size and other fittings to accommodate the enormous applicants and the students, this often lead to most students having to stay by the doors and window sides to receive lecture thereby obstructing proper ventilation.

Although government intervention in the past eight years has to some extent improved the nature of the structures in our campuses, these seem to be inadequate and not properly

executed considering the teaming students population in schools. The absence of spacious class rooms, lecture theatres, studios, exhibition rooms and workshops in art schools in Nigeria tertiary institutions does not permit proper studio practice in terms of interaction, discussions, demonstrations and skill acquisition. Further more, the absence of relevant materials, tools and equipment for effective instruction, demonstration and practice for meaningful and functional skill acquisition constitute barriers in art schools. In addition, most art students, due to poor family background cannot afford most of the basic materials; tools and equipment require carrying out their practical resulting in poor performance.

2.7 Availability/Accessibility of Instructional Media

Instructional media are technological devices which appeal to the senses of hearing, sight and motion and can be effectively and efficiently use to facilitate teaching and learning. UNESCO cited in [6] postulates that instructional media refer to materials or devices which presents a complete body of information and largely self-supporting rather than supplementary in the teaching – learning process. Such media include audio media – radio, tape recorder, record player, phonograph, reel to reel recorder, visual media – projected (computer, filmstrips, slides, overhead, opaque, cine), non-projected (chalkboard, whiteboard, textbooks, flannel board, models, mobiles, pictures, templates, diorama, puppets, real objects), audio-visual such as film with sound, television, tape/sound slide projector, tape/film charts, videotapes, tape/overheads, transparencies. Others include the new generation audio media such as portable FM radio, lexiphon, teleconferencing, talking or digital speech computer devices etc, and audio-visual technological media like satellite video conferencing, videotaped instruction, video disc interaction, digital /wide-up radio technology, web-television technology, hypermedia, telephone learning, non-linear desktop video, audio editing system. According to [7], these new generation instructional devices which she postulated are commonly use in the advanced countries of the world like USA, Britain, Japan and Germany are organized combination of audiovisuals that are capable of storing and transmitting information content to students for effective performance. The use of these media of instruction in art schools to inculcating knowledge and practical skills in art students have not been embraced by most of the school leaving the lecturers, instructors and technologists in total darkness as to the use of such media in the teaching-learning of fine and applied art. The inclusion of these media of instruction in the course of teaching via discussion, explanation, illustration and demonstration will greatly improve students' performance/achievement. These media which are self instructing can be used by individual or groups to facilitate learning without the presence of the teacher or lecturer.

2.8 Power Supply

The issue of Power supply in Nigeria generally is appalling and disheartening. The epileptic nature of power supply tends to inhibit productivity in art education. Effective

teaching and learning in art greatly depends on instruction and practical demonstration which in most cases is enhanced by regular power supply. Most activities in art such as ceramics, graphics, photography, fashion, sculpture, textile etc. require regular power supply to ensure effective and efficient practices and production. Lighting is also required in drawing. Constant and un-notified disruption of power hampers effective instruction, demonstration and practice by both students and lecturers. The inability of most institutions to provide alternative power supply is a major hindrance to art instruction, demonstration, practice and production in Nigeria tertiary institutions.

3 The Way Forward

To overcome the contemporary issues plaguing the standard in education (fine/applied art education) in Nigeria, the following steps should be taken.

- a) Art institutions should develop and adopt applied and integrated curriculum which is capable of strengthening vocational, academic and workplace skills that will facilitate self actualization, sustainability, employment generation and employer of labor.
- b) In recruiting personnel/resource persons particularly in the academic cadres, consideration should be given to merit, competence and experience and not employment base on tribalism, nepotism, religious/social affiliation, God-fatherism etc. The latter will breed all sorts of uncheck able corrupt practices which are anti-educational.
- c) Admission requirements for intending art students should be reviewed in view of the absent of art teachers in Nigeria schools (primary and secondary). The compulsion of fine/applied Art and the requirement of credit in mathematics for admission into fine/applied art programmes should not be made a prerequisite for admission for those interested in studying the course as long as they meet the number of credits needed for admission. This is to savage the extinction of fine and applied art from our educational system following the dearth of art teachers at the primary and secondary levels of the education system.
- d) The procedure for admitting students into the various programmes in Nigeria schools, art program inclusive should be readdressed. Students should be subjected to well scrutinized screening exercise with the most outstanding students given admission without delay rather than subjecting admission to the highest bidder which is becoming a common phenomenon in some of our educational settings, thereby resulting to poor standard.
- e) Institutions and schools should enforce/implement laws banning the activities of bodies such as secret cults which contradict the norms or rules of the system. Serious sanction should be taken against herring students. While associations and societies that conform with the rules and regulation of the institutions should be encouraged. In addition extra-curricular activities that advances the development of body and soul should be further encouraged.

- f) Adequate and quality infrastructures should be provided in view of the increasing numbers of intakes into art and other programmes in Nigeria tertiary institutions. In addition there should be no short or absent of supply of teaching materials, tools and equipment which ensure efficiency and effectiveness in teaching and learning processes.
- g) Instructional media both old and the new generation should be procure, made accessible for use by lecturers, instructors and technologists who should be trained on their usage for effective and efficient instruction, learning so as to infuse in the teaching-learning process, unique, motivational and pleasurable outcome.
- h) To ensure efficacy, effectiveness and product oriented art teaching, the over reliance on national power supply should be put to a stop by procuring and installing power generating plants in the various schools, faculties and departments for use in case of power outage from the national creed. This will help to enhance teaching and learning as well as boost productivity in the area of fine and applied art.

Polytechnic, Auchì where he had his National Diploma in Painting and General Art, Higher National Diploma in Ceramic and the Technical Teachers Certificate in Education, Certificate in Community Banking and National Diploma in Banking and Finance in 1982, 1985, 1988, 1996 and 1998. He also poses a Post Graduate Diploma in Technical Education (PGDTED) from the University of Benin in 1994, a Master Degree in Educational Technology and Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Technology (Ph.D) from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 2002 and 2011. Presently, he is a Principal Lecturer in the Department of Ceramics Technology, Auchì Polytechnic, Auchì which he headed for two years and has been a lecturer for Twenty One years. He has participated in several exhibitions, seminars, conferences and workshops locally and internationally. He has to his credits; numerous publications in reputable journals, text books in Ceramics and Research. He is married with Four Children.

4 Conclusion

The study revealed that several issues militate against effective teaching of fine and applied art in Nigeria tertiary institutions among these are; Art curriculum design and implementations, Availability of resource persons, Admission requirement/certification, Admission procedure, Extra curricula activities, Infrastructural facilities, Availability of instructional media (materials, tools and equipment), Accessibility of instructional media and Power supply. The study further, suggested means by which these problems can be averted.

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Author Profile



Saibu Alasa (Ph.D) was born on 1st of October, 1963. He completed his Primary and Secondary Education at St. Pauls' Anglican School, Idi-Oro, Lagos and Western Boys High School, Benin City in 1974 and 1979 respectively. Thereafter, he proceeded to Auchì