

Making a Career in the Field of Fine and Applied Art: The Nigeria Perspective

Saibu Alasa

Department of Ceramics, Auchi Polytechnic, P.M.B.13, Auchi, Edo State, Nigeria

Abstract: *This paper examined the need to train students in practical related courses such as in the field of fine and applied art. In the discussion, major concepts were clarified, the pre-requisite academic requirement(s) needed for the pursuance of professional certificate in fine and applied art were analyzed while the job or career opportunities available to graduates of fine and applied art were concisely discussed. Conclusions were drawn and recommendation put forward.*

Keywords: Career, Art, Fine and Applied Art.

1. Introduction

The topic, making a career in Fine and Applied Art is addressed from three major perspectives, firstly the conceptual interpretation, secondly the academic requirement for the pursuance of the discipline in tertiary institutions and lastly the job prospect for specialists in the field. Fine and applied art which to most Nigerian implies drawing, painting and molding of objects of different forms and shapes for admiration, ritual and religious purposes, has little or no societal recognition in Nigeria. Never-the-less, this all important discipline, has been overwhelmingly embraced in the more advanced countries of the world such as USA, Japan, China, and Germany, Britain etc. as the hub for scientific and technological advancement. This explains the reason why the course is eminence in the school programmes of those great countries that have contributed immensely to global development and growth in all ramification of human existence.

For Nigeria to advance technologically, the implementation of her national policy on education which stipulates gearing of our education towards acquisition of appropriate skills, ability and competence both mental and physical as instrument for individual and societal development [1], the adoption of practically and intellectually based education which fine and applied art is capable of offering, should be embraced as in the case of the advance countries of the world. This will not only bring about technological growth and development, it will results to self-reliance and employment generation for the teeming and job seeking youths [2].

The dearth of relevant resources – man, materials, infrastructures etc. needed to inculcate intellectual, skilled and vocational training on Nigeria populace, inhibit the effective and efficient teaching and learning of fine and applied art at all levels of education in Nigeria schools (primary, secondary and tertiary). The societal misconception concerning fine and applied art and the ignorance of the citizens regarding the enormous roles fine and applied art education could usher into all facets of our nation's development brought about the lack of government patronage, societal and individual interest in the discipline.

However, before x-raying the job prospects in the field of fine and applied art, the need to acquaint with the conceptual meaning of the terms is necessary. This therefore brings one, to the next sub-heading.

2. Conceptual Meaning of Career, Fine and Applied Art

According to [3], career is the progress and actions taken by a person throughout a life time, especially those related to the person's occupation. The [4], also defined career as a person's course or progress through life or distinct portion of his life. It is said to relate to aspects of an individual life, learning and work. It is an occupation or a profession that usually involves special training or formal education and is considered as person's life job/work. Career is basically a job or work carried out by an individual through training in a formal or an informal institution which earns the individual, a means of livelihood throughout life or greater part of his/her life. Career is most often associated with professional training in such field as fine and applied art, medicine, engineering, law etc. In this study, when an individual is trained in any aspects of fine and applied art and he/she earns his/her livelihood through such practice, the person can be referred to as career artists (painter, graphics designer, sculptor, ceramist, textile designer, fashion designer, metal designer, interior decorator etc).

Art is a medium for creativity and self expression. It is something that makes us more thoughtful and well-rounded humans. Art is embedded in every facet of our daily lives as such it is difficult not to always think about it. Art in other words is a diverse range of human activities as well as the products of such activities. Looking around our homes, offices and environment everywhere is clogged with works of art. The chair, desk or table you are occupying at this very moment which are designed by someone, are art. Your shoes, clothing are art. Your tea cup/saucer is art. Your homes and it fittings as well as all functional design are art. Art therefore could be said to be something that is both functional and aesthetically pleasing to our sense of sight.

This paper focuses primarily on the visual arts, which includes the creation of images or objects in such fields as painting, sculpture, printmaking, photography, and other

visual media. Architecture is often included as one of the visual arts. Like the decorative arts, architecture involves the creation of objects where the practical considerations of their use are essential. Other areas of broader definition of art known as performing art which include music, theatre/drama, film, dance, literature, as well as interactive media, are out of the scope of this paper.

This paper therefore, basically addressed the area of Fine arts, where aesthetic considerations are paramount as well as the applied arts which are distinguished from the former due to its functionality or utilitarian values. For easy comprehension therefore, the two concepts are clarified through concise discussion as posited by experts in the field. According to [5], the word fine is defined as concerning the appreciation of the beautiful and is used to describe that branch of art whose function is no other than appealing to man's sense of beauty. [2], defined fine art as that aspect of visual art concerned with the conception or imagination and creation of art works employing different resources and techniques for the production of objects of aesthetic or beautification values. Fine art is concerned with beauty and it appeals to taste. Painting, sculpture, drawing, printmaking, art appreciation and history of art fall into this category [2, 5].

Applied art on the other hand is the field of art that refers to the application of design and aesthetics to objects of functional and everyday use. [6], [2] described applied art as involving the conception, design and production of art objects for beautification and utilitarian purposes using variety of resources and techniques. Ceramics, graphics design, fashion design, textile design, architecture, computer art, industrial design, interior design as well as decorative arts fall into this category. While fine art provides intellectual stimulation to the observers, applied art creates utilitarian items like cup, bowls, water closet, wash hand basin, sofa, clock, chair, table, clothes etc using aesthetic principles in their design.

3. Academic Requirement in Pursuing a Course (Career) in Fine and Applied Art

The prerequisite or academic requirement for the pursuance of fine and applied art programmes vary from institution to institution at the tertiary level of Nigeria educational system. At the National Certificate of Education (NCE) level, five credits with credit in English language and fine art are needed. At the polytechnic level, five credits are required at a sitting with credit in English language and fine art while the university demands five credits or six at a sitting or two sittings respectively; these usually include credit in English Language and Fine art [7]. It is worth mentioning that admission requirement into fine and applied art programmes also vary from institution to institution. For instance in Auchi Polytechnic however, five credits are needed at a sitting or six credits at two sittings. These credits include English Language and Mathematics. In view of the low students' enrolment for fine and applied art courses as well as the dearth of art teachers at the primary and secondary school levels, credit in fine and applied art is no longer mandatory in Auchi polytechnic. Rather credit a credit pass in fine and applied art is considered as added advantage.

Non-art (fine/applied art) students from secondary schools who are admitted to study fine and applied art by this deficiency, are intensely groomed for the first two years in general art and the later two years after the compulsory one year industrial training in specialized or professional areas as artist (painter, ceramicist, sculptor, graphics designer, fashion designer, textile designer, decorator (interior/exterior), photographer etc. for onward career progression in life.

4. Career Opportunities in the field of Fine and Applied Art

Graduates of fine and applied art have the opportunity to work in different segments of any economy going by their training and the relevance of fine and applied art to the day to day mainstay of the individual, the nation and the globe at large. Such opportunities abound in industries, semi government/government establishments, advertising agencies, interior design and display, exhibition work (curator), self employment and employer of labor.

In the field of graphics to be specific, career opportunities are in such areas in industries – advertising, CD-ROM publishing, book publishing, web designing, newspaper and magazine publishing and television software production etc. career option open to commercial artists in the field include visualizer in advertising agencies, art director, illustrator, cartoonist, graphics artist and freelancing artist. Works are also available in design houses, media (print/electronic), greeting card manufacturing outfits; web designing, book covers etc.

The ceramist on the other hand, can be gainfully employed in several industries such as those in the construction sector – bricks, cement, tiles, pipe and glass, consumer good sector industries – the glassware, pottery, spark plug, industrial products industries - electrical insulators, cutting tools and bearings, electronic industries that produces - diodes, capacitors, magnetic materials, and computer memory packages as well as industries that deals with high temperature tiles insulation and composite materials use in space technology, ceramics spark plugs use in aerospace industry and nuclear fuel rods for nuclear industry. In order words ceramicists can find prominence in industries such as refractory, insulating, table ware, sanitary ware, metallurgical, power, sewage, automobile, medical, cement, construction and chemical companies, mineral processing and, semi government/government establishments, private companies, teaching at primary, secondary and tertiary institutions, self employed as well as serve as employer of labor etc. Ceramicists can also function as administrator, project supervisor, and sale engineer, technical consultant in firms where ceramics materials and products are applied.

The textile designer can be employed in textile industry, weaving industry, chemical industry, as designer in semi government, government and private out-fits, teaching, self employed as well as generate employment for others etc.

Fashion designer on the other hand is employable in clothing/garment industry, fashion home, toys industry, as

moderator in fashion shows, in semi government/government establishment, private outfits, self-employed as well as act as employment generator/creator for others.

The sculptor is also not left out in the scheme of being gainfully employed in design outfits, construction firms, automobile industry, private, semi-government and government establishments as well as being independent in term of employment. The painter like every other artists, can be a designer in several establishments - government, private and individual.

5. Conclusion

In concluding this discussion, it could be obviously stated that fine and applied art is an integral part of human existence as it cumulates to form all our activities and the products of these activities bring comfort to man through the utilitarian and the aesthetic values of art in all sphere of human endeavors.

6. Recommendations

I strong recommend that our youth should be provided education or training that will inculcate in them the appropriate skills, ability and competence both mental and physical such as in the area of fine and applied art that will enable them function efficiently and effectively in the society by being independent, self-sufficient and self-reliant in term of employment. And as well serve as employer of labor. Only by this, the truancy, idleness and insecurity in the system 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 Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi 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, Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi which he headed for two years and has been a lecturer for Twenty Two 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.