

URGENT ATTENTION FOR SUSTAINABLE REFORMS IN FINE AND APPLIED ARTS EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

All over the world we are experiencing changes in every aspect of life. In Nigeria, there had been changes in all aspects of economy of which education is inclusive. Nigeria, in order to move with the rate of changes, had adopted various means in education sector in the new scheme of events. Fine and Applied Arts education which is one of the courses of study in Vocational and Technical Education should not be left out. There is need for sustainable reforms in this field of study that will meet the needs of this present age. This paper therefore looked at sustainable reforms in Fine and Applied Arts Education. Simple meaning, branches and importance of arts were not left out. Brief history of art education in Nigeria and current problems facing it were dealt with. Suggestions/recommendations were made on how there could be sustainable reforms in Fine and Applied Arts Education in Nigeria.

Introduction

The 19th, 20th and 21st centuries in Nigeria have brought many changes in all sectors of economy. Changes still continue as we are in the age of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Fine and Applied Arts which is an aspect of education sector also had witnessed some changes. Art is Life, it is not static, it changes as custom, fashion and development change. In the light of this, to blend with the trends in development that is taking place in Nigeria, it is therefore expedient that there should be sustainable reforms in Fine and Applied Arts Education.

Education remains an effective means of development of any nation. Many changes, improvement and development had come to this country through education which in turn brought about social

changes in the society at large. Attempts had been made by the government of this nation in 1969 curriculum conference. This one way or the other had brought some changes, yet it did not totally meet the needs of the society. Globally, education is the foundation of development. Art is a universal language that is needed in education and society. It is therefore expedient that there should be sustainable reforms in teacher education in Nigeria.

Art is the core of other subjects. It focuses itself as the core of life (George 1979). One may know it or not, it surrounds life by visible and invisible means. Other subjects make use of art in explaining some concepts such as diagrams, illustrations, lines, figures, shapes of which all are concepts of art. There is no discipline that does not feature in.

Art reveals the way of life of a particular community and their cultural trait. Art expresses or reveals the social, economic and political backgrounds of a society. (Uzoagba 2000). For example, the Yoruba arts in early 20th century inform us about the people's way of life. And today, the 21st century art of the same Yoruba is tailored to the cultural trait of the present society.

Art enhances technological development: science observes and records events in the world and this helps it to explain them in logical manner; with this, art makes use of scientific knowledge to all. For example, ceramics in an attempt to design mug, plate, or other wares needs to apply the knowledge of science; the ceramist has to understand the chemical properties of clay if what he would design for production will be useful to the community. With this, art promotes technological developments. Other aspects of art such as photography, digital printing, textile design need technological/scientific application for its proper operation.

Through art education, some qualities are developed such as power of pure seeing, this is the ability to observe critically. Power of imagination is still another quality developed through art. Everything made by man is born from the imagination. Creativity power in artist makes him to express it in highest form. This is also similar to power to research for new things (Uzoagba, 2000).

Meaning and Branches of Art

Many people in the society did not know what art is. All that they mistakenly conceived to be art is just drawing and painting picture

(Uzoagba, 2002). There is need to give concise meaning of art so that the mistakenly conceived idea about art can be erased.

Art is seen as a way to develop skills in the use of art materials through experimentation, manipulation and practice. It is therefore the expression of human ideas, feelings imaginations/thoughts in three dimensional and two dimensional forms. There are two branches of art; they are visual arts and non-visual arts.

The concern of this paper is visual arts which have many branches. Visual arts are sub-divided into two namely: Fine Arts and Applied/ Industrial arts. Fine arts have to do with appealing to man's sense of beauty and emotion. This branch of art is painting, sculpture, and drawing. The artists who produced them have nobody to satisfy other than themselves; in others words, they do not work under the instruction of any client to please them. Industrial/Applied arts are concerned with marking objects to serve a particular purpose, i.e. to make it have some commercial values. The artists in this category work to please the client to satisfy their desire. Such fields of applied arts are Graphics, Textile, Ceramics, Photography, e.t.c. It is an indisputable fact that each of these could be put in a realm of high level source of income.

Importance of Fine and Applied Arts Education in the Society

Fine and applied arts are important at home, in schools, in religion, in industry, politics and in politics and in the society at large.

Art at Home: Maximum satisfaction is the primary concern of artists while designing most of the materials needed at home. A number of art works give aesthetic value to our home such as carpet, rug, photography, cooking utensils, ceramic ware and they are much appreciated.

Art and Education: There is no level of education in which art is not useful. There are illustrations on the pages of most books being used in primary, secondary and even tertiary institutions. Illustrations of visuals are needed to convey the message to the learner. Some concepts cannot be understood except with visual illustration which is the work of art.

Arts in the Society: Various information has to be and had been passed across to the public through the use of visuals. Posters, billboards, road signs, e.t.c. are illustrations which influence people in the society.

Art and Religion: Religion and art cannot be separated. Religion is the way of life and art is life. It has influence in understanding the concept of man's dealing with God. We are able to understand the culture of our past generations through art.

Art in Industry: Various manufacturers and companies use graphic illustration to educate the public about their products. Also the means of advertisement through billboard, posters or other forms make the dissemination of information to the desired populace.

Art in Politics: The easiest means of passing the message to the entire population is through the works of art. The use of posters, handbills and billboards played much role in this area.

Brief History of Fine and Applied Arts Education in Nigeria

Western education came into Nigeria with intent to train interpreters and messengers. At first, art was not included in the school curriculum for several decades (Olaosebikan, 1982). Aina Onabolu was a self trained artist. He went to England to study Art, on his return to Nigeria he taught as an Art teacher in some secondary schools. His effort made the government to recruit expatriate teachers of Fine Arts such as Kenneth Murray, H. E. Duckworth, J. D. Clarke and Dennis Duerdan to teach Art in some schools in Nigeria (Ogumor, 1993). Akinola Lasekan also practised art on his own after he left school. He was known by Nigerians for his paintings and newspaper cartoons during his time. He was one of the artists who helped to establish contemporary art in Nigeria. By and by in 1950's there was establishment of Art and Printing Department in the Technical Institute, Yaba which is now Yaba College of Technology. There was also establishment of Fine Arts Department at the University of Ibadan which was later moved to Ahmadu Bello University Zaria in 1955 (Olaosebikan, 1982). When the set of young men and women were turned out, this brought about the history of Art education in Nigeria. From them many institutions such as University of Nigeria Nsukka established Fine Arts Department in

1961 (Adepegba, 1995) and other Polytechnics and Colleges of Education established Fine and Applied Arts Department. This resulted into more artists being trained and shaped into what we now have in Fine and Applied Arts Education in the country.

Problems Facing Fine and Applied Arts Education in Nigeria

Fine and Applied Arts education is facing many problems of which if care is not taken the in-coming generations may one way or the other lose sight of what the pioneers of art education in this country had laid down their lives for.

Government attitude: It took a lot of effort by Aina Onabolu to convince the government of then to include art in the school curriculum. Now, government in one way or the other is gradually phasing out Visual Art out of the school in the sense that it is only in Junior Secondary Schools that art teachers are available; for students who have interest in Visual Art when they get to Senior Secondary schools they do not continue in it due to shortage of trained teachers in Visual Art. This is making the intake of Fine and Applied Arts students into higher institution of learning dwindling every year (Lawal – Ojibara, 1997). One can look at the various marking centres of WAEC and NECO throughout Oyo State; it is only in Oyo and Ibadan that Visual Art papers are being marked compared to other subjects in Vocational and Technical Education such as Agriculture, Accounting, e.t.c. where large numbers of students do put in at the ordinary level.

Also, the preference of government or science and technology got into the head makes the society to discourage its young ones who may want study Arts. (Otunaiya, 2006). The discouragement may come in form of advice withdrawal of financial support to those students so as to frustrate them out of the way to force them to their own will (i.e. the will of the parents). There are examples of students who had flair for Fine and Applied Arts at the Colleges of Education level; student prefer to come to Fine and Applied Arts through Pre-NCE programme. Atimes, at the end of the session the parent may discourage the students to continue the programme because they do not see any substance in studying Fine and Applied Arts as a discipline.

Fine and Applied Art Education is still plagued with inadequate materials in some schools offering the subject. (George Talabi, 1979). There might not be any studio for it, but if it is one of the science

subjects the government will build laboratory for it. Where there is a studio, materials like donkey chair, and others might not be available. Art is facing the problem of inadequate curriculum planning and development/content, as it relates to the curriculum.

Sustainable Reforms in Fine and Applied Arts Education

Having discussed the problems facing Fine and Applied Art, the following suggestions/recommendations are made to bring sustainable reforms. This depends on an extensive re-orientation of the society, i.e. the Nigerian populace with respect to the improper values attached to Fine and Applied Arts. As government places premium on science and technology and everybody is crazy about it, so should government do to Fine and Applied Arts education. That the course is not just drawing and paintings alone, a lot of things are embedded in it, so that its values can be better appreciated.

As emphasis is placed on Mathematics, English Language plus Basic Science in Pre-primary, Primary schools, Arts/Visual Arts also should be supported. There should be teaching of it at both Junior and Senior Secondary Schools, mostly at senior secondary so as to raise the interest of students who want to take it as a course of study in tertiary institution. The private sectors and the Educational Tax Fund should consider Fine and Applied Arts Education as priority area for funding in terms of facilities and infrastructure.

Fine and Applied Arts course at university level is in the faculty of environmental sciences. Fine Art should be studied along with science subjects at senior secondary schools. This is because all science related courses including Medicine and Engineering cannot but do with Fine Art. Medicine, Engineering, Technology, Sciences are vertically related to Fine and Applied Arts as long as these disciplines are in need of illustrations which only Fine and Applied Arts could offer.

At the university level, a Fine Arts course should be made compulsory at 100 level for all students in every faculty, this will help them in their further course of study as it is being done at Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH, FES 1996 – 1998). Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, Monotechnics and other tertiary institutions should make it compulsory for all students to take a course in Fine Arts as there will not be any student who will not take courses in General Studies Department of any tertiary institutions. If the courses taken in

General Studies are relevant either now or in the future, there is no doubt that Art which is useful in everyday life will be of importance in the future one way or the other.

Curriculum of Fine and Applied Arts should be reviewed; this is because we are living in the age of Information and Communication Technology. More computer-related courses that can be blended with artistic skills should be included in the curriculum. This will prepare the graduate of Fine and Applied Arts Education to meet the need of the society.

Conclusion

Everybody either consciously or unconsciously has something to do with art and enjoy it. It is therefore expedient for the educational stakeholders at different levels of government to re-orientate the society on the values of art and its roles in national development. Curriculum of Art Education should be reviewed in order to meet the demand of this present age Information and Communication Technology (ICT). All these will go a long way to achieve sustainable reforms in Art Education.

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