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# CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS FOR INNOVATION IN FINE AND APPLIED ARTS EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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By

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## **Abstract**

*This work noted the value of Fine and Applied Arts to the development of any nation. The different perspective of Fine and Applied Arts were analyzed while the various challenges that have played the development and the teaching of Fine and Applied Arts in the schools were discussed. Conclusion were made, that the stakeholders in the Fine and Applied Arts Education sector are called upon to give necessary support for the growth and development of the course in the school system. Recommendations for remediation were also given.*

Fine and Applied Arts education is supposed to be a very important aspect of the school curriculum that should be given much attention. Though Fine and Applied Arts is taught in the schools, it is not given priority attention as is done to the science. Fine and Applied Arts education if well developed in our schools has the potentials of producing Nigerians who are skilled and well equipped to contribute to the economic development of the country. Graduates of Fine and Applied Arts are not only will be self employed but will be employers of labour, thus reducing the problem of unemployment in the country.

Against this background, this paper tries to examine the challenges facing Fine and Applied arts in the Nigerian educational system and to prepare possible solutions.

## **Conceptual Background**

Uzoagba (2000) sees all-round knowledge of art in three perspectives, such as:

1. The psycho-philosophical or aesthetical perspective, which concerns the philosophy, psychology and the sociology of arts. This involves instruction in the perception, use, employment, criticism and evaluation of art works.
2. The morphological or practical perspective which involves Creation, Design manufacture, Execution and Art performance .According to him, this involve the practical techniques of production and performance.
3. The Historical perspective, here he observed that art is developed in chronological order which deals with detailed study of art from period to period.

### **Academic Excellence**

Art as a means of self expression is a means whereby ideas, thoughts and feelings are expressed in a skillful way. Avae (1990), sees arts as the highest form of human expression which deals with the sense of visual aspect of art.

Visual art include Fine and Applied Arts according to Uzeagba (2009) is art of expressing, producing, interpreting and communicating nature as perceived and felt through drawing, painting, textiles, sculpture, ceramics and graphics.

The concept of Fine and Applied Arts is all about creativity, which can be found in anybody.

Creativity according to Lowenfield and Britain (1975), is an instinct, which all people posses, an instinct with which we primarily solve and express life's problems. This instinct need to be developed

skillful to adhere its potential values and expected goals. For the goals to be achieved there should be serious practical work in Fine and Applied Arts at all the levels of education.

Since post independence, series of new policies and programmes on Fine and Applied Arts have been introduced into the Nigerian Education system and this is very commendable. It is however worrying to note that most of the schools do not teach the subject at all, and the few that attempt to teach it, the facilities are not provided and the time available for teaching the subject in the school time table is too short compared to the actual time required for a practical lesson. It is also discovered that the schools that do not teach the subject do not have Fine and Applied Arts teachers.

Standfield (1956), Students should experiment with materials and tools so as to explore their possibility. He corroborated with above observation by noting that the quality of Fine and Applied Arts instruction at both primary and secondary schools levels in the country is poor and does not indicate any progress. His observations are based on reasons of lack of student's interest in the course, lack of sufficient and qualified teachers, societal apathy, poor infrastructures, insufficient tools and materials and poor funding.

Skill acquisition and knowledge in Fine and Applied Arts does not only help to solve the problem of unemployment but also helps to produce instructional materials for teaching students in other school disciplines. As a matter of fact, Fine and Applied Arts makes important contribution in every school subject or course. In actual fact, the instinct of Fine and Applied Arts in every aspect of man's activities in life: production, decoration, environmental care, cultural activities, festival, man's carriage etc. Works of Art are of great value to man's life to the extent that if they are taken away from him life will be meaningless. Fine and Applied Arts contributes immensely in cultural and tourist development of all nation of the world. This explains why the advanced countries of the world vote enough funds to Fine and Applied Arts Department in countries and the school system. It is suggested that Nigeria should borrow a leaf from such countries by voting enough money for Fine and Applied Arts education, engage in mass production of Fine and Applied Arts teachers and making the teaching of Fine and Applied Arts compulsory in the schools.

### **Challenges**

The problem facing Fine and Applied Arts education has earlier been mentioned based on standfield's observation 1956

These problems have been there and are still there begging for proper solution.

Some of these problems include:-

#### **Lack of Interest**

Lack of interest can be seen in three perspectives: societal apathy, misconception and lack of good guidance.

In the area of societal apathy, it is only few out of thousands of people in the society that show interest in art works. Most parents students and the society at large do not value art works in Nigeria. Things we wear, use at homes streets, churches, markets and offices are products of Fine and Applied Arts, yet these works are not valued and appreciated by people who used them. This explains why enrolment into for Fine and Applied Arts study in schools is very low.

In the area of misconception, most people in the society believe that Fine and Applied Arts is all about drawing and painting. Because of this misconception, some parents feel that they cannot spent their money on training their children in schools to become<sup>3</sup> artists. Rather they like their children to become lawyers, Doctors, Engineers etc just because these professions are well respected in the society.

Misconceptions have lead parents to push their children who have interest in studying Fine and Applied Arts to study other courses. Any attempt to refuse their parents decision always attracts abandonment to the children.

Misconception on the part of students. Most students expressed the same opinion that Fine and Applied Arts is meant for those who know how to draw and paint. Some believes that it is meant for those who art is inborn in them, that anyone who does not know how to draw cannot study art. Some also said that artists are not recognized in the society and so cannot waste their time studying such course in University or any higher institution. That they prefer to study other courses that will pay them and make them recognized in the society.

Some student also believes that Fine and Applied Arts is money consuming, therefore is meant for those who are buoyant enough to afford for the cost of art materials.

Lack of good guidance is another problem that scares students away from the study of Fine and Applied Arts. In this case, some students will have interest but do not have confidence on themselves and have no one to direct them. As a result, the interest will just disappear. Some students also loose interest in the study of Fine and Applied Arts due to influence of their friends who do not like the subject.

### **Lack of Sufficient and Qualified Teachers**

This is a common problem in Fine and Applied Arts Education at all the levels of education in Nigeria. At primary and secondary levels, Fine and Applied Arts teachers are hardly available. As a result of this, some students that would have studied the subject miss it.

Art is there in the school curriculum, yet the heads of such schools are not interested to know weather the subject is being taught or not. In one school, you may find only one Fine and Applied teacher to teach the subject across all the classes.

In higher Institutions and Universities, there are also insufficient numbers of Fine and Applied Arts teachers. This posse a lot of challenges to students as well as lecturers. For lecturers, they carry a lot of work over load. Some will even be made to teach courses they did not specialize in. Students do not benefit much on this kind of situation.

Another problem is lack of qualified teachers. This is serious because it affects student's ability to develop interest in the studying of the subject.

### **Indiscipline Among Teachers**

Some Fine and Applied Arts teachers exhibit various acts of indiscipline which manifest in the following ways:

1. Truancy, Fine and Applied Arts teachers dodge to teach the students but examination must be taken.
  2. They extort money from students for personal use.
  3. Instead of teaching students major practical skills they refer them to their personal Studio where they will pay some money before getting the skills.
  4. Students who do not buy art materials from such teachers are made to fail their examinations.
  5. Some engage in other private business outside the school job and this they give more attention to that than the students.
  6. Some teachers engage in immoral relationship with the students.
- These acts of indiscipline demonizes the students and dampen their interest in the subject.

### **Poor Infrastructure and Insufficient tools and Materials**

Normal studios are hardly provided in the schools for practical. What we see allocated as Fine and Applied Arts classes and studios are blocks of rooms with small space. Tables and other facilities are hardly available. ~~Challenges and Prospects For Innovation~~ ~~are not provided. Most schools administrators complain that Fine and Applied Art materials are very expensive and not affordable with the Mega allocation they are given. The high cost of Fine and Applied tools and materials also scare students away from the course. Fine and Applied Arts teacher are also frustrated by the non availability of materials for their job.~~

### **Poor Funding**

The money allocated to Fine and Applied Arts education in the country is very little. This state of affairs has always caused the poor provision of facilities for Fine and Applied Arts teaching in schools. As a result, Fine and Applied Arts teachers are not encouraged to carry out explorations and exhibition which helps them develop new ideas that the students can learn. Some higher Institutions and Universities also do not have Fine and Applied Arts Department. This is because of funds to establish the department and run the courses required. These problems facing Fine and Applied Arts in the school system as discussed in this paper pose a great challenge to Fine and Applied Arts development in the country. Something must be done and done urgently to reverse the trend.

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### **Conclusion**

It does not need any emphasis to state that Fine and Applied Arts Education has the potentials to contribute to socio-economic development of the nation. It worrying that the attention the course needs is not given to it. A call is being made to all stakeholders in Fine and Applied Arts in Nigeria to demonstrate positive attitude towards the course and provide necessary support for its growth and development.

### **Recommendations**

Fine and Applied Arts education helps to equip individuals with appropriate skills and competences to enable the individuals live and contribute effectively in the development of the society. In order to achieve this in our educational system the following recommendations are put forward:

1. There is need for ministry of education in collaboration with association of Fine and Applied Arts Teacher to mount regular conferences and workshops for Fine and Applied Arts teachers in the country to improve their knowledge and skills so that they can teach students better.
2. Association of Fine and Applied Arts Teachers should endeavour to popularize the learning of Fine and Applied Art using the various media available in the country including jingles. It is hoped that this will correct the misconceptions the public have about the study of Fine and Applied Arts.
3. Due to great contribution of Fine and Applied Arts to the socio-economic development in the country, Government should make the study of Fine and Applied Arts compulsory at least at the primary and secondary school levels.
4. Excursions in Fine and Applied Arts should be taken seriously by the schools. This helps students to ~~Academic Excellence~~ ~~have face to face encounter with facilities and the acquired tremendous knowledge and skills.~~
5. Government should undertake mass training of Fine and Applied Arts teachers by approving some incentives to students of Fine and Applied Arts in the country.
6. Sufficient and qualified art teachers should be employed at all levels of Nigerian schools. This will help to reduce work loads to teachers and ensure concentration in their various areas of specialization. It will provide sound knowledge into the field and avoid production of half-based students.
7. Fine and Applied Arts teachers should be checked and brought to book for any dictated act of indiscipline in the discharge of their duties.
8. Government should try and encourage art students as well as their teachers by equipping Fine and Applied Arts department with materials and tools needed for their work. This will make teaching and learning process easy.

9. Fine and Applied Art teacher should also be motivated by the government in the area of carrying out exploration for new knowledge. Government should provide specific amount of money for exploration and exhibition as this will encourage the teachers to explore more and come up with new ideas that will promote new knowledge that will fit in with changes in the environment and society.
10. Classrooms and teaching environment should be made conducive for teachers and students. Departmental library, computer and fashion sections should be provided in any Fine and Applied Art department. Sizable classes and studio rooms, fans and Air conditions should be provided where necessary. Lights and water should also be provided.
11. School Administrators should support Fine and Applied Arts department very well by releasing to them every fund approved for them.

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