

ART EDUCATION: CHALLENGES OF THE 21st CENTURY

Dr. M.P. Mamza

Abstract

The recommendations for the first ever National Curriculum Conference of 1969, culminated in the National Policy of Education (NPE) first enunciated in 1977 and revised 1981, 1998 and 2004. The challenges of the 21st century have raised new questions and issues which have continued to attract the policy makers, curriculum researchers, curriculum developers and implementers. The global trends in education and how globalization can bring about quality education through Internet operation and information explosion are some of these challenges. It is against this backdrop that this paper highlights the state of Art Education in our educational system. The paper also suggests strategies like the issue of relevance, revision and adaptation, teacher preparation, integration of new art materials among others in response to the challenges of the 21st century. Recommendations are proffered for such challenges.

Introduction

The basic philosophy of Nigerian Education emphasizes integrating the individual into a sound and effective citizen and providing equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the primary through secondary to tertiary level. The recommendations from the first ever National Conference of 1969 evolved new national education goals. The context of education as well as the strategies for implementation were subjected to close and careful examination in the effort to make them suitable for the Nigerian society. The discussion at the conference also culminated in the production of National Policy on Education (NPE) first published in 1977 and revised 1981, 1998 and 2004.

In line with the requirements of the National Policy on Education, all school curricula were redesigned to reflect the new thinking at that time. Since curriculum is a dynamic concept which depicts an intention; a plan, a prescription or idea about what one would like to see happen in the school; it is naturally open to criticism, evaluation, re-evaluation, adoption and innovation. School curriculum is due for revision for the 21st century.

The National Policy on Education (2004), provides the offering of art education at all levels of our system (6-3-3-4). Objectives of the curriculum are also stated at each level of education. The recent technological advancement which started at the close of the 20th century has turned the world into a global village in which information and communication technologies have transformed former practices in our curriculum, which needs a complete reorganization and change. Thus, in a world that has changed so rapidly and drastically, no curriculum is good enough except one that captures the global mood and trends.

This paper therefore, highlights the objectives and the contents of Art Education, the state of art education, and then suggests some strategies for the challenges of the 21st century.

Contents and Objectives of Art Studies

Art Education as defined by the National Policy on Education (2004), is that aspect of training of an individual at various levels of education to discriminate in his/her verbal, visual perception, sensation and expression. It is the training of potential or actual professional artists or art educator in all or one area of art discipline. In this article, it is used to mean education in art at whatever level and in whatever institution (from primary to university). It also, refers to the education of the individual in the creative activities.

At each level of our educational system (the 6-3-3-4), art education curriculum offering has been spelt out in the National Policy on Education. At the primary school level, curriculum offering includes cultural arts. At the secondary school education, it is given in two stages, junior and senior. The junior art education is creative arts, music and local craft as core subjects. The senior art education is elective subject and the curriculum offering is fine arts. At higher education, that is colleges of education and universities, the courses differ according to the objectives of the institutions.

Therefore, the offering could be in Fine Arts (painting, sculpture, and drawing), Applied Arts (Graphics, Ceramics, Textile, and Glass technology) and Performing arts (drama, dance and music).

The Arts, as the sciences have developed into a number of specialized fields of practice and

knowledge. Arts in a narrow sense comprise; Fine Arts, Applied Arts, Performing Arts as enumerated above. Conventionally, the interdisciplinary fields of Art Education and Art history are taught in the context of the above. On the basis of our understanding of art education, the above described programme and the objectives of art studies are seen (according to the National Policy on Education) as:

1. To foster creativity in artistic practice as well as in thinking by exposure to all aspects of the arts;
2. To develop a critical understanding of traditional and contemporary art and to induce sensitivity and responsibility for the cultural heritage;
3. To transmit understanding and operation of art and design techniques as well as their application and to develop intellectual and academic capacities for critical judgment and independent academic work; and
4. To induce the students to develop a sense for creative and responsible application; thus to make meaningful contributions to the cultural development of the society. (NPE, 2004).

The students will be prepared for a wide range of professional career in Art field. Through art education, thought, feelings and perceptions are organized into expression (visual or verbal) that communicate these thoughts to someone else. Thus, we have primary, secondary and tertiary art education. Each of these levels of art education has its different methods of approach and objectives.

The State of Art Education in Schools Today

Many artists and art educators (Akolo 1990, Wangboje 1995, Mbahi 2000, Oguibe 2004), feel that lack of materials, qualified art teachers, redundancies in our curriculum are problems facing the effective teaching and learning of art education in our schools today. This also affects the implementation and innovation in art.

Inadequate facilities for teaching and learning are some of the serious issues facing art education. The quality diminishes when the facilities for teaching and learning are inadequate. "The condition under which art education is taught in most of the Nigerian institutions is pathetic according to Akolo (1990), and Wangboje (1995). Most institutions teaching the subject lacks the studio, lecture room and if there is any for the artists to work with. All these are problems of teaching and learning art education.

There are many art institutions today offering art courses from primary to university with unqualified art teachers. Mbahi (2001), notes that, several secondary schools in the country are lacking qualified art teachers to teach the subject. This is a serious factor affecting quality teaching in our schools. Unqualified art teacher cannot teach art nor supervise as expected.

Redundancy in our curriculum and lack of creativity are serious dangers to the profession of art. Oguibe (2004), stated that the issue of redundancies in our curriculum has resulted in the overall inability to prepare our students and young artists for survival in an increasingly globalize world. Thus, the question of relevance and progress in our curricula is a pertinent one when curricula are due to be revised.

Poor funding and poor remuneration of teachers is another problem facing art education. Funding of art education has been a serious issue affecting quality teaching of art in our schools (Wangboje 1995). According to Ali (1998), teachers' entitlement is always handled in most shoddy, sloppy and shabby manner and promotions are always haphazardly done.

Akolo (1990), observed that lack of research and innovation in our schools in art education is a problem. Even when research is done, it ends up there in the institutions and may not reach where it intends to be. Thus, ideas and information are not circulated.

The Issue of Relevance of Art Curriculum in the 21st Century

The question of relevance of our curriculum is another issue to be considered in this 21st century. This term refers to the sensitivity of the values, beliefs, norms, traditions, aesthetics, sciences and technology, art, religion and customs of the people. Here, art curriculum must be sensitive to the totality of the way of life of the society for which it was designed. Thus, the contents of art curricula of both the formal and non-formal art education are best evaluated against the background of their relevance to the culture and environment of the people.

Adeniyi (1999), affirms that due to the global trend in education, there are emerging needs and mounting desire to acquire new knowledge, skills and competences in such areas as computer science and application, banking and finance, information technology, art and technology, engineering,

medicine among others. These needs and desires must be reflected in our curriculum. Oguibe (2004), notes that art education curriculum today is facing serious challenges as a result of global change. He enumerated these challenges to include redundancies in our curriculum; a growing lack of creativity in our programming; overall inability to prepare our students and young artists for Survival in an increasingly globalize world; as well as administrative and policy misadventures that pose serious dangers to the profession.

The needs of any nation in the present age of scientific and technological advancement which is further promoted by the computer technology and the information super highway are best determined through appropriate and relevant art curricula, research, teaching and dissemination of existing and new information in art. The question that immediately follows is how do we fashion an art education programme for the 21st century that reflects the needs of our society? What are the areas we must revise and discard in the age of computer information technology? How and where do we look for the art materials for curriculum demand? These are few among other challenging questions that need to be answered.

Suggested Strategies for Ensuring Quality Art Education in the 21st Century

Quality in education, generally, is a multi-dimensional concept which should embrace all functions and activities; teaching and academic programme, research and scholarship, staffing, student, building, facilities, equipment, services to the community and academic environment (UNESCO 1998). Since art education is offered at all levels of our education system (6-3-3-4), quality is the uppermost in art education given the growing importance of trans-border education provision in the wake of globalization. These strategies include:

1. Curriculum Revisions and Adaptation

The school curricula were due for revision in 1992 following the outcome of National Schools Curriculum Review Conference of 1991. A proposal was submitted through the Joint Consultative Committee (JCCE) to the National Council on Education (NCE) which approved it and advised the Federal Ministry of Education to provide fund for the exercise. Unfortunately, this was not done. However, with the intervention of Education Trust Fund (ETF), curriculum revision commenced in 2001 (Maduewesi, 2005).

There is one issue that frequently crops up these days. Artists, art educators and scholars in Art (Oguibe 2004, Mbahi 2001), believe that art education curricula are in dire need for change in terms of content and that certain important global and national issues should be incorporated into the school curriculum. However, this has serious implications for curriculum planners, textbook writers and publishers.

2. Teacher Preparation

The quantity and quality of teachers produced in Nigeria over the years fell far short of national expectations and needs as now inadequate teacher preparation in our educational system. According to Isyaku (1991), the number of the Colleges of Education in the country and their intakes are inadequate to provide the number of teachers required in the schools. Mbahi (2001), also affirms that there is the dire need of qualified art teachers to teach art in most of our schools.

The retraining of art teachers to take these additional responsibilities of new knowledge and skills for the 21st century is important. It is time to start making new plans, mapping out new ideas and strategies for training and retraining art teachers and other personnel to be able to take up the new challenges.

3. Provision of Facilities

The issue of adequate facilities in the teaching of art education cannot be over-emphasized. Teaching with available materials and good facilities help to motivate the students and enhance quality. There is a limit to improvisation. Teaching with the real materials and handling the materials gives the learner the clear picture of what is taught. Akolo (1990), observed that, most of our schools do not have facilities for the teaching of Art Education. He further stated that, facilities perform the functions, like helping to speed up the learning process and make it more pleasant for the students. It also helps by making the students participate in their own learning.

4. Proper Funding

It is clear that the government cannot provide all the needed funds for all educational needs. But with the little that government can afford Art Departments teaching Art can provide more through Parent

Teachers Association (PTA) at the secondary school level. At the Colleges of Education level, staff of the department can generate fund through art exhibition, sales of art works and so on. It is also the same with Universities. Akolo (1990), observed that lack of proper funding by the government affects the research and innovation in Art Education. With adequate funding, artists or researchers can come up with new ideas and innovations.

Recommendations

Having examined the state of Art Education in our schools and the challenges of the 21st century, the following recommendations are made:

1. The government should set up an "Art Academy" that will shoulder all art affairs and give recommendations to the government on how to handle all matters of art in the country.
2. Proper funding. Adequate funding by the government is very important for the teaching of Art Education in all the institutions in the country.
3. Provision of facilities and instructional materials by government for the teaching of Art Education is very important at all levels of education.
4. Curriculum Revision and Supervision by the appropriate agencies responsible for the promotion of Art Education should be funded by the government.
5. Accreditation; the system of accreditation of academic programmes in higher institutions should be maintained and encouraged, especially at the Universities in order to maintain standards.

Conclusion

This paper highlights and discussed Art Education in the light of the challenges of the 21st century. Art Education Curriculum needs to be relevant in this age of computer and information technology, through; curriculum review, adaptation, teacher preparation, provision of facilities, proper funding, research and innovation. All these put in place will make for a quality Art Education in the 21st century Nigeria. If the recommendations given above are implemented in Nigeria they will improve and in turn move the nation forward.

References

- Adeniyi, E.O. (1999). The State of the art in curriculum planning and implementation in Nigeria. working paper. In E.O.A Adeniyi (Ed.), *National Feedback Conference of School Curriculum*. Abuja, report of NERDC pp. 67 - 76.
- Akolo, J.B. (1990). *National Policy on Education and Creative Arts*. SNA and 25 Edited by Dele Jegede, Lagos, Nigeria.
- Ali, A (1998). My reflections on Nigeria education monographic series No. 8 institute of Education UNN.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (1998). *National Policy on Education*, Abuja, NERDC Press Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). *National Policy on Education*, Abuja, Government Press.
- Isyaku, K.(1991). Schools curriculum in Nigeria: Issues in teacher preparation, in national school Curriculum Review Conference Proceedings (FME) Lagos. Macmillan Nigerian Publisher's Ltd pp.324-328
- Maduewesi, E. J (2005). *Benchmarks and Global Trends in Education*: Published by Dasylya influence enterprises Benin City, pp. 27-36
- Mbahi, A. A. (2001). *Art Teacher*, Published by I Cingswell Publishers Ltd Maiduguri pp. 58-59.
- Oguibe, O. (2004). Re-interrogating the visual arts curriculum in Nigeria, keynote to the conference by Olu Oguibe, Delta State University, July 23 UNESCO (1998). *The stale of Education in Nigeria*, UNESCO, Lagos Office
- Wangboje, I. S.(1995). *Fourty Years of Formal Art Education in Nigeria*. The arts, artists and society in Nigeria. A paper presented at London University, conference organized by African Art and culture Association, May 24 - 27

