

ART TEACHER AND PROFESSIONALISM: CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

Across much of the developing nations (Nigeria inclusive) there is a renewed emphasis on the quality of teachers and teacher education because teachers remain the pillars of the system. 21st century does indeed present an amalgam of challenges to educational system, like the issue of link between education and globalization, proliferation of information and communication technology, qualitative and quantitative expansion among others are the main areas in need of attention for improvement of educational system. This article examines the art teacher and professionalism in the 21st century, qualities of art teacher and the problematic issues of status and training. In Nigeria anxieties in education are stirred by the combined efforts of population explosion in classrooms at all levels, absence of qualitative and quantitative teachers to cope with this explosion, deteriorating physical facilities and continued inadequacy in funding among others. Recommendation was proffered for possible solutions.

Introduction

The National policy on Education (2004:8) states that no education system may rise above the quality of its teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development. Across much of the developed and developing nations (Nigeria inclusive) there is a renewed emphasis on the quality of teachers and teacher education. Indeed, no nation builds a strong and effective educational system without the continuous appraisal and subsequent improvement of its teachers training programmes, since teachers remain the pillars of the system.

In Nigeria, anxieties in education are stirred by the combined efforts of population explosion in classrooms at all levels, the absence of qualitative and quantitative teachers to cope with this explosion, the deteriorating facilities, continued inadequacy in funding among others. The qualitative expansion has not logically followed qualitative growth in our educational system. The 21st century does indeed presents an amalgam of challenges to educational system, especially the link between education and globalization and the proliferation of information and communication technologies.

Education is impossible without teachers. We cannot have schools without teachers. Schools can be built in a few months but it takes years to train a teacher. So any government that wants to develop its schools has to look a long way ahead to provide teachers for them. They cannot be produced unless primary and secondary schools send students to the training colleges and universities. And Colleges of Education must also have highly educated teachers to prepare their students for the schools. This article, therefore, attempts to examine art teacher and professionalism in the 21st century, especially the training of prospective professional art teachers; the issue of status; and quality, among others, in the 21st century.

Concept of Professionalism

Although dictionaries do not give meaning to words, they describe usage, Webster (McKKeohmie 1980) describe professionalism as professional quality or status. Professional is seen as; engagement, in or worthy of the high standard of a profession; and as a person who makes some activity not usually followed for gain, such as a sport, the source of livelihood. Profession is described as: a vocation or occupation requiring advanced training in some liberal art or science and usually involving mental rather than manual work as teaching, engineering, among others. Also Encyclopedia World (Hanks and Peter 1980) describes professional as: following an occupation as a means of livelihood or for gain.

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(20th Century Dictionary), describes professionalism as the collective body persons engaged in or practicing a particular calling or vocation. It also explains that such a vocation require advanced training in some discipline such as Medicine, Engineering, Law, Fine and Applied Arts among others. A professional is therefore, one who is well trained or an expert in a vocation; while professionalism relates to the manner or spirit of a profession or to its practitioners.

Training and Supply of Art Teachers

At present there are three channels through which Art Teachers are trained in order to teach art. One is through the Colleges of Education, which with the senior secondary school certification examination (SSCE) last for three years and the graduate obtains the Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE). This qualifies an individual to teach art in pre-primary, primary and junior secondary schools (.ISS). The second is through two or three years Diploma in Fine Arts obtained from Polytechnics and Institute of Education and the third is through training of art teachers by art departments in our universities. According to Mbahi (2000), only few Nigerian Universities have art department, not to talk of Colleges of Education, College of Education (technical) and Polytechnics. Consequently, there are not enough teachers of art to serve in secondary schools. The few universities that have art departments do not have enough lecturers.

The turnover of art teachers is not only slow but the number is too small to cope with the manpower needs and the population explosion in secondary schools. According to Ajayi (1994), the issues related to these problems are: (a) lack of recognition of the importance of art by the policy makers (b) lack of art curriculum review, and lack of enough art schools and educators. We lack art teachers seriously and even the ones we have are sometimes not properly trained. What, then becomes of this subjects if it is ill-equipped and badly staffed? The ill-trained teachers are also ill-equipped and the classroom ill-provided.

Art teachers are not only readily available. Even when there is one, it is always difficult to keep one for many years. In some case because of lack of qualified art teachers, diploma and university graduates without teaching skills take up teaching appointment even at higher institutions. In such situation, the problem of understanding the learner and how to help him becomes acute. According to Mbahi (2000) the abolition of the Grade II Teachers Certificate Programme has led to acute shortage of qualified art teachers in primary and junior secondary schools. Lack of teachers have affected the status of art in the curriculum and the self concept of art teachers among their colleagues. The present low status of art has discouraged students from seeking training in the subject. This situation has raised other problems to its implementation at all levels of education.

At moments, it appears as the NCE programme cannot cope with the demand for art teachers at pre-primary, primary, and junior secondary schools. Mbahi (2000), identified the reasons as follows: (1) Fine and Applied Arts in NCE programme does not encourage large intake of students. The entry qualification for the NCE is always very difficult to achieve by secondary school studies in some parts of the country. Also, because of the nature of the course, there is restriction on the number of students admission in art class; (2) Not all those who graduate with qualifications of Fine and Applied Arts end up as classroom teachers. The nature of the course at NCE level enables students to become freelance artists or continue with higher education; and (3) there is no law which compels the NCE graduate to go to classroom after completing their study.

Art Teacher's Professional Qualities in the 21st Century

The quality of primary and secondary education in any society to a great extent, depends on the quality and quantity of teachers in the schools. If the extent to which the educational goals are realized depends largely on the quality of the teachers, then the task of producing teachers who will be effective at their jobs is crucial to teacher education.

Akolo (1990), states that a professional art teachers or the right kind of art teacher must be a well educated person, widely read, and competent in the oral and written usage of English. He should have a considerable studio experience Olorukooba (1990), also explains that in addition to the above, the right kind of art teacher must be 'thoroughly familiar with the processes of children's and adolescents psychological development, especially in relation to their creative growth; adding that such a teacher must have a deep understanding of art and of the art of teaching. A professional art

teacher, therefore, must have the essential qualities of a creative person which will enable him leave the familiar and known and attempt to venture into untried and unknown.

From the foregoing, it can be seen that professional teacher of the arts needs much intellectual, technical and pedagogical preparation. The right kind of art teacher therefore, for our schools especially the 6-3-3-4 system, should be fairly skilled in all the studio areas of fine and applied arts including some knowledge of the history of art. He should also have good knowledge of the principles and practice of education including some subjects outside the field like anthropology, musicology in the 21st century.

The Art teacher should have a considerable knowledge of a child, adolescent and adult psychology and keeps abreast with contemporary trends in art education. Uzoagba (1982), pointed out that the art teacher should have the following qualifications: (a) a fairly wide range of skill in the fine and applied arts; (b) knowledge of history and theory of arts; and a fairly wide general education so that he can present the subject not isolation. In short, he should be a well educated person outside his field as well as in it.

Although the professional preparation of the art teacher is adequate by the time he or she graduates from College of Education or University, it is by no means complete and should never be considered terminal. Art teachers should continue to prepare themselves professionally through graduate study, participation in professional organizations, in-service training and by reading current professional literature. They should be aware of the changes in the content of art course the evidence of new materials and techniques and the diversity of contemporary art of forms.

Professional Art Teacher and Challenges of the 21st Century

The challenges of 21st century is about quality standard, globalization, proliferation of information, and communication technology. It can thus be stated without hesitation that art teacher education and training face serious challenges in the 21st century if it is to contribute to the nation's aspirations. Again, the challenge of the patterns of teaching art at all levels in this age of information technology explosion is another issue. Are the training art departments or institutions prepared to meet this challenge?

As explained by Fatuyi (1990), the training of art teachers in the Colleges of Education, Polytechnics and Universities, should be two fold; namely 'Practical and Theory'. The practical concerns training in skills in all or one of the studio areas including history and theory of visual arts, for a prescribed period of time, and there after studies in the theory and practice of education and other relevant subjects outside the field. He further slates that the prospective teachers knowledge of the practical and theory should be balanced and in the ratio of fifty-fifty percent, adding that anything short of this will not yield goods results. It therefore follows that for Nigeria to have a virile and functional art teachers profession which will play significant role in the countries development, the members must be those who possesses the knowledge and expertise mentioned above.

Power (2000, Apologun, 2005 and Maduwesi, 2005) suggest, globalization presents multiple challenges to education in general and curriculum in particular. Within the Nigerian context, they said the main challenges are two fold; namely the outer and the inner reforms. They define the outer reform as structural re-organization, investment in more schools and workshop and studio or laboratory equipment. While the inner reform includes curriculum development and more especially teacher preparation they further state that unless there is something of value to teach and competent people perform the task, educational development will not take place in the context of globalization. This statement of fact is nowhere more than in visual arts where there exists a large number of inadequate and untrained art teachers to make the education and training of students meaningful.

Undoubtedly, one of the most influential factors in art teacher professional, training is the presence of economic restraint. This has in no small way been responsible for the none provision of infrastructural facilities and tools for art teaching in most of the art departments of college and universities. According to the Education Sector Analysis (ESA) information brochure (1998), there are strong indications that at secondary school level and other levels, shortage in structure, facilities, personal among others are common in our schools. Government is aware that in order to implement the teacher education scheme, adequate physical facilities and qualified staff will have to be provided. The challenge facing art teachers in these schools, therefore, is how to rationalize resources in order to meet this continuing financial restraint.

Recommendation

1. The philosophy of art education in Nigeria should be re-visited in which structure and content are in harmony with the type of society in our age of information technology. According to Apologun (2005) the inner reform with regard to curriculum changes must be seen as the nations perception and determination to expand its opportunities and to explore or abilities to cope with the dynamics of technological and industrial future.
2. Since the quality of the art teachers depended upon their training, the art departments of Nigerian universities should see themselves as being a pursuit of excellence. This suggests that the form of education should be given the art teacher to equip him for his professional calling.
3. It would be easy to overstress the importance of financial considerations in the development of art education in Nigeria. However, financial consideration will dominate many of the decisions which have to be made concerning the teaching of art in both the short and long terms.
4. There is hardly any field of endeavour that changes as fast as art and technology. Therefore, when the appropriate training programme, and a well functioning system of art teacher education and training are in place they must be received from time to time so that improvement may be made. In addition to this, opportunities for research and dissemination of knowledge should be created in order to keep art teacher abreast of time.

Conclusion

This article has examined the art teacher and professionalism and the challenges of 21st century more especially the training and the supply of art teachers at all levels of education. It is clear that the task before a professional art teachers in the field are enormous. As Power (2000, Apologun, 2005 and Maduewesi 2005) suggest, globalization presents multiple challenges to education in general and curriculum planning in particular more especially in the 21st century. Teachers remain the pillars of educational system of every nation.

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Art Teacher and Professionalism: Challenges of the 21st Century

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