

ART AS INTRINSIC IN THE TASK OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

GEORGEBEST U. C. ONYAYELA

Abstract

The concept and retrospective view of the nature of Fine art in juxtaposition with Fine and applied art is envisioned in this article cataloguing the definition of Art, Visual art, Fine art, Fine and Applied arts and other subsidiaries. Explaining from the point of view of Nigeria's National Philosophy of Education, how education in the Arts could be made relevant in the attainment of the National policy on Education with regards to serving as tool for bridging the gap of knowledge and engendering educational goals. It evaluated the status of art pondering on the question; what has kept the arts on the loose-edge of educational respectability? elucidating the involvement of various educational and governmental agencies from policy formulation to implementation suggesting measures of improving the policy implementation procedure. In this article, the importance of supervision as key to the effective implementation of policy is highlighted taking a cursory view of policy implementation of the teacher education programme and evaluated problems of supervision while proposing recommendations for enhancing arts education.

Preceding modern day art, Art has previously been the exclusive reserve of certain areas formally referred to as fine arts especially during the Middle Ages. In recent times, the subject 'Art' has been redefined and broadened to encompass aesthetics and applied arts according to the National Art Education Association in the National Visual Arts Standards. Visual arts are expression of forms and images with materials that can be seen and appreciated (Egonwa, 2011). They are explained as including the traditional fine arts like drawing, printmaking, ceramics, sculpture and painting.

Basically, Fine art is a subset of Art in a literary view of the divisions of learning. However, the general or layman's view is that Art involves mainly drawing or painting without realizing that it goes a very long way beyond that. Art is the use of imagination as a skill to create objects expressing ideas or feelings particularly in painting, drawing or sculpture especially when you study it (Hornby, 2010). Furthermore, Art is the highest form of human expression and a reflection of the society

that creates it as it has the ability to create an object in its finest form (Stevenson, 2010). Art however, is made up of Visual and non-visual form. According to the National Visual Arts Standards, visual art depicts all forms of expressions of images and forms creatively made from drawing, painting, and sculpture (modelling and carving) viewed basically as fine art and applied art. Non-visual/Liberal art constitutes all forms of literary writings like poems, novels, short-fiction stories among others. Applied art characterises the making of art works to perform useful functions rather than mere aesthetic appreciation. It is giving pieces of works of art functional ability to interact with the environment and users. They could be seen as art for use. This is the major difference between Fine art and applied art although both terms are often used interchangeably. Conceivably this paper examined the status of the arts, challenges it is faced with from policy formulation to implementation offering recommendation that can re-focus and consolidate on its objectives.

The Current Status of the Arts in Nigeria

The possible significance of art in education of the Nigerian youth is largely unrecognized, often ignored and generally underrated. For the past, perhaps longer, art programs in many Nigerian institutions have been systematically dismantled. Formal educational access to the vast treasury of Nigeria and world culture is denied many Nigerian children with result that their education is incomplete, their minds less enlightened, and their lives less enlivened. Consequently, a lot of people believe that art is for the never-do-well and for lazy individuals. Some parents would even scold their children when they are seen making sketches and design or image drawings. More so, some teachers at the elementary level teach the subject area with great reluctance due to the stigmatization.

To support the view of Robert (1999) which posits that “the current status of the arts tends towards extinction as it denies transformative influences in the creative process” a report on the survey recently conducted by the writer on the state of study in fine and applied arts in some of the secondary schools in Delta State shows that art as a subject is being pushed to the curricular periphery; some schools do not enrol the subject due to flimsy reasons of absence of manpower. This is even when there are numerous graduate job applicants in the study area thirsty and desirous of service. This event gives further evidence of the paucity of support for the arts in public education. There is high pressure on schools to serve corporate, political and commercial needs leading to the establishment of the elite core of subjects in Nigerian schools, this position has angered many who recognize the enormous educational potential of the various study areas in the art. Question now is why can't the arts command anything more than marginal status in the public educational system? The answer lies in the fact that government and educators have not given the arts its rightful place in the various levels of the school system.

Art as Intrinsic in the Task of National Development

The fundamental purpose of Nigerian schooling today, whether or not you agree with it, is geared towards preparation for work. Though ironically, there exists no establishment that can accommodate the teeming graduate youth population. This inadvertently affects the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Therefore, it is important that a more concerted and drastic measure be adopted to hold against the tidal wave of mono-economic dependence. Yet are our economic problems a temporary malady? We must remember that schools have been serving the nation's economic and political agenda for almost since independence/democratic inception.

Our educational priorities have drifted to serve the needs of commerce and political rift; the arts appear increasingly frivolous, rendered almost totally unessential to these controlling purposes, Sadler (1998). This is the reality we face in the arts. Art is easily pushed aside as an elective, not given attention as Mathematics, English Language, History, Government, Economics, computer science etc. This prompts the reason why making the study of arts more serious, sequential and focused in the acquisition of knowledge is very vital to further the national goals of education. Schools also fail in provision of functional education as they are poorly staffed and in-equipped with required facilities to achieve functional education in the arts. Many art schools in Nigeria fail to conduct exhibitions and art trade fairs every year which should have culminated in the interest and capacity building of students.

Schools and industry in the area of training and skilled jobs engagements respectively are not being motivated to make certain that talents and human potential of our children are realised and not squandered. If it is ignored, the status of arts will continue to remain marginal or even decline further. So what has kept the arts on the fringes of educational respectability? What keeps them from being basic? Is it that our educational and corporate leaders do not commit themselves to the true implementation of the national goals? Is it that they do not associate the arts with the particular utilitarian abilities that they expect education in this study area to impact?

Translating Educational Policy in Art Education from Policy to Practice

The charge of nation building as well as development requires that a far-reaching view of policy making to improve the capacity of governance, government and its agencies to articulate and influence changes in the nature of handling policy in the socio-educational processes is imperative; its relevance in the art is applauded as art has enormous educational potential, inculcating a multitude of positive learning attitude in students and teachers by the opportunities of self realisation it creates. Students who are involved in the arts are more motivated, more engaged, more sensitive and more focussed, creative and responsive to change. Thus importance of fine and applied arts cannot be de-emphasised as its creative capacity can be effectively nurtured to stimulate national development. Every work of art is an object that embodies a meaning. This is

so, as an artwork would mean nothing without an interpretation of what it represents. Thus the policy on education should emphasis art subjects as basic course in vocational training, not an elective in all levels of education and be made effective and capable of achieving the objectives of the arts in personal and national development. Art involves a whole lot of abilities such that it is difficult to subject it to relegation, (Avae, 2007): fine arts have capability of providing intensely enduring experiences when employed as a pedagogical tool bringing understanding to any object of instruction as seen in the use of mock-ups in the instructional process.

Policy innovation ideas and ideals for education and its funding should be focussed on a long term basis and not subject to change by any government of the day, as this will give educational establishments some level of autonomy preventing undue governmental interference in policy and finance that could cause incessant distortion in school curriculum as this has impact on the man power availability, infrastructural and financial capacity of the state as it has remained perpetually under the arbitrary control of the government. For example the recent adoption of the 9-3-4 system against the moribund 6-3-3-4 and the initial 6-5-4 school curriculum plan.

Records of policy enactment, procedure and importantly its implementation should be maintained by government and monitoring intensely carried-out to ensure coherence, uniformity and stability of the policy exercise; thus a system of capacity development through strategic and comprehensive planning should be vigorously pursued by the numerous educational institutions and monitored through their supervisory/monitoring agencies as provided for in the national policy on education this will require schools to conduct Art exhibitions and trade fare.

Art in school curriculum can be used as a major transformational tool and a formidable instrument for socio-economic empowerment (Oladumiye, Adelabu and Adiji 2012). However, there is a difference between what can be termed Education in the arts (meaning teaching in Fine and Applied Art, Music, Drama, Crafts etc) and Education through the arts (meaning, the use of arts as a pedagogical tool in other subjects, such as numeracy, literacy, technology etc). Thus education which uses creative and artistic pedagogies to teach, all curricula by adopting education through the arts, enhances overall academic attainment, reduces school disaffection and promotes positive cognitive transfer and these noted benefits are only accrued where there are provisions of quality programmes as poor programmes are seen to actively inhibit the benefits apparent in good quality programmes.

Ughamadu (2006) defined education as the process by which young people acquire the cultural heritage, knowledge, ideals and the civilisation of the past so as to be able to take part in the civilisation of the present and help build the civilisation of the

future. Therefore art education, whether formal or informal, is a major means of acquisition of vocational skills, knowledge and capability able to cause positive individual and societal transformation. It is one of the greatest investments any nation can make, for its economic, technological, political and philosophical development in both human and material resources. So, Art education is a veritable instrument that inhibits individual and national development. However, Itedjere (2006) again argued that laterally, education has no aims apart from what people now attribute as its aims. Hence it is simply what people wish that it helps them to achieve. Therefore, the society must decide what its art education policy will help them achieve in the course of time, whom is it meant? And why it should be?

Bridging the Gap from Policy to Practice through Implementation

Nigeria is blessed with lofty ideas and policies but has problem of implementation. To effectively deliver the advantages of bridging the gap in education, government effort has to be committed and intensified in policy practice through implementation. Justifiably, the importance of monitoring/supervision looks at the nitty gritty of art education, evaluating the agencies charged with monitoring and inspection of the school programme for efficient policy implementation in the teaching and learning exercise. However, many scholars regard supervision in different ways. Robins (1987), regarded supervision as getting work done by getting along with others, possessing the ability of gaining co-operation and compliance. This definition emphasises the character of supervision to assist and support rather than as a punitive as it brings about accountability which leads to quality of output in any enterprise. Okokoyo (2009) stated that supervision is not an end but a means to an end hence it is the major function of educational administration as it regulates by monitoring activities educational institutions to achieve the broad aims and objectives of the educational system.

Additionally, to extol the virtues of monitoring and maintenance of minimum standards as anticipated by the National policy on education, government established inspectorate services to cope with the developmental needs of the nation in general. Such agencies, boards and commissions are: National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) Post-Primary Education Management Board (PPEMB National Board for Technical Education (NABTE) National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) The National Universities Commission (NUC) The Joint Consultative Committee on Education (JCC) The National Educational research and Development council (NERDC) The National Council of Education (NCE).

Those councils are made up of the minister and the state commissioners of education.

However, all these above named agencies and commissions exact relative advisory and supervisory functions to the federal government and educational institutions respectively in the achievement of objectives of educational programmes as supported by the national policy of education; thus their functions spread across the three levels of government and education.

Despite the existence of these supervisory bodies, there are still gaps between policy and practice in the art education programme. Therefore it is not the absence of statutory bodies or agencies/boards or policies that is the bane of education in Nigeria. Rather, the ineffective discharge of statutory functions and corruption within the system is responsible for the state of development of education in Nigeria. Thus, we shall look at the problems that militate against supervision of the teacher education programme.

Problems Militating against Supervision of the Art Education programme in Nigeria

Non-implementation of appropriate policies is a major problem in art education and this affects its advancement.

Insufficiency in budgetary allocation/ oscillatory allocation to Education is another problem. UNESCO stipulates the minimum standard for developing nations' budgetary allocation to education must as a matter of fact not be less than 26% of annual GDP for any meaningful education to flourish (Abamba, 2008).

More so, absence of educational statistics and data in many educational ministries and institutions is a serious problem as it relates to the unavailability of detailed and reliable educational information and figures that matter to educational administration leading to poor management of art education.

Furthermore, the problem of accreditation irregularities exists and it distorts proper supervision of Art educational institutions: the case where a school authority indulges in irregular or cosmetic enlistment of skilled professionals into its staff list to acquire accreditation of new courses to be able to award certain certificates.

Poverty and the state of affairs in Nigeria militate against policy implementation and monitoring of the art educational programme as some officers are not well motivated.

Additionally, there is lack of technical skills as some educational inspectors may not have enough knowledge of current technological trend. There should be training and continuous retraining of supervisors to make sure they are up to date.

Art as Intrinsic in the Task of National Development

However, there is also the issue of bad road network to some communities making access to some Art educational institutions limited hampering proper and regular supervision.

Conclusion

In conclusion, art has a potential to serve our country and help youth in incredibly important ways that will enhance education, enhance life, and yes, enhance the ability of people to be productive citizens; especially as skills acquisition in various vocations in art could be promoted. Additionally, those creative arts which are capable of improving and diversifying the economy; by reducing the number of graduates patiently and restlessly waiting on government jobs rather than engaging their creative hands in a vocation should be encouraged and provided for as it will enhance job creation.

Furthermore, the recent directive on educational reform and curriculum change in line with what is obtainable in Nigeria's philosophy of education is a good stride in the right direction; however, efforts should be geared towards the monitoring/supervision of the policy procedure as a means of ensuring effective implementation. Thus, there should be the deliberate effort to enrich the Art curriculum to make it a group A basic core subject being taught as a discipline in all levels of education to avoid misguided notions about art. More so, any school which teach courses related to fine and applied art should compulsorily engage art exhibitions and art trade-fairs. Thus, art exhibition techniques and methods should be included in the school course content and curriculum.

The rising intricacy of tasks of management of social transformation in Nigeria today necessitates the need to recognize and evolve an efficient policy framework where the nations' resources can be mobilised and effectively employed in a way to improve the entire citizenry and the nation at large. It could be predicted that if the provisions in the National policy of education and goals of education are adhered to; the next decade will witness some truly fundamental changes in theory and practice of art education that will be comparable to development in other professions of medicine, pharmacy, law etc. This is reassuringly so because education is the greatest device man has created for his continued improvement. It improves his intellect, knowledge and skills as well as his attitude to his environment training his head, hand and heart, placing him in position of leadership on earth. More importantly, this prediction lies on the content and character of the policy procedure and practice in professional issues in arts, asserting that enough is not sincerely being done in policy and practice to better the teaching in the arts.

Recommendations

In line with all that has been discussed in the preceding pages of this research and the problems of Art education enumerated therein, it is suggested that there should be enactment of laws depoliticising educational policy implementation to avoid undue influence and interruption by politicians in government.

There should also be a centre for Education in the Arts to launch Nation-wide effort to make art education more academic, with the thought that increased rigor and a broad curriculum encompassing aesthetics, art history and art criticism as well as the development of the skills of production would engender better perceptions of art and art education and establish it as a basic part of the curriculum. This will help in the realization of promise of a great and dynamic economy as stipulated in the national goals in the national philosophy of education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004).

There should be increased allocation to the educational sector to up the standard and status of education: government should be more alive to its responsibilities and uphold sincerity in their dealings with educational matters, through the various agencies. Educational policies should be implemented as statutory provisions by the educational agencies without fear or favour, to maintain integrity and avoid being used as puppets by politicians.

More so, since policy implementation is a major challenge in almost all facets of the Nigerian system, effective monitoring of the implementation of educational policy and results/reports of findings or recommendations from supervision should be carried out promptly to enhance trust and raise standards among the various commissions and boards.

Furthermore, there should be proper access to reliable and dependable information/ data for effective discharge of supervisory and administrative functions: this extols the virtues of the Freedom of information act recently enacted into law by President Goodluck Jonathan led government encouraging information sharing.

Additionally, government should endeavour to equip art education institutions with adequate skilled human and material resources in furtherance of bridging the gap from policy to practice.

Likewise, there should be adequate in-service training for staff of various ministries of education on supervisory skills, integrity and quality assurance.

Finally, remuneration to supervisory staff should be encouraging to take care of their transport and lugging needs to beat the state of bad roads and to dissuade them from accepting inducement from any educational parastatal and corrupt heads.

References

- Abamba, G.O. (2008) *History and Development of Education: A text for students in Nigeria* Ibadan, Oyo: End-Time Publishing House.
- Akpotu, N.E. & Nwaham,C.O. (Eds) (2008). *Introduction to the Teaching Profession in Nigeria*. Agbor, Delta: Royal Palace Publications.
- Avae, D.T.M. (2nd edition, 2007). *The Essentials Of Art For Junior and Senior Schools Certificate*. Benin-City, Edo. Idodo Umeh Publishers Ltd.
- Awana, B.O. (2012). *Essentials of Library Science for College Students*. Boji- Boji Owa, Delta: Sky Press Ltd.
- Egonwa, O.D. (2011) *Nigerian Art: Introductory notes*. Ibadan, Oyo: Ababa Press Ltd.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN 2004). *National Policy on Education*. Owerri, Imo: Cape Publishers Ltd.
- Itedjere, P.O. (2006). *Current Issues in Nigeria Educational System*. Abraka Delta State: Delsu Publishers.
- Okokoyo, I.E. (2009). *Essentials of Educational Administration, Planning and Supervision*. Agbor, Delta: Krisbec Publications.
- Oladumiye, E et al. (2012). *Visual arts Communication in Nigeria: A veritable tool for value re-orientation*. Abraka, Delta State: Society of Nigerian Artists.
- Oniyama, et al (Eds) (2009). *Essentials of guidance and counselling*. Agbor, Delta: Progressing printing association.
- Ughamadu, K.A.(2006). *Curriculum: Concept, Development and Implementation*. Onitsha, Anambra: Lincel Publishers.
- Ughamadu, K.A . & Okoye, N.S. (Eds) (2nd edition, 2006). *Principle, Methods and Strategies for effective teaching*. Onitsha, Anambra: Lincel Publishers.

- Robert, B. (1999). *Art and Society in Africa*. London, United Kingdom. Longman publishes.
- Robins, S.P. (1987). *Organizational Theory: Structure, Design and Application*. San Diego State University, USA. Prentice Hall International Inc.
- Sadler, I. (1998). *Art of the Post Modern Era*. Colorado, USA. West View Press.
- Sanusi, H. U. (1992). *Public Policy Coordination in Nigeria*. Jos, Plateau. National Institute Press.
- Stallabrass, J. (2004). *Contemporary Art: A Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc.