

STEMMING THE TIDE OF ADMISSION INADEQUACY INTO CREATIVE ART DEPARTMENTS OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

In recent years, most creative art departments of tertiary institutions in Nigeria are battling to stem the tide of admission inadequacy. This trend has become more worrisome because it is manifesting at a time when tertiary institutions in Nigeria are finding it difficult to cope with the upsurge of applicants seeking admission into various departments. This paper examined common impediments that may have caused this traumatic turn around. It identified poor implementation of Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy on Cultural and Creative Arts as a major factor responsible for the sandy foundation of art education in the formative years of enthusiastic and talented children. It also identified the culture of apathy or negligence on the part of education authorities and school heads at national, state and local government levels, towards the teaching and learning of art in primary and secondary schools in Nigeria. This paper suggested buffer measures by art professional bodies, practitioners and educators to encourage interested and talented students in primary and secondary schools, towards the enrolment of creative art in their respective certificate examinations. It also advocated strict implementation of UBE policy on Cultural and Creative Arts and inclusion of art courses in the curriculum of all colleges of education and faculties of education in Nigerian universities.

Key words: Cultural and creative arts, universal basic education (UBE) policy, buffer measures, curriculum implementation.

A casual assessment of the development of education in Nigeria reveals a tremendous growth pattern since 1840 when western education started gaining acceptance in all regions of the country. Similarly, the number of colleges of education, polytechnics and universities have also increased at geometric rate since 1960. The reason for this growth pattern is not far from the envisaged turn out of primary and secondary school students from the ever increasing number of primary and secondary schools all over the country.

Different education policies and programmes have emerged at various points of educational transition in Nigeria. Some achieved part of their educational goals, aims and objectives while others could not and are replaced with newer versions of similar or different programmes. The most recent known as Universal Basic Education emphasizes the concept of manpower development, vocational development, skill acquisition and self reliance. This policy, which otherwise refer to basic education aims at laying strong foundation for life long learning. The position of the Cultural and Creative Arts as specified in the National Policy on Educaiton (2004) encourages the growing child towards acquiring sound knowledge in the manipulation of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms etc so as to effectively participate and contribute to the life of the society where in he lives, and as well build a strong foundation for the acquisition of further skills in later life. According to Otoba (2004), with growth in art experiences throughout the elementary grades, it is reasonable to expect children to be able to characterize themselves increasingly well in their environment.

The foundation of education in the primary and lower secondary levels must be solid because all other educational attainments depend on it. "Infants and toddlers experience life more holistically than any other age groups. They learn social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic and physical lessons not in isolation, but cooperatively. The child learns from the whole experience, and not just that part of the experience to which the adult gives attention. (Gardner, 1990; Clark, 1996; and David, 2001).

During the Romantic period, art was seen as a special faculty of the human mind, classified with religion and science. Art shapens our knowledge of the world, and our existence as human beings and redeem mankind from external boredom, psychological depression and health depreciation. The historical, theoretical and practical impact of visual art education on young learners is not restricted to art fields alone, but extended to other areas of academic, political and industrial endeavours. Despite these immense benefits accruing from the teaching and learning of visual or creative art, there is regrettably noticeable low quality of art education in the primary

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and secondary schools in Nigeria. The consequence being the manifestation of poor candidacy for admission into art departments of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Common Impediments

(a) Curriculum and Curriculum Implementation

The Federal Government of Nigeria in her National Policy of Education (2004) has embarked on the development and implementation of an entirely new primary school curriculum with the goals of producing a complete and all round individual that will be useful to the society through acquired manipulative skills and basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality. The primary school curriculum has been articulated in each subject into modules preparatory for efficient and effective teaching. The assessment mode shall be continuous assessment and not on the results of a single final examination. According to the chairman, implementation committee, National Policy on Education, “the modules are presented in booklet form, with each booklet produced for each class”. This is done in consonance with the common practice of assigning a teacher to take charge of a class and to teach all the subjects in that class (p.viii). The above extract calls for the certification of teachers in primary education to teach in the primary school. Such category of teachers should then be sufficiently prepared to teach all subjects in the primary school. A situation where specialist teachers are mandated to teach all subjects despite their area of specialization neglects the goal of effective instructional delivery in all the subjects. Lack of specialist teachers in primary education to teach all subjects in the primary class could be responsible for poor implementation of the curriculum for Creative and Cultural Arts and also account for the merging of the subject with General Paper in the First School Leaving Certificate Examination (placement examination).

A sound curriculum should develop proper value, attitude, appreciation and sensitivity towards the subject. This could be achieved through the application of proper method to adequate content scope. The art curriculum for primary school in Nigeria by the “National Primary Education Commission” (N.P.E.C) did not generate enough value for the subject. “The marriage of art and craft in the curriculum neglects the importance of these two separate and vital areas of human endeavour, especially at the primary school level where acquisition of formal knowledge in these areas begin. Enough consideration was not given to art as a subject essential to the educational development of the child; very few art activities can be observed in the curriculum in all the classes. More attention is given to craft in principle, where pupils purchase and not actively participating in the production of craft items such as broom, basket etc. The present art curriculum is weak and made so general that it does not cater adequately for both cultural and visual

aspects of the subject. More art activities should be introduced into the curriculum in the primary school in order to increase the value of the subject before the pupils. Art as a subject is and should be taught in its own right as a school subject in the curriculum. The addition of Cultural and Creative Arts to other subjects in the First School Leaving Certificate examination as “General Paper”, tend to reduce the value of the subject among other subjects such as Arithmetic, English Language etc. Cultural and Creative Arts should be taught and examined separately in the primary school. This will reverse the current trend where pupils loose interest in the subject as they progress towards primary six. Primary school teachers should show greater commitment towards implementing the art curriculum by employing appropriate teaching method that could arouse the interest of the pupils and manifest their hidden talent.

(b) **Educational Administrators and Parents**

In many schools especially in the rural areas, art is not being taught and this is a problem bothering on encouragement from school heads. Some school heads feel that art is not important and even when they have art tutors, they assign other subjects to them to teach. This act is criminal and should stop. Some parents are grossly ignorant of the potentialities of the art profession. They discourage their wards when they observe that their interest in art is growing progressively. They should rather conserve their energy and talent for more acclaimed professions in the society. They see art as merely the act of drawing and painting and blind to the numerous products of art such as the clothes we wear, the books we read, the plates with which we serve our food, the tiles in our kitchen, bathroom and sitting rooms, just to mention but a few. This culture of apathy or negligence affects the teaching and learning of art in primary and secondary schools at national, state and local government levels.

(c) **Art Teachers**

The quality of art education to a large extent relies on the competence of the art teacher. Most primary schools in Nigeria lack teachers who are competent in most areas of art skill and scholarship. Art is a creative, intellectual and practical discipline, that requires mastery by the teacher to be able to achieve effective instructional delivery. (Otoba, 2010).

The primary school needs National Certificate in Education (NCE) and Technical Teachers Certificate (TTC) graduates who are specially trained to teach art in primary schools. Such teachers should possess the qualities of patience, competence, and good knowledge of the teaching methods suitable for pupils in the primary school. Art teachers should be enthusiastic, industrious, refined and resourceful (Uzoagba, 2002). Most primary schools lack trained art teachers that

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can guarantee good-quality art education that is capable of motivating pupils to acquire higher education in art.

(d) **Infrastructure**

Art instructions are delivered in special rooms and studios. Most primary and secondary schools in Nigeria have no studio where art is taught. Such a studio should be equipped with materials such as pencil, crayon, poster colour, water colour, charcoal, colour pencil, brush, paper stock, donkeys, easel, drawing board, clay, shaping tools and exhibition board to display works done by the students. A well equipped art studio will stimulate creativity in the students and motivate them to greater heights in art.

(e) **Status of Cultural and Creative Arts**

In the National Policy on Education (2004:15), the curriculum for primary education includes “Cultural and Creative arts (drawing, handcraft, music and cultural activities). It was considered a “particular subject for which special teachers shall be provided”. It is a particular and special subject not only because of its special role in the development of Fine and Applied Arts in the tertiary institution, but also because of its role in the development of all other courses in academics. For the purpose of smooth interaction with our neighbours, the subject French is made compulsory in primary and junior secondary schools in Nigeria. Similar gesture extended to Cultural and Creative arts which is the main subject that teaches the culture and tradition of the people and inculcate the spirit of skill acquisition and literacy in the pupils (not minding what they become later in life), should be properly implemented. It is expected that the subject should be made compulsory in the primary and junior secondary schools and taken as a separate subject in the respective certificate examinations.

Conclusion

This paper has examined some of the causes why there is inadequate number of applicants seeking admission into creative art departments of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The solutions proffered if religiously implemented will no doubt improve the teaching and learning of Cultural and Creative Arts in primary and secondary schools, which will in turn improve on the student enrolment in the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination. The attainment of this goal will automatically change this ugly trend and keep the nation on a progressive pace of peace, stability and national development.

The Way Forward

1. Implementation of UBE Policy on Cultural and Creative Arts. The lower basic education curriculum (primaries 1-3), middle basic education curriculum (primaries 3-6), and upper basic education curriculum (JSS 1-3) should be effectively implemented. In addition to this, this paper recommends that the subject should also be made compulsory at the Senior Secondary School level.
2. Creative art courses should be included into the curriculum of all colleges of education, schools and faculties of Education of all polytechnics and universities respectively, to train art teachers who will teach the subject in primary and secondary schools in Nigeria.
3. A functional art gallery should be built in all art schools. Every local government headquarters and state capital should have an art museum which students can visit from time to time.
4. There should be government subsidy on art materials and equipment, and the private sector should be encouraged to partner with government in making available these materials/equipment at affordable prices.
5. Buffer measures – practitioners and professional bodies such as Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA), Ceramic Researchers Association of Nigeria (CeRAN) etc, should singularly or collectively organize art classes for schools that lack art teachers, art clubs in schools around them, art competitions and awards to encourage and motivate students towards the learning and enrolment of art courses in their certificate examinations. There should also be aggressive education of the general public about visual and creative arts in order to reduce the level of ignorance presently exhibited towards the course.

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