

Importance and challenges of fine art education on Nigerian child

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Abstract

This paper explores the meaning of art. It expresses the breakdown of the importance of art to the Nigerian child. It points out key facts of how Fine art education is influential to the life of the Nigerian child. Studies show that art plays vital role in the development of the child. Development of artistic skills is debated as essential to the natural development of children, which helps them properly to be better in the society. A number of challenges face by the art subjects in the schools, lack of professional teachers and materials. The idea of using improvised materials was also encouraged. Some recommendations were made such as; The Nigerian government has to play a vital role in ensuring the importance of fine art to the Nigerian child, make adequate provision of professional teachers and resources.

Keyword: Fine art, Art Education, Nigerian Child, Role, Development.

Introduction

A meaningful creative expression can be described as art for aesthetic purposes. Within every art there is a meaning attached. Art is understood to be a communication concept in several communities by their norms and believes. Studies of different authors have emphasized on the advantages of art to an individual and society at large. Development of artistic skill is debated as essential to the natural development of children, which helps them properly to be better in the society. These children acquiring the skills within their environment being it academic or home are a welcoming idea. (Opoko & Nwade 2014). Arts in education translate the ideas of educational system into reality. It is to be noted that, it is one thing to introduce a subject in school, and another to successfully implement it. In the primary and secondary levels of education, art teaching is in the service of general development of the pupils, which actually starts with drawing and illustrations in demonstrations of events which are supposed to be read out. But, instead of reading out, the illustrations speak on their own and leave lasting impressions in the pupils. (Enamhe 2013). Art practice generally dates back to period of civilization and including Nigeria with some of the country's cultural heritage, values and

historical studies traceable to her traditional art and later the contemporary. However, with the evolving trend and rapidity at which art in the global market flourishes, occupying some measures of patronage in financial and social circle, Nigerian art is yet to get fair share of the reckoning, despite creative works of art done by the masters (Onuoha, 2019). This paper discussed the role of fine art to the Nigerian child, by identifying problems and possible solutions not only to the Nigerian child but to the National development of the Nigerian education. The following sub-headings guided discussion:

- Self-expression
- Cultural awareness
- Critical intellectual skills
- Confidence and inventiveness

Definition of Fine Art

Art generally is a way of life; it is the power of doing anything. It means any skill, trade, craft or acquired expertise. Art is a very wide human activity involving some skills, it is imaginative, creative and aesthetic in nature. One uncontroversial thing about art is that it affects almost every aspect of man's life, which is the society at large. Technically it is the study and creation of things in forms, texture, lines and colour which gives pleasure to the mind and satisfies our sense of beauty. This is what is usually referred to as the fine and applied art. Art has two broad divisions, these are the liberal arts and the creative arts.

Fine art, sometimes also called high art, commonly refers to a form of art that is aesthetically pleasing and that takes a certain set of skills to achieve. Fine art is also generally seen as a superior to applied art or craft, which are commonly seen as utilitarian activities. This understanding of art however, is quite limited and has been challenged and has extended as new philosophies and technologies emerge. Just as the definition of fine art is blurred and ever-changing, so are the lists of mediums used by fine artists. The lists of what constitutes fine art are sure to change over time as technology changes and with the emergence of new artistic inventions. However, based on current findings we can include the following examples; drawing, painting, sculpture, ceramics, textile arts, print making, installation, mixed media arts, fine art photography, conceptual art, performing arts, and digital art. (artincontext, 2022). Painting and sculpture in which objects are produced that are beautiful rather than useful can be referred to as fine art. Art produced chiefly for its aesthetic value, as opposed to applied art. Any of the art forms that include drawing, painting, sculpture and ceramics, or occasionally,

architecture, literature, music, dramatic art, or dancing. (collins, 2022). The meaning of the term fine art has evolved and transformed overtime. Fine art is generally implied as something that appeals to our visual or auditory senses and is formed through a creative process, there by captivating the interest of an individual.

Role of Fine Art

Art is a means of communicating ideas, feelings, and solutions in a way other than verbally or written. Several studies have shown that art prepares children for future life experiences in a diversified way. These benefits include promotion of mental and innovative ability, cultural awareness, development of creative problem-solving and communication skills, development of self-esteem, self-discipline, cooperation, self-motivation, social integration, improved academic performance (Mulder-Slater, 2001). (Root-Bernstein & Root-Bernstein (2013) in Opoko, & Nwade (2014) identified Fine art as professional ability that when acquired by a child can influence the choice and teaching of other subject like Mathematics, engineering, science and technology in the school system. These skills include observing; imaging and visualization; abstracting; pattern recognition and pattern invention; analogizing; dimensional thinking; modeling; body or kinesthetic thinking; manual dexterity; familiarity with tools; transforming data into visual or graphical forms; converting theories into mechanical procedures; and understanding data and experiments kinaesthetically and empathetically. However most schools in Nigeria don't see the significance of Fine art as a subject, this is perhaps due to the misconception that art is a luxury superfluous and isolated subject. (Opoko, & Nwade 2014). BellaNaija (2018) gave several reasons to the importance of creative arts to the Nigerian child. Some of these are discussed below.

Self-Expression

Fine art is literarily practice based kind of subject which makes it unique, by self-expression. It enables oneself to express the inner you by visuals, symbols, movement and sound. It teaches self-expression by creativity, focus, communication and self-control in a dynamic way. They become empathetic, not only to themselves but to others. Students who are confused or frustrated in a school environment become not only absorbed, they fine a way to express their thinking and emotions through a non-verbal communication; thus, creating a more comfortable learning environment for themselves.

Cultural awareness, Empathy and Tolerance

Because of the nature of art embodied together, it requires collaboration; thus, making learners work together towards achieving goals being set, learning of differences in diversity is also observed. Development of cultural diversity is experienced, creative problem-solving skills is learnt, communication of thoughts and ideas sharing is practiced, gaining tools necessary for the understanding of human experience is achieved. Creating respect and understanding boundaries between each other on how they work and think is learnt. Understanding other peoples characters and their cultures develop their ability for empathy towards traditions and symbols. Perceptions and stereotypes are learnt in a positive way through the exposure to different societies and cultures in their arts.

Critical intellectual skills

Questions of matters arises from the learner of how to do, what to do, and how should I do it, when it comes to learning of fine art. It helps learners in critical thinking and problem-solving skills which can be life time knowledge in their education and other parts of life experience. When encountered with problems, they analyse and synthesis, they see different approaches to solving problem, and they are able to think critically in trying to profound solutions. Whenever they find themselves with challenges that come in the labour market, they can easily apply critical thinking ability to get solutions to the challenges. They are able to right decisions in any situation they find themselves. This will make them less naive or novice in life activities.

Confidence and inventiveness

Fine arts build talents, confidence and create opportunity for students in explorations of creativities. Taking the bold step of producing an art work either by realistic or abstraction gives a learner the opportunity to stepping outside their comfort zone and trying new things totally different from their lives. The participation of the learner in this process, helps to build their self-esteem, self-discipline, cooperation, and self-motivation, there by triggering ingenuity and inventiveness.

Art education in Nigeria

Art education in Nigeria has stirred up many studies on how it is losing its value, by being dis-regarded not only by the Nigerian government but also by parents of children in schools. Lacking of professional teachers also add to the negative behavior of the society. Many studies have shown how important art education in Nigeria can build up the Nigerian child with great intellectual skills, confidence and tolerance in facing life with the challenges that come with it. Etuk, Ering & Ajake, (2012) in Opoko, & Nwade (2014) discussed brief history of the emergence of art education in Nigeria in 1923 when some secondary schools were selected for pilot study in Lagos. Lack of professional art teachers led to use of traditional artist in schools to augment the teaching profession. Learners were only able to copy what the teachers draw on the board as at that time due to lack of professional skills. The 9-3-4 educational system of Nigeria aims at providing with a child all the necessary skills and values, which will prep the Nigerian child for the future; thus, employment and its contribution to the national development. This system devotes the first nine years to compulsory basic education at the primary (6 years) and junior secondary (3 years) levels, three years for the senior secondary education and the last four years for the tertiary education level Uwaifo & Uddin, (2009) in Opoko & Nwade (2014). Art is one of the compulsory subjects taught at the basic education levels. Art education in Nigeria aims at inculcating in children the spirit of enquiry and creativity while developing their basic skills including those needed for proper adjustment and contribution to society (Akinwunmi, 2011 in Opoko, & Nwade 2014).

The average Nigerian school concentrates more on STEM subject than ‘softer’ subjects such as Fine Arts, music drama/theatre and languages (alternative). These subjects usually categorized as ‘the arts’ are not considered as important as other subjects. They are not always recognized as a vital component of modern-day learning, so are not evaluated through high stakes. Even more several parents discourage their children from opting for these subjects, as they hold the misconception that art is superfluous and isolated subject. They rather encourage their children to go for these other subjects they believe will help them secure jobs that meet the needs of our ever-changing economy (BellaNaija, 2018). The National policy on Education provides guidelines for teaching in schools.

Challenges currently encountered in art education include lack of professional art teachers, poor funding (art materials) and general lack of recognition of the importance of art. Art has increasingly been cited in arguments that an education in the arts is an integral part of every child’s development.

Suggestion

The importance as it pertains to child development cannot be overlooked. The creative process begins from the scratch. Parents, teachers and educational planners could be well informed as stake holders. This understanding and knowledge will create awareness and delineate the impression that art is for failures and a dumping ground for the never do well.

The poor appreciation of arts and crafts in education was evident in poor funding, inadequacy of space and facilities as well as insufficient time allocation for class work should be looked into.

We must accept to the fact that art has a key role to play in the development of the economy of the country. The Nigerian government in collaboration with the Nigerian education ministry should make sure that art is being studied as a compulsory subject in schools to enable children be exposed to the benefits of art education.

Adequate materials should be provided for the art practices. Improvised materials can also be used to teach art to the children, helping them in improvisation in life. The students should be exposed to all aspects of the Visual Arts, this will stimulate interest, especially when they see the different creations by other children.

Exhibitions and workshops can be organized by the society of Nigerian artists, or other relevant art bodies of the government or non-governmental bodies to help promote and spread the importance of art education to the Nigerian child.

Summary

Art in Education is not only important part of our educational system, but to our cultural understanding. The study should be given adequate consideration. This should start from the very beginning that is, the early childhood. Exposing the early child to art as we have discussed in this paper gives the child a life time opportunity of self-expression, cultural awareness, empathy and tolerance, critical intellectual skills, confidence and inventiveness. With these characteristics a child can grow to become useful to self, society in any field of choice.

Conclusion

Fine art as a subject has a huge potential in keeping and realizing ideas that would have been otherwise missed. Fine art as a subject is actually that vehicle that conveys individual child to be nurtured and bred into an artist of worth. Building of a nation through developed

entrepreneurs is very possible. This is for the fact that, proper training of every child is a grooming in one of the various sections of fine art as an artist who are individual entrepreneurs per excellent. In turn they stand out independently opening of studios for productions of products and services. Once the challenges of fine arts has been tackled in our society, more entrepreneurial opportunity will be provided,

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