

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING QUALITY OF TEACHERS IN VISUAL ARTS PROGRAMME IN NIGERIAN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION FOR OPTIMUM PRODUCTIVITY

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Abstract

The study examined strategies for improving the quality of visual art teachers in Nigerian colleges of education. It looked at the concepts of Visual Art Education and the Art Educator as well as the standard qualities of Visual Art Educator. It also looked at the problems affecting Visual Art Educators' performance and effects of poor quality of teachers, on graduates of Visual Art Education. Among the problems revealed by the literature are: limited number of highly qualified professionals; lack of perceptual and physical effectiveness; lack of standard visual art studios, equipment and materials for quality research. The paper also revealed that compromised teachers quality would hinder the graduates from developing intellectual skills and knowledge which will in turn lead to unemployment and poverty. To remedy the situation, the colleges of education should encourage and absorb best students of art; sponsor art teachers on art workshops, seminars and conferences from time to time; provide standard art materials, studios, books and equipment to the teachers, introduce modern techniques of performance evaluation; give grants/ loans to encourage the art teachers and stringent measures should be employed to check examination malpractices and checkmate the excesses of sexual harassment and extortion of money from students.

Introduction

Development of the powers of imagination, creativity, beautification (aesthetics) and a visual language of communication through which people express themselves in thoughts and feelings about life generally in the society is the outcome of Visual Arts programme in any level of education. Mukoro (2005) noted that the aim of teaching art in schools is not purposely for the production of ARTISTS only but to develop the creative and constructive talents in everybody.

Visual arts according to Uzoagba (1982) "designates those arts addressed primarily to the sense of vision". According to him, they include the fine arts (Drawing, painting and sculpture) and the Applied arts (Graphic

Design, Commercial, Textile Design, Ceramics, Photography, Industrial Design, and Cabinet Making). Ogumor (2007) sees the Visual Arts as the study and creation of things in forms, texture, lines and colour which gives pleasure to the mind and satisfies our sense of beauty.

According to Cooper (2016), Art does not solve problems but makes us aware of their existence, but art education does solve problems. This is so because it is closely linked to almost everything that we as a nation say we want for our children and demand from our schools: academic achievement, social and emotional development, civic engagement, and equitable opportunity.

Involvement in the arts is associated with gains in mathematics, reading, cognitive ability, critical thinking and verbal skill. The learning of arts also improve motivation, concentration, confidence and teamwork.

For this reason, the federal government of Nigeria has adopted a well planned national policy on education which made education an “instrument *par excellence* for affecting national development”. Effective Visual Art Education programme is part of the educational disciplines that have been put in the scheme to yield quality capacity building of the individuals, society and the economy of Nigeria. For example, the philosophy behind the establishment of Art programmes in the Nigeria Colleges of Education is to provide academic and professional training for NCE teachers in Fine and Applied Arts. Its aims at developing students aesthetic perception, artistic talents and expression as well as stimulate interest and enquiries in the practical and theoretical areas, particularly as they affect the teaching of art at the primary and junior secondary school levels.

The Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria designed the visual art programmes in the Colleges of Education with the following objectives:

- ? "Training professional art teachers to fill the manpower needs of the primary and junior secondary schools;
- ? Equipping and providing the teachers with knowledge, understanding and skills in Fine and Applied Arts;
- ? Equipped students with the necessary knowledge and skills for the promotion of Nigeria and world's artistic and cultural heritage;
- ? Developing in the would-be teachers the ability to communicate effectively through the arts; and

- ? Preparing teachers to qualify for and benefit from teacher education at the university level.
- ? Equipping NCE graduates with manipulative skills which will make them self reliant job creators”.

The issue is that in spite of the seemingly well - planned visual art education curriculum in Nigeria, it would appear as though not much is gained from the graduates of this programme. Many graduates of Visual Arts in the NCE programmes do not seem to make adequate use of the skills acquired especially as the rate of employment is so low in this political dispensation. Few that are employed sometimes find themselves in other establishments that are not related to arts and culture, thereby depriving them of the opportunities of expressing themselves fully in terms of creativity for lack of finances. In most cases the teachers are blamed for the poor performance of students.

The objective of this paper is therefore, to look at the concept of the quality of a visual art educator. It will also concern itself with the problems affecting the visual art educators performance that is causing the low quality output. It will also expose more effects of poor teachers quality on graduates of Visual Arts Education and present a discourse on strategies of improving the quality of Visual Art educators.

The Concept of Visual Art Educator Quality

According to Hasley, *et al* “Art Education is a course of study designed to teach students practical skills as well as theory and history of art”. The quality art educator uses theory in addition to his practical skills to ensure that knowledge is imparted on the individual Teachers of visual art use reasoned ideas

(theories) to explain facts and events which are used for the following in art education:

- (a) Describing of the nature of a work of art, distinguishing a work of art from objects of art.
- (b) Explaining the nature of beauty or the sublime
- (c) Clarifying concepts in art production
- (d) Providing criteria for defining, analyzing and evaluating works of art.

Having the above philosophy in mind, a quality Visual Art educator must have broad knowledge in all the major components of the visual arts. He must be knowledgeable in general education, (Philosophy of Education, Psychology of Education, Comparative Education Studies, Measurement and Evaluation of students, Educational Technology, Guidance and Counseling, Educational Administration etc); general art subjects such as the fine arts (drawing, painting and sculpture) and Applied arts (Graphic designs, Ceramics, Textile Designs and production, Photography, Printmaking and Industrial Printing, Local Crafts, (Uzoagba 1982). The Visual Art Educator is worried and concerned about making art education recognized and accepted, imbibe changes where necessary, discovering new styles and techniques of production of art or building upon the existing styles and techniques thereby increasing the quality of art production. He identifies problems and offers solutions to them.

The quality art teacher needs to be able to showcase his or her own work and allow students to do the same. He should be able to teach students basic techniques and encourage them to take the techniques further. In a nut shell, the following are some necessary qualities of a good visual art educator:

- (1) The visual art educator must be a master of the subject he teaches.
- (2) He must be able to cause learning or inspire people to learn.
- (3) He must assume the role of a leader and must develop leadership qualities in his students.
- (4) He must be a person of integrity, an adviser, a guardian as well as custodian of discipline.
- (5) He must be able to stimulate students to undertake various activities which result in learning.
- (6) He must show good examples and maintain good and healthy relationships with art students.
- (7) He must be familiar with the philosophy of the school, as well as the aims and objectives of the art programme and work towards achieving them.
- (8) He must be familiar with the community in which he teaches. He should be part of the community and should understand the relationship between the community and the school.
- (9) He should not only be a teacher of theories, but also a studio practitioner to enhance efficiency inspiration to the learner.

Problems Affecting Visual Art Educators Performance

Despite the growth of visual art education programmes in Nigerian colleges of education, there are still a lot of deficiency in its quality. Some of these problems include:

Limited Number Of Highly Qualified Professional Art Teachers: Though the government of Nigeria has fixed considerable budget for tertiary institutions throughout the country, the visual art education programme still faces the shortage

of highly qualified professional art educators. In the authors own experience, he was denied admission to read Graphic Arts at the post-graduate unit of the Delta State University, Abraka for about four years for lack of professionals on that field. That caused a lot of delay for a long period until one finally emerged. This delay made many who would have emerged successful graphic arts lecturers today to divert into other fields. It is worthy to note that knowledge unused is meaningless until an individual develops the urge to use it, Agbayi (2004). In the opinion of Ojie (2006), "several Nigeria artists are hardly able to express themselves fully because of financially deprivation and wrong placements in jobs.

Lack of Perceptual and Physical Effectiveness: Perceptual training made possible by art education makes it convenient for Nigeria artists to express themselves visually with considerations for a variety of art forms, Ojie (2006). These considerations include: given space, textures, colours, lines, shapes etc. The guiding principles of art are major factors towards achieving the above. They include: balance, rhythm, emphasis, contrast, perspective, and proportion, Mukoro (2005). Some art teachers lack physical effectiveness. According to Ojie (2006) "Most Nigerian artists appear not to engage in creativity using media that are challenging". This accounts for the reason why there are a very few of them who engage in stone carving, clay works, metal sculpture etc.

Poor Aesthetic Value and Expression: According to Lowenfield and Britain, "aesthetics is the means of organizing, thinking, feeling and perceiving into an expression that communicates these thoughts and feelings to someone else". Its

assessment are routed on the perceiver and the particular work of art, the purpose of its production, and the environment or culture in which the work of art is made. While some art educators present their art works in a decent manner, using attractive media and themes which arouse aesthetic appeal, some present theirs in the opposite direction. While some art educators dress decently most of the time, others are too badly dressed in the guise of being artists. This does not imply that such art teachers are not creative, or that their intellectuality is low, it only depict the fact that the aesthetic training of such art teachers in some cases only influenced their observational appreciative powers as well as their skillful production of the art work. However, some claim it is because of uncertainties, poverty, low acceptance of art works or low patronage of the arts, including art exhibitions, Ojie (2006).

Lack of Standard Visual Art Studios, Equipment And Materials For Quality Research And Practice: In Nigeria, there are very few facilities for doing quality research: very few institutions have good art studios with good facilities such as kilns, standard Donkeys, Arts studios with good window blinds, easels, welding machines for metal sculpture, looms for weaving etc. This situation affects the performance of the teachers in art programmes.

Lack of Standardized Performance Evaluation System:

The public sector colleges of education follow the old annual confidential report technique, in which the performance of teachers is evaluated on annual basis by their bosses. This form of evaluation is one-sided in such way that no feedback is given to the teachers. Often this evaluation is used for promotion of teachers, and is not used for

teaching improvement and quality enhancement purposes (Udeme, 2012).

Negative Influence Of Some Lecturers To Students:

It is unfortunate that some of the lecturers now constitute nuisance in national education system because they are only interested in making money and they fail to commit to memory that their activities today determines the progress and downfall of national development in future. These group of lecturers have no interest for lecture. All their actions are geared towards money-making and satisfaction of their sexual urge. These acts lead to the production of half baked teachers. This evil compels the students to commit fornication which can stimulate the students to develop sexual intensity. This is the reason why Udeme (2012) said the “Nigerian tertiary institutions are not only producing poor quality graduates but also burglars and prostitutes.

Lack of Government Investment:

The government of Nigeria keeps increasing its budget for the education sector continuously, but still it is considered that its investment in education especially in the visual arts sector is low. Furthermore, over 95% of educational budget is spent on salaries and office expenses, while less amount is left for research and development. Some lecturers do not have offices. Some Heads of Departments have no Secretaries. With this, how will the educational instructors devote their full interest to their duty? This impression compels them to compromise their duty even when they are eligible to render effective service to students and nations at large, Obiete, Nwazor and Vin Mbah, (2015). Teachers and students are not comfortable when learning. Congestion in classrooms and examination halls give rise to examination malpractice.

Effects of Poor Teachers' Quality On Graduates of Visual Arts Education

According to Amoor, (2010) poor teacher's quality causes damages to the graduates of any sector in the following: It hinders the graduate from developing intellectual skills and knowledge that will equip them to contribute significantly to the society and nation at large. the usual arts Burton (2000), has it that we use art to understand who we are, our places in the world and the meaning of our lives:. This is so because art remains the universal languages that all human being understand and use for communication. Human beings have an essential drive to create and understand imagery. In our contemporary society, the visual art and dependence upon visual imagery is essential in communicating and understanding information we need to live our lives. in other to fully understand visual imagery and its meaning , it is essential that all people receive a quality arts infused education. Such education enables people to become informed citizens, critical thinkers, creative problem solvers and productive members of the society.

Poor teachers quality also denies the graduates the ability to satisfy the requirements of the labour market, thereby causing unemployment and poverty. The arts education programme is framed instrumentally as a means of supporting the rest of the school curriculum (to make it more interesting) a means to enhance students' employability and a means of developing good environmentally aware, health-conscious citizen. Therefore, when poorly imparted, the desired performance level of the students will be affected greatly.

Conclusion:

Visual art education is an important type of profession which aims at preparing visual

artists, competent art lecturers and executives for the future. In a general note, conscious efforts are being put in place to develop code of ethics for various professions in Nigeria. The reason is to increase sustenance and further development of the professions. However, it is quite difficult for the artists to stay within a code of ethics in terms of productivity as they must be allowed to explore every avenue of creativity.

This paper concludes that the existing visual art programme has the abilities and potentials for improvements thereby fostering giant developmental strides of the economy of the nation only if quality graduates are turned out of our tertiary institutions. There is rising expectations about what all students should know, and be able to do, breakthroughs in research on how children learn, and the increasing diversity of the student population have all put significant pressure on the knowledge and skills teachers must have to achieve the ambitious goal demanded of public education at the end of the 20th Century.

Therefore when high standards are important at every point in a teacher's career, when those high standards are not suspended in the face of teacher shortages, and when being an accomplished visual art teacher is recognized and adequately rewarded, then we will have visual art teachers' quality assurance and vastly greater confidence that we are providing a quality education for all students. Unless there is a commitment to enhance the quality and professionalism of the Nigerian teaching force, it is unlikely that we will achieve this national goal any time soon.

Recommendations:

This paper further recommends the following:

- ? That the Nigerian tertiary institutions of learning should do everything possible to encourage and absorb the best students of art as graduate assistants who should later be developed to become professionals rather than leaving them to the mercy of other professions.
- ? The Colleges of Education should sponsor the visual art teachers on art workshop programmes, seminars and conferences in order to broaden their knowledge in the practicals, history, art appreciation and teaching methodologies. This will also increase their level of aesthetic appreciation. This was why authors and researchers like Nwazor (2012) and Essai (2012) called for training and retraining of lecturers from time to time.
- ? The colleges should provide standard visual art studios, art materials, art text books, and journals as well a standard art equipment in every department of Fine and Applied arts.
- ? Introduction of modern techniques of performance evaluation of lecturers. These techniques should include both qualitative as well as quantitative assessment of both the lecturers, Heads of Department and the Deans of Schools such that at the end, feedback should be given to the academic staff for improvement of their performance and overcoming of their weaknesses.

- ? Furthermore, stringent measures should be put in place to discourage examination malpractice, cultism as well as checkmate the excesses of lecturers who sexually harass students.
- ? Lastly, the social status of the art teacher in the Nigerian Colleges of Education can be improved through support loans or grants/sponsorship. This would encourage them into organizing art exhibitions thereby being up their creativity. Obviously, if the teachers of art are given all the necessary financial and environmental supports listed above they would yield very high productivity level which would contribute to the development of the economy of Nigeria, and the word in general.
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