

FINE AND APPLIED ARTS EDUCATION: AN IMPERATIVE FOR NATIONAL INTEGRATION AND COHESION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Art is among the few subjects in the school curriculum as far back as 1842 A.D. Today, any nation that seeks rapid economic development, peace and unity, must make every effort to give its citizen the best education possible. Fine and Applied Arts Education is a vital instrument per excellence that a nation can depend on. Therefore the main thrust of this paper is to examine the efficacy of fine and applied arts education for achieving National integration and cohesion in Nigeria. This paper is of the opinion that provisions in National Policy on Education are adequate, and if implemented to the fullest by addressing all highlighted provisions is capable of sustaining our hard-earned National integration and cohesion. A thoroughly organized mass literacy in the creative arts for self-reliance will go a long way in re-orientating the masses towards creativity leading to self-employment of many job seekers and potential trouble shooters towards National unity and stability.

Keywords: *Fine and Applied Arts Education, Imperative, National Integration and Cohesion.*

Introduction

In this age of globalization, any nation that seeks rapid economic development, peace and unity, must make every effort to give its citizen the best education possible. Fine and Applied Arts Education is an instrument per excellence that a nation can rely on. Art is an embodiment of all the creative activities of man since time immemorial. Art has since and universally been linked to the creation of beautiful works in the visual (fine and applied arts) and performing (drama, dance, music and literary arts), this is why art is generally accepted as a universal language known to man. It is one of the oldest subject and vocation ever developed by man since ages. It is on this note that, Amadi (2017) asserts that it appears that a new vista and knowledge is unfolding in the Nigeria socio-political environment, the awareness of the efficacy of using arts and culture for national integration and unity. Therefore, this paper seeks to review the provisions of the National Policy on Education (2004 and 2013) in relation to fine and applied arts education, see its adequacies or otherwise and to proffer possible solutions for effective attainment of National integration and cohesion in Nigeria through a well organized art education in Nigeria. Before that

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is done, there will be a review of the place of art in the development of human race so as to establish the relevance of the topic on ground.

Fine and Applied Arts Education

The two major branches of the creative arts embrace visual and performing arts, while Fine art involves all the aesthetic expressions such as drawing, painting, sculpture and architecture. Applied art involves such functional works as graphics design, industrial design, textile design, ceramics and photography. Similarly, Ibrahim (2000) submitted that fine art is an art whose visual products serve decorative purposes. While, applied art are form of art whose products serve a functional purpose, which include Graphics, Textiles, Ceramics, Industrial Design, Photography and Metal work. Agreeing with these, Uzoagba (2000) as cited in Nicholas and Amayo (2021), sees the word “Fine” as what has to do with the appreciation of what is beautiful and is used to describe the branch of art which has no other function than the appeal it makes to the man’s sense of beauty. Art, has been severally defined as man’s creation as opposed to nature, it has been of immense value to human development. Art, according to Encarta Dictionary (2009), is the creation of beautiful or thought-provoking works, in painting, music or writing. Until one has discarded the idea that art is confined to drawing and painting and mere visual entertainment, one begins to recognize its immense values to the society. The highest level of human needs of self-actualization which stimulates creativity in man, according to Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs is the starting point of the artist’s creative disposition in life.

General Influence of Arts in National Integration and Cohesion

The unity (integration and cohesion) of a nation is as important to her as is her quest for sovereignty. For an unstable nation, is like a rocking ship on the high sea or turbulent plane in the air, bound to lose control, direction and likely plunge herself into slumber (Thomas & Uviomo, 2009). Art was introduced into our educational system in 1842 as Handicraft and was incorporated into the school curriculum in the early 1920’s as fine art as a vehicle for the attainment of self-reliant, strong and united nation because of its strategic position in nation building. This is why Ogbuleka (1999) claimed that apart from the numerous art forms and activities such as art exhibition and others, people are affected by art in their model reflections through jingles, film shows, placards, billboards, catalogue towards national unity and stability. The attention of passer-by is arrested by interesting advertising billboards on which consumer products are skillfully presented to the public by the artist. These may satisfy the aesthetic yearnings or give messages vividly to the passer-by or used for advertising purposes. Art in this context becomes a vital link between the consumer and the manufacturer. Apart from being catalytic for sales of goods, the billboards add to the aesthetics of the general surroundings. Today, politicians explore and exploit the works of art for their selfish aggrandizement. Organizers of protests, demonstrations, walks, and rallies have found out how effective it is to carry placards on which their minds are clearly stated by the artist (Ogbuleka, 1999). Even human models with creative inscriptions and design for cat walking have been incorporated in their demonstrations and rallies. Ogbuleka (1999) further reveals that since the end of cold war between Communist Eastern Europe and the west, Russia has been sending art works from its museums for temporary exhibitions in United States. These

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traveling art works have become a kind of diplomatic currency which has improved relationship between Russia and other nations.

Klu Kus Klan movement sprang up in the early 1960's in the United States of America. Its activities became so unbearable that many people foresaw a probable racial show-down. At this era, Guston, an American artist set up an art exhibition which satirized the movement. This was just Guston's response to the looming crisis which filtered through an elaborate visual language which sent the sect into limbo for awhile. Recently, the racial and unwanted killing of blacks by the white American Police has been contained to a bearable state due to constant demonstrations and protests by the blacks who hovers placards, posters, billboards and statues with costumes vividly inscribed and pictorially presented different degrees of unwanted racial treatment against the black. Institutions and individuals have found art works flourishing in the art market throughout the world. Auctioning of art works has become an international business in a large scale. Art theft is also national and international in large scale for economic gain. In Okeke (1978), the year of British expedition in 1897, Benin was a veritable museum and outstanding center for art culture... came to a close with wanton destruction and looting of art objects by the British soldiers and adventures.

Visitors drawn to arts venues and cultural events also bring economic benefits for other businesses. A thriving arts and cultural events help attract visitors who not only spend their money on the event themselves, but also contribute to local economies by dining in restaurants, lodging in hotels and buying of gifts and services from the respective centers and locations. Many travelers pick vacation sports not only for natural resources but for their cultural offerings. At time, visitors extend their vacation just to enjoy an area's historical background, unique music, art and delicacies. Our festivals here celebrates the rich cultural heritage of Nigeria through the showcase of indigenous music, dance steps and instruments, mask and masquerade display of different features, costumes, crafts by indigenous craftsmen, folklore exhibitions and other creative activities. This is why National Planning Commission (NPC) (2004) asserts that National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) will promote programmes that develop information and communication technology, tourism and entertainment and financial services as this will aggressively promote exports and harmonizes tariffs with regional trade organizations while protecting local industries. Film festivals have also become popular attraction which states like Bayelsa, Enugu and the federal capital Abuja to mention have long enjoyed the bump and its associated economic and social benefits resulting from these events.

Another good example as cited by Amadi (2017) is the Ojude Oba Festival in Ijebu Ode, Ogun State. Amadi reveals that the festival was occasioned to explore avenues of national integration. The main Sponsor, Globacom, called for deepening of unity in the country through intense learning of the histories, culture and tradition of the federating communities by youths. Amadi further reveals that in a goodwill message by Globacom's Chairman, he observed that the theme of the celebration, Ojude Oba: A Rich Heritage For Ijebu Unity, was a confirmation of the truism that traditions, cultures and religious beliefs were necessary ingredients that would weld peoples and races throughout the history of mankind. In another instance, Amadi (2017) reveals that at the opening ceremony of the 2017 edition of African Arts and Craft Expo, the Emir of Karshi in an opening speech posited that by promoting Arts and Culture, the unity of Nigeria is promoted

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especially in this time of separatist agitations. Art teaching can be traced to the pre-colonial era when one of the aims of education in the society was centered on character building and job creation. When a child is of age, he was made to undergo a vocation on agriculture, trade, and craft which involves weaving, smiting, hunting, carving, building and drumming. The level of development and unity in any nation depends largely upon its level of education (creativity). It is on this note that the National Policy on Education (1988-2013) adequately included the teaching of art as the basis for all forms of creativity from the pre-primary school level to the tertiary levels. In light of these, art has become a tool for translating other subjects (a mirror through which other subjects can be seen clearly), through art the child's thought are made clearer (Talabi, 1979). In same direction, Anyasdo (2006) stresses that arts now take its position among the other subjects, its aim and objectives are based on the educational needs of the society, taking its place not only in the graded art syllabus but in the master plan of the school program as a whole. Art focuses itself as the core of life and therefore should be the central core for contemporary cohesive living in the society. Reflecting on art and national integration, Akanuwor (1988) pointed out that the bedrock of any technical breakthrough is the existence of appropriate skill, abilities and competences both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in the society as a dynamic instrument of change. These can be acquired through teachings and activities in fine and applied arts. Drawing is a graphic language by which we can communicate and interpret our artistic and scientific ideas. A draughtsman who does drawings to express his inner most feelings about the society can positively change certain negative impression in the society. Portrait paintings of notable figures from different cultural diversity in the society adorn the walls of notable parks, museums and galleries. Nicholas and Amayo (2021) advocates that sculptors can be commissioned by various governments in Nigeria to decorate notable public squares, market squares, and other places of interest as these will contribute to the development, beautification and unification of our society. Textile designer in the textiles industries, factories and mills produces designs of different motifs which they reproduce into clothes like Kampala through the process of tie and dye; super-print through the process of batik. Morally, art education teaches satisfaction in the self, thereby eliminating greed, envy and disregard for our fellow man. It also discourages the self-destructive attitude because the child works with the spirit of creation. In group work, a selfless attitude is encouraged and respect for the leader of the group and one another. Talabi (1979), posits that aesthetic education is the only education that brings grace to the body and nobility to the mind. It is evident the art education has much to contribute in character and moral development of the individual in our society. Great philosophers like Plato, Pestalozzi, Froebel and Montessori agree, that art education develops aesthetic sensibilities (Uzoagba, 1991). Further states that art education kindles the development of other sensibilities like our sense of value for personality development to bring about well-adjusted and contributing member of the society. Now that man has began to shape his environment in accordance with the laws of beauty and thereby molding the image of man and his relationship according to the law of beauty, art has become vital to human existence, national integration and stability.

The Arts and National Policy on Education

Creative Arts which was first introduced into our educational system in 1842 as Handicraft and incorporated into school curriculum in the early 1920's as Fine Art, gained proper recognition in our education industry after the historic 1969 curriculum conference as one of the core subject

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(NPE, 2004). In line with this, Nwana (1999), claimed that since independence (and perhaps even before then) the first ever formal expression of the aims and objectives of education for Nigeria can be found in the volumes of National Policy on Education (1977, 1981 and 2004 editions). It is important to note that Nigeria in its national policy on education has adopted and placed education as an instrument for effecting and achieving national development, integration and stability. That is to say, education is to foster self-reliance, strong and united Nigeria among others.

The National Policy on Education (NPE) (2004) has provision for the teaching of Art at all levels of Education. It recognized the role of art education (Fine and Applied Arts) as one of the powerful instrument for self-reliant economy. It is one of the disciplines in our educational programme that avail learners the opportunity to acquire appropriate skills, abilities and competencies for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society. However, Ubagida (2004), observed that in reality the teaching of art at the primary and secondary levels of education have not been fully effective because it has not been effectively implemented.

A self-reliant nation is the one that can solve its developmental problems using human material resources predominantly sourced from within its border. A strong nation is one that can physically and effectively define its borders, citizens, and interests against internal and external threats of aggression. A united nation is one which all sections and component parts identify with same goals and see themselves as one, caring for each other and living together. If the attainment of these laudable objectives means attainment of national unity and stability, how can an effective utilization of the Visual Arts help in its sustenance? The Creative Arts which is the basis for a self-reliant and united nation is being given a lot of impetus in the planning stage of our education system but given little or no attention at the implementation stage. For instance, how many primary and secondary schools in Nigeria have specialist and qualified Fine and Applied Arts teachers, Music and Dance as stipulated in the National Policy on Education?

The role of art has been over emphasized in our educational system as the medium for unity and instruction for all subjects among others but it has not been given adequate attention for proper training of the students/pupils. Other provision not been implemented include:

- Provision of staff and facilities for the teaching of creative arts and crafts and music at the basic (primary and junior secondary) levels of education where the subject is supposed to be compulsory.
- Provision of In-service Training for serving art teachers, to enable them updates their knowledge.
- Employment of traditional craftsmen to supplement the efforts of trained art teachers even at the basic (junior secondary) schools.
- Encouragement of cultural programmes utilizing not only the educational system but also the mass media, Television, Video, Tape recorder, Computer, News papers, Radios for the promotion of Nigeria cultural life in music and song, drama and dance, religion and social behavior, family and community customs, dress and decoration, hosting and entertainment, fine and plastic arts oral and written literature.

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- Creation of a body for the preservation of the above cultural programmes of their purity and integrity, and the control of their progressive development in order to arrest the current liberty of the mass media and the corrupting influence of exotic culture.

The above measures were envisaged not to satisfy academic curiosity but to prepare for great venture of national integration and cohesion. Nigeria is at a cross-road of nationhood now and only a consciously articulated path to an overall national growth in arts can do the magic.

Conclusion

Fine and Applied Arts Education as an imperative for National integration and cohesion in Nigeria can be achieved if the provisions of National Policy on Education are implemented. That is, to say, the provisions in the NPE for Fine and Applied Arts are adequate to carry us through and capable of solving the looming instability in Nigeria. Creative arts are capable of developing a wholesome Nigeria youths in the cognitive, affective and psycho-productive domain. That is the acquisition of skills, abilities, knowledge and morals for self-sustenance. Apart from art students, others can be influenced by art in their modal reflections through film shows, billboards, placards, jingles, among others towards National unity and stability.

Recommendations

To attain the much needed National development, integration, cohesion and stability:

1. Art curriculum should be implemented to the fullest by addressing all highlighted provisions.
2. A thoroughly organized mass literacy in the creative arts for self-reliance will go a long way in re-orientating the masses towards creativity leading to self-employment of many job seekers and potential trouble shooters.
3. Art works with positive implications can be employed during political rallies and national orientation exercises.
4. Art at the socio-cultural level should be such that can promote national image, purity and integration.
5. When using art works for political purposes, it should not stir political acrimony to avoid breakdown of law and order.
6. Art should be made compulsory at all level of our education if not as a major but as an elective course at the tertiary level.
7. Art exhibitions and excursions should be encouraged by schools, colleges, enterprises and government agencies among students and teachers of arts as it will increase:
 - a. Ample opportunity for the development of students' artistic horizon further than classroom situation.
 - b. Opportunity for the teachers to exchange ideas in the field of art.
 - c. Provision of varieties of tourist, excursion and view centers for public.

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