

CHALLENGES AND INTEGRATION OF FINE ARTS EDUCATION: THE WAY FORWARD BY
USING ICT IN POST - PRIMARY SCHOOL LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

Fine arts as a key learning area within the post primary school curriculum is an essential component of every Nigeria post- primary schools. It is a part of school education that focuses on a wide range of arts, such as painting, drawing and sculpture. When looking at a subject like arts education, there are opinions about whether it is a good skill for schools to teach or whether it is unnecessary and a waste of money. The course has many problems that arise as a result of differing opinions. Fine Arts education as an area of study has many challenges because its importance is not always noticeable. The thoughts that arts are unnecessary are one of the main challenges art education faces in Nigeria. This paper discusses the concept of fine arts and its importance in post-primary school level. It x-rays the historical underpinnings for fine arts education, challenges in practicing Fine Arts education in Nigeria and its Integration as well as the way forward and in addition, by using information and communication technology. The paper therefore recommends that, Fine Arts as a subject should be included as main subject like other subjects to improve the condition of its practices and help students nurture their potential through the use of information and communication Technology. This will facilitate motivation and interest of the students on the subject and encourage positive impacts on students' behavior. The incorporation of this subject more in the curriculum and syllabus will help students in their positive mental growth.

KEYWORDS: Fine arts, Education, Challenges and Integration, Information and Communication Technology

INTRODUCTION

The Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) in National Policy on Education reveals the curriculum that have objectives and strategies to foster Fine Arts. It aims to enrich learners' minds and intellect to nourish their attitudes and persuade them to exercise discipline in their mental world and work. Besides, it also aims for inspiring students to nurture and enrich their aesthetic life and assisting them to resist the danger of present decay of social value in the society. Children develop their social skills, their self-respect, and self-esteem through participating in different activities that involve Fine arts (Schirmmacher, 2002). Arslan (2014) asserts that, Fine Art education affects all the developmental fields. Children learn how to express his ideas depending on their developmental levels and turn the concepts they learn into artistic forms. Such different branches of art as painting, music, dance, and drama offer significant opportunities for all the children from different age and skill groups.

In addition, Fine Art and culture's core practice is one of the most participative, dynamic, and social forms of human behavior. It has the capacity to trigger reflection, generate empathy, create dialogue, foster new ideas and relationships, and offers a powerful and democratic way of expressing, sharing, and shaping values." (Common Cause Foundation, 2013). Jacobson (2011) stated that, John Dewey, an American Philosopher and educationist believed that Arts is a fundamental component in education because it fostered creativity and self-expression. Jacobson (2011) also cited another professor of Fine arts in Stanford University explaining that, environment shapes artistic attitudes and that art education has unique contributions to make in the education and intellectual growth of children.

According to Gardner (1998) cited in Tungate (2013), schools should help children create meaning from experience; this requires an education that includes a connection to the senses, meaning and the imagination. Curriculum should foster the theory of multiple intelligence and creative cognition. Gardner (1999) himself in one of his own articles explained that Fine Arts assist students to develop other consequential academic activities. Hence, to foster the Fine Arts education, there is an immense importance of curriculum to address this subject. The article "Creativity and Arts in the Primary School" tries to depict the fact that to develop a learner's ability to think, reason and understand the world and its culture, a Fine Arts education could provide a proper helpful curriculum. Nigeria education policy states several strategies to foster this subject. Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) o her policy on education aims that, Fine Arts will be introduced at the primary and secondary levels as an optional subject. Measures will be taken for phase-wise teaching of different forms of Fine Arts education at both levels in all the educational institutions. Necessary steps will be taken to develop Fine Arts education to achieve professional ends." However, although the fine arts have enormous positive impacts on the student's holistic development, our educational context considers this subject in a different manner.

FINE ARTS AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Fine arts refer to subjects that add a new dimension to a student's education in terms of intellect, creativity, and learning. These are subjects that enhance students' creativity and learning capability through nourishing their interests. According to Jacobson (2011), John Dewey, an American Philosopher and educationist believed that Fine Arts is a fundamental component in education because it fostered creativity and self-expression. He also explained that students' artistic attitudes are shaped by practicing arts education and there is a huge contribution of these subjects on holistic education and intellectual growth of children.

Hence, this subject plays a vital role in case of a student's overall growth. Vohra (2019) contends that, learning the Fine Arts doesn't just foster the creative development of a child, but also assists in advancing and refining his or her core skills, which in fact goes towards boosting academic achievement as well." Building on the same point and also denoting to the future of the world economy. In his article, Jones (2019) mentioned that, giving children a Fine Arts Education is essential to create the kinds of skills necessary for the modern, creative economy. The learning of Fine Arts focuses our attention to the importance of these subjects by describing that different skills including confidence, creativity, imagination, and competence build among students through multiple sensory experiences such as visual, tactile, etc (Mansourieh, 2019). Therefore, suffice it to say that this subject plays a vital role in students' holistic growth. Phillip (2019) cited in Udi and Nwosu (2023) declares that there are evidences of improvement, health and efficient functioning of the human brain, the result is that the brain waves, emotion and the nervous system are imparted leading to increase of serotonin levels, a chemical required by the body to regulate mood, appetite, digestion, sleep, memory, social behavior, sexual desire and overall functioning of the human body. The usefulness of Fine Arts Education cannot be overemphasized ; it is priceless rather researches over the decade are enough proofs that the school curriculum should build in Fine Arts Education and give it the required attention to build a people and at large a formidable society for growth and economic emancipation.

HISTORICAL UNDERPINNINGS FOR FINE ARTS EDUCATION

Students and adults learn by doing. Fine Arts education, by nature, is the education of doing via creating, performing, presenting, producing, responding, reflecting, and connecting, and in three main strands. Those strands being arts for "art's" sake, integrated arts, and arts in the content areas – birth through life (Joseph, 2014, 2019; National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS), 2014). Additionally, Fine Arts education has been a subject area that is taught in person. The Fine Arts student and the Fine Arts Educator form a relationship via an interactive process, argued by John Dewey in his many writings about education and learning as social and interactive processes; whereas the school itself is a social institution through which social reform can and should take place, and where art is taught as experience.

Erikson (1963) developed a philosophy and theory of psycho-social theory, where meaningful relationships and relevant social interactions birth through life were essential to a whole and balanced person, with childhood, school, teachers, friends, neighborhoods, achievement and accomplishment, adolescent, peers, groups, work and social life, all of which were shuttered during the pandemic yet are critical to one's well-being and development. The CASEL model of social and emotional learning further validates Dewey, Erikson, and others in stressing the importance of how school allows people to develop in ways that will assist them in success in their personal and professional practices and areas of calling (Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning, 2020). Fine arts education naturally, authentically, and intentionally provides relationships through the artistic processes of creating, performing, presenting, producing, responding, reflecting, and connecting—fostering relevance and rigor in learning that has lasting and life-long positive effects, as well as meaning and transfer to all cultures. Social justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion are essential elements of arts education—connecting learning around the world via dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts through individual and collaborative processes and experiences. Social-emotional learning is at the heart of arts education (CASEL, 2020; Petrokubi, Bates, & Malinis, 2019).

CHALLENGES IN PRACTICING FINE ARTS EDUCATION

The biggest challenge here is the financial condition of the students. In most of the educational institutions from primary to tertiary levels, be it government or be it private or NGO run, students' financial ability plays crucial role in their studies. Students have various needs ranging from arts tools, materials, books and all kinds of facilities and equipment to assist and facilitate learning and practicing arts. Most of the time they are unable to practice at home due to unavailability of the instruments and proper props (Arslan, 2014). One of the main challenges is the large number of students and lack of instruments against the student number. This resonates with the fact that number of students determines other factors like availability of instruments and other logistics for Fine arts and also space for the students to practice and learn these properly (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS), 2014). Students often sit on the floor. There is also a lack of space for the students and the teachers to take classes, lack of proper instruments and other logistics required for these subjects. Besides, space and logistics, another big challenge in the schools is the number of students. In most schools, the number of students in each class is really big that it becomes nearly impossible for a single teacher to reach out to every individual especially for these subjects (Mansourieh, 2019). According to Deka (2017), there is a scarcity of proper props for the class as only an old pair of table and harmonium are found for using. The student number, on the other hand is pretty big to accommodate everybody inside the small room. Besides accommodation and scarcity of proper props for this subject. The number of students is so huge that the teacher used to struggle to reach every individual which eventually was hampering the whole classroom learning environment. In addition to this large number of students, availability of trained teachers in these subjects and also teacher-student ratio are the other challenges. Even if the schools want to keep new teachers, this

involves payment for them. Government schools may have some protocols regarding this but most of the time it becomes a challenge for the private schools (Vohra, 2019). However, although the Fine Arts subject is found to leave impact on students' growth, imagination and overall learning, there have been challenges in fostering these subjects as per students' and institutions' requirements. Problem has been found that in many cases these subjects are taught in primary sections of schools while providing facilities for these in secondary or higher secondary sections are tough (NCCAS), 2014). In addition to this, there are challenges with attitude of both students and institutional authorities towards these subjects. Also, there are problems with the curriculum and policy as well. Olafsson and Autio et al., (2010)'s study on Fine Arts education found that the lessons for these subjects are provided with less time than that of the common core academic subjects. It also found that even the students give more emphasis on their theoretical subjects. Besides, challenges lie in educational structure for these subjects, availability of related resources, institutional premises and so on. Hanna (2013) research on arts education discovered that, due to the neglectful attitudes described before, primary art education in Nigeria suffers from a serious structural problem. Schools do not have a common practical art teaching manual. The teachers are challenged by space limitations, for both work and storage. Working with the hands requires a workstation for everyone." Nevertheless, Nigeria is addressing Fine Arts education in our educational institutions.

Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) on the National Policy of Education aims reveal that, Fine Arts should be introduced at the primary and secondary levels. Measures should be taken for phase-wise teaching of different forms of Fine Arts at both levels in all the educational institutions. Necessary steps should be taken to develop Fine Arts education to achieve professional ends." However, there are challenges faced in implementing these. Rahman (2019) mentioned in one of his articles that in the past there were a lot of opportunities for students in schools, colleges, and universities of our country to participate in various cultural activities which have been lessened in an alarming rate in most of the educational institutions nowadays. He also cited one of the renowned child literary person and organizer, Imam (2016) saying that, there are several human elements that help a human being grow up in the right manner, be it through stories, be it music or dance. But unfortunately, all of these are missing in Nigeria educational institutions at present. Nigeria has gone through different historical challenges that have affected our art and culture and thus the education system especially in case of these subjects. Hence, we need to re-think about these subjects as Selim (2014) found that solidarity and cultural differences must be rethought in order to minimize the changes and challenges in Fine Arts in a holistic approach.

THE WAY FORWARD AND ITS INTEGRATION BY USING INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

With the current trend in this 21st century there is game changing in the way things are done and Fine Arts cannot be an exception. Technology has a lot to offer in this dimension even though it is very clear to note that creativity is the core value of Fine Arts as a subject, as a

profession and also as Fine Arts Education inclusive. Be it as it may, the use of ICT would act as a vehicle to ginger the interest of both the teachers and the students and would bring more motivation to facilitate the teaching and learning process. According to Harmon (2019) technology has taken the space “whether you are a fan or not” reporting a statement by Bernard that educators and developers are producing tools and application to improve education. Identifying these ten ways include the following;

- i) The use of several applications and tools by students to create their own arts. These applications could be Aviary, Paper 53, Doodle Art, Green Screen, Kaleida Cam Pics Art and Procreate. These include animation and motion picture.
- ii) Allows manipulation and transformation of traditional art a term known as “app smashing” where the use two or more apps can manipulate an art work. Drawings can be edited using Aviary and Pics Arts tool can be used to add other editions especially in photography.
- iii) Technology enables flipped learning which allows sharing of information between students consistently and easily without repetition. Student at distances or absentees can have access to instructional resources like video demonstrations created using technology such as Chrome books or iPads. The use of flipped model enables the reduction of time on teaching concepts and enables student-directed learning. Flipped learning generally facilitates Fine Arts Education learning.
- iv) The use of technological resources like projectors, document cameras, iPads, Chromebooks, and SMART boards has the ability to transform Fine Arts teaching Strategies which could accelerate the course to another level. The era of the use of only the print format resource in teaching and learning is over. Technology has become an integral part of education process, presenting information in new, effective ways. Students have access to various websites for views of museums and the current trend in the Arts world such as museums like Louvre.
- v) With the use of technology there are various rooms for research opportunities. A way of redirecting students’ use of their time on smart phones on more positive energy rather than frivolities. The use of these tools such as laptops, smartphones, tablets to mention a few will produce critical thinkers and solution solvers which will be beneficial to class projects, education and the building of the entire society at large.
- vi) Technology makes the assessment of student’s very easy giving provision for quick and easy tracking of students’ progress by making available digital portfolios, where the teacher can view their arts works. Such popular apps for digital portfolios include Creatubbles, SeeSaw, and [Artsonia](#). The use Google Classroom also enables older students to document their work.
- vii) Technology has put into learning an experience that is of excitement and fun. This could be achieved when the students are also fully involved in their learning through sharing of information, collaboration, and acquisition of 21st-century

- skills for a holistic development; psychologically, mentally, physically, intellectually which will also enable development of critical thinking, communication and creativity.
- viii) Enables integration of formative assessments in the arts room with ease even with large numbers of students without being overwhelmed. Technology one the ability to conduct effective and organized formative assessments depending on the app or platform chosen.
 - ix) Technology promotes collaboration which facilitate the development of self-esteem and self-reliance as they see what their counterparts and also allowing students the opportunity to practice working well with others. There are a various ways to promote this skill through the use of technology.
 - x) Using technology in the teaching and learning process promotes students' engagement, the result which is the ability get them focused and develop interest in their work while learning while learning. Interacting with the learning resources are engaging such as viewing a Google Slide presentation of famous arts or being assessed using Plickers, can easily catch students' attention.

Whether you use loads of technology or are just getting started, the fact that you are implementing forms of technology in your class is a step in the right direction. As you can see, there are a variety of benefits helpful to both you and your students. Teachers should try to mitigate these challenges by taking initiatives like teaching and completing their learning in the schools since they get minimum opportunity at their home to practice these subjects. Besides, they should try to build new spaces to help students learn and practice these subjects in the school premises. They should try to build new buildings to make some space for the students to practice these subjects. However, the administrators should look forward to the government to take actions special regarding the curriculum and also recruiting more qualified teachers for this subject to ensure the best learning experience for the students. Since the government can control the teacher's recruitment process in government schools, they can emphasize more on this and recruit more expert teachers for these subjects which might mitigate these challenges. In school, the teachers should be very friendly. Even though if the room is too small to even sit properly, they should not wait for that convenience to take place rather tried to manage the class inside that small room. The teachers should try from their own end to mitigate the challenges as much as possible. For example, the teachers should computer literate and be trained to have skills which will boost their competence in education of the subject.

CONCLUSION

Teachers who are responsible for teaching Fine arts must be at the centre of any reform in arts education, and must be able to follow the revision of the curricula step-by-step. This is an excellent way to ensure their acceptance of the proposed educational project and their competence in the use of information and communication technology is paramount as far as driving this integration is concern for the advancement of Fine Arts in the various artistic fields and Fine Arts Education as a profession. Great importance must be given to the training of teachers in visual arts, dance, music, theatre, etc., if the quality of Fine Arts Education is to be upgraded, and thereby of school education in general, is to be improved. For instance, the initial training of Fine arts teachers must not only take into account new teaching methods that emphasize the creativity and traditional know-how of the community, but also the use of electronic tools as a means of artistic production and learning and a source of knowledge that can no longer be ignored.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are as follows:

- The Fine Arts curriculum in all levels from the primary to tertiary institutions should reflect the current trend of integration information and communication technology. This is due to the fact that, a curriculum can provide with a proper guideline for this subject. It helps the teachers in designing a session based on its objectives, learning outcomes, and overall students' growth.
- The curriculum should include proper directions and instructions for the teachers on how to teach these subjects in a student-centric manner so that it helps the teachers understand the instructions more easily and design their sessions prioritizing students' need.
- Government should recruit expert teachers who are technologically bias on teaching Fine arts in every primary schools so that the students get the opportunity to learn from the expert ones.
- Government should increase and allot a particular amount of budget behind these subjects for the government schools and should make it mandatory for the private schools also to keep a particular amount of budget for this subject.
- Trainings are provided for only the government teachers at present. This should be available for the private school teachers too.
- Fine Arts as a subject should be included as main subject like other subjects to improve the condition of its practices and help students nurture their potentials. As this subject has positive impacts on students' behavior, incorporation of this subject more in the curriculum and syllabus will help students in their positive mental growth.

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