
RETHINKING VISUAL ARTS EDUCATION TO ACHIEVING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRATIC REFORMS IN NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

Education remains the effective tool for the development of any nation. When it is properly adopted, it will meet the need of the society. The paper discusses rethinking Visual arts education to achieving socio-economic development and democratic reforms in Nigeria. The present curriculum in Visual arts education is examined with the challenges being faced presently in the country on socio-economic development and democratic reforms in Nigeria. Several factors led to the prevailing situations in Nigeria. Among them are unemployment, underemployment, insecurity challenges, economic hardship, poverty, sundry crimes and lots more. Visual arts education as a vocational course of study in the College of Education is embedded with skills. Each of the skills is enterprising. The paper identifies various aspects of Visual arts education that one can engage in and be enterprising. The methods of instructions in Visual arts education were also discussed. The paper recommends the new and modern method of instruction in Visual arts education. Emphasis should be placed on eighty percent of the use of technology to execute artworks while in training. There should be frequent training, workshops, conferences, art exhibition and excursion fully sponsored by the government for Visual arts teachers at all levels of education.

Key words: Development, Enterprising, Method of Instruction, Visual Arts Education

Introduction

Education is the foundation as well as the crucial factor for the development of individuals and the society. It plays a vital role in the orientation of the citizens of the country. Hence in Nigeria, the National Policy on Education (2014) emphasizes that the quality of education shall be functional and a foundation for the promotion of development and progress in Nigeria. In the Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs) (SDG, 2015), one of the goals stress that the quality of education given to the citizen takes place in a nation to promote development and unity of that nation.

Education is a process which is gradual and it requires acquisition of knowledge, skills and its application through effective and systematic method of teaching. Education is also used to transmit values in the society. Cultural norms and skills in the community are transmitted through education. Therefore education can be formal or informal. Formal education takes place inside the school setting while the informal one is outside the school, and it is known as traditional education or indigenous education (Ogunjide and Oladimeji, 2012). UNESCO (2006) explains the importance of education that it is a Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This enables man to have power to live a better life in the society. It also helps man to be initiative and break away from the cycle of poverty if properly imbued, which eventually makes him useful and contributes meaningfully to the society at large.

Contrary to the expectation of the citizens of Nigeria on the provision of education; it seems educational system in the country has not fulfilled its function as expected. The reason educational system is not working for us as expected is that despite the fact that policies have been formulated and implemented, it has become worrisome without any appreciable changes.

Some of the educational policies are Universal Primary Education UPE in 1976 by the then Federal Government of Nigeria. Also in 1977 and 1980s another programme on education was launched called '6-3-3-4 system' which hopes to cater for the people of the society (Odo, 2019). Those reforms and others were meant to make education functional and meet the needs of the society. The current tide of development on education now is on Science and Technology with the aim of catching up with the technological advancement in advanced countries. Yet in Nigeria, it seems the system is not functioning as it supposed to be. What is left for us now is to rethink our education to achieve socio-economic development and democratic reforms. The paper therefore focuses on rethinking visual arts education to achieving socio- economic development and democratic reforms in Nigeria.

Visual art education

Visual arts, Creative arts or Fine and Applied arts are courses of study in the school of secondary education, Vocational and Technical Education Programmes in colleges of education in Nigeria. Visual arts is of different views by the artists. It is the product, imagination or dreams of man executed through a medium. In Egonwa (2012), visual arts is viewed as the aspect of human culture that passes message through visual forms. Kalilu (2013) views visual arts as an encompassing discipline or subject that combines different areas of specializations.

Visual arts, unlike other arts, is divided into two, which are Fine art and Applied arts. All of which are either two-dimensional or three-dimensional forms. The two-dimensional art forms are Graphics, Painting, Textiles and Drawing. The three-dimensional are sculpture and

ceramics. The fine art tends to appeal to the beauty of man that is aesthetics while applied arts are meant to serve utilitarian purposes.

Visual art education is being faced with major problems that hinder the effectiveness of its objectives. Okunlola (2011) identifies some of the problems, which are none recognition of the subject and its importance, no necessary attention given to Visual arts education as it ought to be by the educational policy makers in the country and the mad rush for science subjects by the government, parents and the society which play a significant role in drawing back the clock of the visual art education. Today in the education sector, visual art is given less attention. Other subjects that they feel are superior are given double periods, laboratories and other learning materials while none is given to visual arts. It is even placed as pre-vocational elective subjects in Junior Secondary School (JSS) and vocational electives in Senior Secondary School (SSS) (Babalola & Laba, 2018).

Prevailing Situation Affecting Socio- Economic Reforms in Nigeria

The prevailing conditions in Nigeria today call for rethinking and redirecting education so as to achieve economic and democratic reforms. Some of the conditions are population expansion, high rate of unemployment and underemployment.

In Nigeria, there has been large turnout of the graduates from higher institutions of learning. These graduates are either underemployed or not employed at all. The increase in unemployment and underemployment has affected the socio-economic development in the nation. The productive or working class that are supposed to exhibit initiative are one way or the other handicapped for certain reasons.

Poverty and poor management system: The high rate of poverty among the citizens of a nation as well as poor management system pose problem to the socio-economic development of any nation. Poverty has led to many crimes being experienced in the nation today: some of the crimes are banditry, cybercrime, kidnappings either for rituals or for ransoms, human and hard drug trafficking and others. All these and others constitute to the decline in socio-economic development in the nation.

Irrelevant curriculum, obsolete equipment and lack of relevant learning materials: the curriculum that worked effectively some years back cannot serve as it used to be. Some of the contents of the curriculum are not relevant to the need of the contemporary society. Also, learning materials that are not relevant contributes negatively to the present socio-economic development in the nation. When learners are not properly instructed or are half baked, the result will tell on the output of the learners. The use of obsolete equipment and tools constitute problems to the well-being of the socio-economic development of the nation.

Population Growth: There are problems that usually accompany the population growth. The resources and adequate facilities may not match the corresponding rapid growth in population. This is what we are experiencing in Nigeria. Today, some of the problems associated with population growth are high rate of unemployment, overcrowding, high rate in crime and others (Oyedemi & Lawal, 2018). Those problems and other challenges not properly attended to pose threat to the socio-economic development of any nation.

The plight of Nigeria education system at all levels also poses challenges to the socio-economic development of the nation. Some of the challenges are frequent strike actions, poor remuneration of staff, inability to have access to grants for research as well as training, inadequate financing of educational sector couple with inconsistency in political support for the sector. These in turn affect the socio-economic development of the country.

Rethinking Visual Arts Education for Better Response

The society is changing every day. There is need for the nation to revisit the policy on education and its goals at all levels. If there is a right thinking motive on education, then, there will be better improvement in socio-economic development in the nation. In Nigeria higher education system, there are seven main goals education (FGN, 1998; Iwowi, 2006, p. 1). They are:

- i. to contribute to national development;
- ii. to develop and inculcate capacity proper values for the survival of the individual and society;
- iii. to develop the intellectual capacity of individuals;
- iv. to acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
- v. to promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
- vi. to forge and cement national unity; and
- vii. to promote national and international understanding and interaction.

If all the goals itemized above are to be realized today in Nigeria, there is need to rethink our education system for better response. Since visual art education is one of the courses of study in Nigeria higher institution, it needs also to follow suit and fulfill the above goals.

Mode of Institutional Delivery: The mode of instruction in visual arts education should include multi-media and the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) should blend with various earliest known methods of instruction. The learning activities should be directed toward problem-solving in the form of innovation and creativity that could contribute positively to socio-economic development and democratic reforms in Nigeria.

There should be curriculum reform which will include creativity, innovation and sustainable development. There should be a drastic or significant change from the old curriculum to the new to cater for the present needs in the society. The curriculum of visual art education should be reformed so that each learner will be innovative, creative, and achieve success which will eventually bring about socio-economic development of the nation. For this to take place, the quality of education should be greatly improved.

Refocusing Visual Art Education for Professionalization of Teaching: There is nowhere in the world where one is not a certified medical practitioner and practices in the hospital. There is need to have qualified and trained teachers for the visual art education. Where there is none, the personnel should be encouraged to register for post-graduate diploma in Education or its equivalent. This will enhance the quality of students produced in this field of study. The need for automation and globalization is necessary in Nigeria education system. It has been observed that the system has failed us (Okon & Ezekiel, 2014). The phenomena of automation and globalization will link the graduate of visual art education to the new world, this will increase the knowledge. The use of machine, control system and other means should be introduced to the visual art education students. Okon and Ezekiel (2014) opine that the impact of globalization is introduction or impacting the right knowledge, values and skills needed to bring about global economy in this 21st century.

Vocational Skills in Visual Arts Education for Socio-Economic Development and Democratic Reforms in Nigeria

The rapid development in visual art practice and dynamic changes in the world of art made it possible to contribute immensely to the socio-economic development and democratic reforms in the nation. Some of the vocational skills that can be acquired during visual training are:

Textile Arts: These are works of the art in two-dimensional design (2-D) and the medium can be cloth majorly with other materials. Various skills that can be acquired are: cloth weaving as in “Asooke” horizontal narrow loom which are practiced in some Yorubaland such as Iseyin, Oyo, Osogbo to mention a few. Others are Akwete cloth weaving on a broad loom. Embroidery, fashion design, tie& dye, appliqué, stage and theatre decoration, marketing and export of textile products and others. There had been rapid development in this art which had grown the socio-economy of this nation (Adebayo, Lala & Ajibade, 2018, p. 126 -136).

Ceramics Art Practice: Unlike textile, ceramics art practice is three-dimensional (3-D). Most ceramic art works are available both at home and offices. Among ceramic art practices are porcelaine, pottery, glassware, mosaic, stone ware, earth ware, tiles, stained glass and others.

Painting: painting is mostly two dimensional (2-D) art, but it can be done on three dimensional surfaces. Paintings are done on the human body. It is called body decoration and the art of tattoo. Tattoo is the use of symbols and signs on the body of some people for a specific purpose such as festivals and other ceremonies. Paintings are mural painting, portraiture, landscape, seascape, imaginative and others. An artist can decide to be a collector, marketing and exporting of these art works. These and others in one way or the other contribute positively to the socio-economic development of the nation, if properly harnessed by the visual art educators.

Sculpture by practice is three dimensional (3-D) arts. The dynamism in the contemporary society has made the art useful in many ways. Some of the sculptural art practices are decorative metal wares, bronze and brass casting, the art of making quality and durable jewelries, household utensils, mobile stores, metal doors and gates, blacksmithing, woodcarving and ivory carving. The modern use of these sculptural pieces has a great influence on the economy of the nation.

Graphic design: This is the use of text and visual to express ideas in communicating to the public. Graphic art practice nowadays has taken a new shape. Available areas are photography, photo journalism, media and publicity, digital banner, electronic billboards, packaging, advertisement, animation, cartoon, customized fabric, printing, publishing large format image printing, graphic or visual communication. These,when adequately explored can be used to achieve socio-economic development and democratic reforms in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The system, tradition and the practices of the world we live in today are dynamic and fast developing than ever before and this is noticed in every phase of life. In our contemporary world setting today there should be rethinking of visual art education so as to achieve socio-economic development and democratic reforms in the nation. The visual art teacher in training can only be useful to the society if there is dynamic rethinking in the field of study. Prevailing situations in the country can be curbed when visual arts education is properly harnessed. Mode of instruction should be in compliance with the need of the contemporary society. Visual arts education should be refocused for professionalization in teaching. The

order of the day such as automation, Information Communication Technology (ICT) and globalization should be put in place.

Recommendations

- Curriculum contents should be re-designed to meet the present need of the society.
- Mode of instructional delivery to the student should be with automation and globalization.
- Adequate and modern workshop and equipment should be provided by the stakeholders in education in Colleges of Education, especially visual arts education.
- Emphasis should be on creativity for self-reliance after the completion of the training.
- Regular workshop, exhibition and conferences should be organized by the stakeholders in education for visual art educators to attend thereby and this is useful to help the society in achieving socio-economic and democratic reforms as expected.
- Government should be encouraged to sponsor visual arts lecturers for international workshops outside Nigeria as they do to some political office holders.
- To encourage the students of visual art education, TETFUND and other organization should give laptops to students at the beginning of their course of study.

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