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## Arts Education in Nigeria: A Global Challenges and Implication for National Development



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**Adikpe, John Ode\*<sup>1</sup>, Ochigbo Oga Gabriel<sup>1</sup>, Enyi Uko Jairus<sup>2</sup>**

*<sup>1</sup>Department of General Studies Education, College of Education, Oju, Benue State, Nigeria*

*<sup>2</sup>Department of Fine and Applied Arts, College of Education, Oju, Benue State, Nigeria*

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### ABSTRACT

The idea of education is not alien to the Arts and Sciences. In a world where interdisciplinary tendencies tend to obliterate boundaries of independence, the areas add up to unity. However, there seems to be a carry-over mentality for official behavior, where more emphasis seems to be allotted to the sciences. The posture manifests clearly in the funding of scientific projects and researches. The sonorous advertisements of technology and its “transfer” bear courses witness to the above position. In Nigeria, parents encourage their children to study sciences and science oriented courses. The sciences are given priority and in our modern society, Arts seems to have clearly lost. The paper seeks to bring to lime-light the importance of Arts Education, its challenges and implication for national development.



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## INTRODUCTION

Education in the Arts is an integral part of development of each human being. Those who have studied the learning processes throughout the ages have emphasized the importance of the arts in the education process. Kaagan (1998) affirms that study in the arts is integral to our society; the arts being part of the cultural heritage, making us most human and most complete as people.

Arts education refers to education in the discipline of visual and creative arts. Wikipedia (2011) clearly defines it as encompassing all the visual arts, that is, painting, graphics, instructor, and the arts being studied as an individual disciplines and integrated into general subject matter teaching.

As Kaagan (1998) infers, sufficient data exists to overwhelmingly support the belief that the study and participation in the visual arts is a key component in improving learning throughout all academic fields. With effectiveness in reducing student dropout, raising student attendance, developing better team players, fostering a love for learning, improving greater student dignity, enhancing student creativity and producing a more prepared citizen for the workplace for tomorrow. In fact, it restores the dignity of man.

Evidence from research is one of the many reasons educations and engagement in the visual arts is beneficial to the educational process and society at large. Jensen (2011) explains that the arts develop neural systems that produce a broad spectrum of benefits ranging from fine motor skills to creativity and improved emotional balance, enhancing the process of learning. The system they nourish, which include our integrated sensory attention, cognitive, emotional and motor capacities are infact, the driving forces behind all other learning. Visual arts are basic to general education of students. The arts experience makes a very significant contribution to the mental, emotional and social growth of the students. Arts stimulate thought and acts as a medium for developing creative and critical thinking in man. Arts education offers the students the opportunity to further refine skills and focus on the ability to utilize skills, creative thinking and problem solving in order to develop their own beliefs and values.

Arts education recognizes individuality of each student and provides opportunity to explore and discover self-esteem. Thus, self-esteem is fostered through acquiring skills and expertise through cognitive and affective investigation. Arts education has substantive content and

vigor beyond its creative expression and enables students to bring shape and order to their challenging and changing world.

### **Benefits of Arts Education**

In the words of Michelle Obama, “My husband and I strongly believe that arts education is essential for building innovative thinkers who will be our nation’s leaders for tomorrow...” and what does arts education do for the individual and for the society? How does art contribute to education at all levels? Though there are many answers, a few listed below stand out as crucial in today’s social and economic climate.

Arts means work: Beyond the qualities of creativity, self-expression and communication, arts is a type of work. Through arts, one learns the meaning of work, work done to the best of one’s ability, for its own sake, for satisfaction and for a job well done. Bryan (2000) infers that there is a desperate need for personal fulfillment, work for social recognition, work for economic development. This seems to buttress Ward (2011) who views that the falling global competitiveness is blamed on education, our schools, universities and other system being broken and no longer fit for purpose. Our population can be prepared to better internalize, reflect, boil down apply and synthesize information from many different sources over extended frames and this is better achieved to a great dimension by arts education.

Work is one of the noblest expression of the human spirit and art is the visible evidence of work carried to the highest possible level. Today, we learn of productivity and workmanship, both of these ideals are strengthened each time we commit ourselves to the endeavor of arts. Faison (2000) is dedicated to the idea that arts is the best way for every young person to learn the value of work.

Arts means language: Arts is a language of visual images that everyone must learn to read. In arts, visual images are made and studied increasingly. These images affect our need, our daily behavior, our hopes, our opinions and our ultimate ideals. And that is why Eisner (1987) believes strongly that any individual who cannot understand or read images is incompletely educated. Accordingly to him, complete literacy includes ability to understand, respond to and talk about visual images. Therefore to carry out its total mission, arts education stimulates language, spoken and writing about visual images. As arts teachers, we work continuously on the development of critical skills as our way of encouraging linguistic skills.

By teaching students to describe, analyze and interpret visual images, we enhance their powers of verbal expression.

Arts means Value: No one touch arts without touching values; values about home and family, work and play, the individual and society, native and the environment, war and peace, beauty and ugliness, violence and love. The great arts of the past and the present deal these durable human concerns. In the arts, we do not indoctrinate. But when we study the arts of many lands and people, we expose our students to the expression of a wide range of human values and concerns. Students are sensitized to the fact that values shape all human efforts and that visual images can affect their personal value choices. All are given the opportunity to see how arts can express the highest aspirations of the human spirit. From the foundation, student will be in a better position to choose what is right and good. This is the importance of arts instruction for students.

Today, more than ever, arts education is needed by our young people as a forum for safe express, communication, exploration, imagination, cultural and historical understanding. Brain research as Jensen (2011) discovers further, confirms that arts education strengthens students problem solving and critical thinking skills adding to overall academic achievement, school success and preparation for the work world.

Arts classes teach students to be more tolerant and open through multicultural and historical perspectives and through their involvement in the creative process. Also due to the collaborative nature of arts, students develop crucial skills in cooperative decision-making, leadership, clear communication and complex problems solving while working with the others. Regular participation in the arts develops self-confidence, self-discipline, persistence and the knowledge of how to make multiple revisions to create high quality work. The skills and experience that students develop by learning to perform, create and respond to works of art provide a foundation for the kind of literacy people must have to communicate and work successfully in our ever-changing media technology and information age.

Arts education not only supports the adolescent's intellectual and educational development but also their personal and social development which Buka (2000), confirms, helps to develop a positive work ethic flexibility and pride in a job well done.

## **Challenges of Arts Education**

While the field of Arts Education has made great strides in our country towards development as a profession, both the arts and arts education must now assess their contemporary significance and consider drastically re-conceiving themselves in order to meet the demands of a post modern era.

The rise of globalization and the rapid pace of digital technology have changed the way we know, experience and participate in our socio-cultural environment, while some individuals have worked to stay barest of cultural changes, some may argue that the field as a whole largely adheres to a set of core assumptions that may no longer be applicable to our contemporary cultural heritage.

## **Digital Technology and Arts Education**

Children and young adults raised on digital technology are utilizing electronic media as a means express their creativity in armor that goes beyond the traditional arts disciplines offered through schools and university arts departments. While many arts education programmes continue to place emphasis on traditional visual arts rather than took to non-traditional arts working with contemporary medias more attained to 21<sup>st</sup> century students' interest and even when given a re-orientation of arts education towards digital media, because of the place of digital technology, pedagogy cannot keep pace with invention and adoption of these new arts forms.

However, in our digital remix world, we find that author and originator is in question. Copy, cut, paste have become the primary artistic skills and one can rightly argue that the traditional emphasis on original thought through artistic expression is being replaced by the ability to mix and match extent material in aesthetic manner. This ability to remix artworks digitally as increasingly comprised the notion of artistic intellectual property and as Clapp (2009) asks, to what extent or degree is it an act of copyright infringement electronic artistic plagiarism?

## **Funding for Arts Education**

Getting proper funding for arts has been pressing challenged and as a result of tightened economy and shifting public attitude towards the arts, arts education professionals find themselves spending more time on issues funding. This shift distracts the field's professionals

from issues of pedagogy and program design, while at the same discouraging young professionals from pursuing and reaching the peak of the profession.

Unlike many corporate industries with long standing history of practice, the field of arts education (as with many other non-profit sectors) was largely established in the 1960s and 70s the core assumptions of the field, have both been conceived and continually ratified from that age's perspective (Sander, 2006). While the beliefs, values and operating mechanisms instituted by this influential generational cohort once propelled the field forward continuing to rely on the dominant voice of old arts education leaders may actually impede the field from progressing into 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **CONCLUSION**

In order to most accurately identify and challenge the field's core assumptions, it is imperative that perspective of younger arts education professionals be brought into dialogue with older generation who are traditionally served as the field's leaders. Naturally, conflicts may arise in how arts education professionals from different generations make meaning to the world but conflict is good. As Heifetz (1994) opines that the ability to adapt requires the productive interaction of different values through which each member of faction in a society sees reality and its challenges. Without conflicting frames of reference, the social system scrutinizes only limited features of its problematic environment. It operates at the mercy of its blind spots because it cannot prepare for what it does not see.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In order to successfully identify and challenge its core assumptions, in order to see beyond its blind spots, and pursue a path of adoptive challenge, it is necessary to engage not authorities, but its emerging and most radical thinking young professionals as well. Awareness programmes should be carried out from time to time to sensitize the society on the gains of arts education while adequate funding should be given to enable purchase of its studio equipments, training and capacity building for instructors on recent developments in digital technology.

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