

Creative/Visual Arts Education as a Multi-disciplinary Apparatus for Technological Enhancement in Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

This paper interrogates the United Nations Scientific, Educational, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)'s Road Map for Arts Education, the 9-year Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) for Cultural and Creative Arts learning in Nigeria as well as the Cultural and Creative Arts curriculum from three technologically advanced countries of USA, Israel and Egypt. Results show that the UNESCO road map recognizes the importance of art education without which, the educational services rendered, especially at the early learning stages, cannot be said to be complete. While the three countries offer very robust and comprehensive art educational services that are well funded and given due priority, the Nigerian educational system is yet to embrace this best practice. The paper suggests a rapid and vigorous curriculum re-engineering and enforcement in the basic school system; provision of complete curriculum infrastructure and funding needed in schools especially public schools. It further adds that schools should give priority time allocation to art teaching since it requires time for practical sessions. Art Educators should redefine their goals and include technological advancement as one major priority. Finally, it insists that cultural studies cannot be successfully divorced from sustainable technological development and therefore, should be properly embedded in the Cultural and Creative Arts curriculum.

***Keywords:* Arts Education, creative arts, technological advancement.**

Introduction:

In the year 2008, responding to the global protocols, particularly Education for All (EFA), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the subsequent declaration of the 9 years basic school system under the Universal Basic Education programme, the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) revised and published the 9-year Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) under the then Education minister who is presently the Governor of Rivers State, Ezenwo Nyesom Wike. **Cultural and Creative Arts (CCA)** was one of the subjects that this revision and publication expounded on, organizing it under three sub-themes of Arts and Crafts, Performing Arts and Entertainment and Customs and Traditions. The Teacher's Guide for CCA captures government's intention for the revision acknowledging the realization that CCA occupies a central position in helping the nation, further stating among others that:

The Federal Government of Nigeria is focused on implementation of policies aimed at alleviating poverty, curbing social ills like religious extremism, armed robbery, kidnapping, unemployment and joblessness through her educational system. Effort is therefore, being made at evolving an educational system aimed at lifting Nigeria from this position [of social ills and other national challenges] to a place of worth through Cultural and Creative Arts (CCA).³

The Basic level starts from Primary 1 to JSS 3, which spans a 9-year educational period with a spiraling curriculum intended to improve as the child matures in age.

By way of definition of terms, CCA for the purpose of this paper is treated as a subject encompassing both Culture studies and Creative Arts. The **Creative arts** derive from the words **creativity** and **arts** have several theories surrounding it. Creativity is interested in how people create art (or science or business or something else, whereas aesthetics is more focused in how people perceive, view and interpret art. (James, 2016) Creativity is also synonymous with Originality, Imagination, Ingenuity, Inspiration, Inventiveness, Vision, and Resourcefulness. Art(s) on the other hand is basically skill, ability and or talent. Technology on another hand is basically described as the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes, especially in industry. A set of knowledge, skills, experience and techniques through which humans change, transform and use our environment in order to create tools, machines, products and services ...the word comes from the Greek word “tekne” (technical, art, skill) and logos (knowledge). The important take here is that creativity and technology are inseparable. Recently, there have been calls to expand STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education to include the arts and design, transforming STEM into STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering Arts and Mathematics) education in the K-20 classroom (Maeda, 2013 cited in Guyotte, et al, 2014). The call for Science Technology Engineering, Art and Mathematics (STEAM) concept as a trans disciplinary concept is not nascent and in a particular experiment involved faculty from engineering and art education (Guyotte, Sochacka, Costantino, Walther, & Kellam, 2014). To technological advancement, we need a lot of creativity as creativity is the application of imagination (United Nations Educational, 2006).

Furthermore, an examination of the term ‘art’ will be more encompassing when we look at it from the UNESCO perspective which states that any list of arts fields must be seen as a pragmatic categorization, ever evolving and never exclusive. A complete list cannot be attempted here, but a tentative list might include performing arts (dance, drama, music, etc.), literature and poetry, craft, design, digital arts, storytelling, heritage, visual arts and film, media, and photography (United Nations Educational, 2006).

The Creative Arts is broad and in this context will include the visual arts, the performing and liberal arts, attention will be directed at the creative/visual arts which in itself is made up of the Fine and applied arts; the Fine Arts will also in this context include sculpture, painting, photography, drawing and architecture – these single words in recent development have evolved massively and includes such others as installation art, conceptual art, virtual reality, extended reality, interactive art and e-art. This broadness is equally acknowledged when UNESCO (2006) admits that ...people in all cultures have always, and will always, seek answers to questions related to their existence. Every culture develops a means through which the insights obtained

³See Teachers’ guide for revised 9-year basic education curriculum (BEC) Cultural and Creative Arts published by Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) 2007.

through the search for understanding are shared and communicated. Basic elements of communication are words, movements, touch, sounds, rhythms and images. In many cultures, the expressions, which communicate insights and open up room for reflection in people's minds are called "art". Throughout history labels have been put on various types of art expressions. It is important to acknowledge the fact that even if terms such as "dance", "music", "drama" and "poetry" are used world-wide, the deeper meanings of such words differ between cultures.

The idea of a multi-disciplinary action to enhance technological development in Nigeria is a welcome development and begs the question, what roles can the creative/visual arts play? What radical curriculum change can the stakeholders make to enhance art teaching, learning and practice at the basic 9 year level of education in Nigeria, in order to reap the full benefits of art learning to enhance creativity which will in turn add value to education and create more technologically savvy individuals. Since art teaching and learning is known to mine to its fullest capacity the three domains of learning namely, psychomotor, cognitive and affective domains, where can its roles begin and end? The above assertion takes root from the works of renowned scholars like Rhoda Kellog (1898 - 1987), who collected and studied children's art over the course of her lifetime, Viktor Lowenfield, Maria Montessori and Lev Vygotsky's child development theories particularly his interest in how cultural elements which a particular society deems important (customs, skills and values among others) are passed on to new generations.

Writing about the importance of arts education, (Martin, 2014) outlined ten reasons why Arts in Education is so important for kids and included; Creativity, Improved Academic Performance, Motor Skills, Confidence, Visual Learning, Decision Making, Perseverance, Focus, Collaboration and Accountability. Martin (2014) also cites Washington post's outlining a list of skills that young people learn from studying the arts; Creativity, Confidence, Problem Solving, Perseverance, Focus, Non-Verbal Communication, Receiving Constructive Feedback, Collaboration, Dedication, Accountability. Between the two, creativity, collaboration, focus and confidence appear as skills learned through art, problem solving, perseverance, non-verbal communication are skills needed for technological engagement. Visual literacy indeed is an art related skill that is unarguably fully demanded in today's tech-driven economy and society.

From the foregoing, this paper stems from an on-going research and thus far is utilizing a combined method of on-line search with an action research administered in the classroom, which includes the introduction of a teaching and learning method and observation of its outcome. The paper argues that the process of technology enhancement in Nigeria will benefit from the creative arts, which in this instance include the Visual art, Performing art and Literary art. If the teaching and learning of this method is properly enforced in schools starting from the early childhood level up to the basic 9-year educational level the impact will be felt in the next decade on the technological outlook of the country.

Findings

One of the major primary sources of information for this research is the World United Nations Scientific, Educational and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)'s Road Map for Arts Education. The "road map" resulted from the World Conference on Arts Education, themed -Building Creative Capacities for the 21st Century. The conference took place from 6 to 9 March 2006 in Lisbon, Portugal, the product, a 26 page document divided into six sub-heads beginning from the background, with a case study annex. The "Road Map for Arts Education" as explained in the document "aims to explore the role of Arts Education in meeting the need for creativity and

cultural awareness in the 21st Century, and places emphasis on the strategies required to introduce or promote Arts Education in the learning environment.” Although this document sparked some criticism from separate Arts Education groups from countries like Canada, it still stands as a global unifier for arts education.

The sections

1. The background explains specifically the aim of the document to “promote a common understanding among all stakeholders of the importance of Arts Education and its essential role in improving the quality of education”.

2. The Aims of Arts Education:

- i. To uphold the human right to education and cultural participation, this dwells more on the right of a child making reference to the Universal declaration of human rights Articles 22, 26 and 27 as well as the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- ii. Develop individual capabilities,
- iii. Improve the quality of education and
- iv. 4 Promote the expression of cultural diversity.

3. Concepts Related to Arts Education

- i. Arts Fields
- ii. Approaches to Arts Education
- iii. Dimensions of Arts Education

4. Essential Strategies for Effective Arts Education

- i. Education of teachers and artists
- ii. Partnerships

5. Research on Arts Education, and Knowledge Sharing

6. Recommendations

- i. Recommendations for Educators, Parents, Artists, and Directors of Schools and Training Institutions
- ii. Recommendations for Government Ministries and Policy Makers
- iii. Recommendations for UNESCO and Other Intergovernmental and Non-governmental Organizations

Annex: Case Studies

Overall the road map presents a concise direction for the arts educational process which can be utilized by educational planners and policy makers as well as schools and creative art teachers.

While the 9 year Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) for Cultural and Creative Arts learning in Nigeria points out the essential role creative arts plays in molding a quality society where educated individuals are technologically skilled and aware, it specifically states that

The major aim is to ensure that learners having successfully completed the 6 years of primary and 3 years of junior secondary education should have acquired and developed:

- Basic numeracy, literacy and life-long skills;
- The basic skills in science, technology and Information Technology (IT);
- The basic rudiments for creative thinking;

- The foundation for technical, vocational and entrepreneurship culture; and
- Imbued high moral values and positive ethical standards.

Creative Arts curriculum from three technologically advanced countries of United States of America (USA), Israel and Egypt show that the UNESCO road map has influenced their delivery of the arts education curriculum and some of them like the USA already has its own well implemented Creative Arts road map. Each of these countries treats Creative art as life skills and USA embeds Music, Dance, Visual Arts and Liberal (literary arts) in the Creative arts curriculum making it even more useful in preparing the learners for embracing a technologically straddled world. Each of these countries, just like Nigeria recognize the importance of art education without which, the educational services rendered, especially at the early learning stages cannot be said to be complete. The implementation however, is where most of the variance occurs. While the three countries offer very robust and comprehensive art educational services, well-funded and given due priority, the Nigerian educational system is yet to embrace this best practice as inferred by Art Historian Ola Oloidi, benefits of the Arts are still awaiting prospecting in Nigeria.” (Oloidi, 2008)

The Nigeria situation

We derive examples from schools in Nsukka educational zone of Enugu state. Creative art is taught at the basic education level as Cultural and Creative Arts with topics taken from three broad themes of Arts and Crafts, Performing arts and Entertainment and Customs and Traditions. Each theme runs through the primary and Junior secondary levels. The Curriculum however, visual art, Music, drama and dance are treated as one. We however note that the literary art (prose, poetry) is cut off as it is only embedded in their English language curriculum.

In the primary Schools, the Curriculum for Visual Arts available for Public schools was recently modified and schools in the urban area have just started waking up to its presence. The most recent one was released as Curriculum for Cultural and Creative Arts (which includes all the arts; Visual Arts, Music, Drama/Performing Arts) under the Ministry of Education during the tenure of Prof. Ahmed Rufa’i as an MDG initiative. There is a palpable gloom hanging over art learning in schools in the urban area because only about 5% of the teachers interviewed have the competent skills required for art teaching. The rest of the teachers agree that they do not have the competency and skills to properly teach and evaluate the performance of the pupils in the arts, since they are not art educators and have had any in-service training on art teaching. When asked how they teach the subject the usual response is “we just ask them to draw”, and they evaluate the students based on how nice the drawing appears to the teacher. This does not in any way cover for the outlined curriculum. However some of the very outstanding students go on to improvise art materials. One of the public schools had on display creative works created by pupils from old cartons and colours, others had moulded objects from clay and papier maché. Only the private schools like the University Staff School have specialised art teachers who teaches only art and can handle all the domain of art effectively. 80% of the Head Teachers of public schools interviewed dismissed art with a wave of the hand; some did explain that since the Educational Authority sent every teacher to the class rooms it has not been possible to handle art as a special subject. When asked if they think that art learning has any impact on pupils overall learning and evaluation performance using examples of drawing well to represent diagrams, 50% of those interviewed agreed that there is a felt impact. However with the kids they are explorative and those who had any artistic skills were noticed and praised as the artist of the class. Some private schools go beyond that to engage in other activities such as papiermachié

modelling, tie and dye, bead making etc. They are also free to ask parents to provide art materials like poster colour, water colour etc. probably because of parental status both financial and educational.

In-Class activities

Taking into cognisance the 5 steps of planning for instructions as outlined by (Gunter, M. A., Estes, T. H. & Schwab J., 2003) which are:

1. Set goals and develop a rationale for instruction
2. Define objectives
3. Construct a means of Evaluation
4. Create units of study that encompass the content of the course of study
5. Design lessons for instruction using a variety of instructional models.

As well as the Educational standards Fig 1, adopted for effective teaching and learning by the Enugu State Education Board, which should always place the learner's need at the centre. This is diagrammatically represented and posted in each of the Public Head Teacher's Office as a constant reminder.

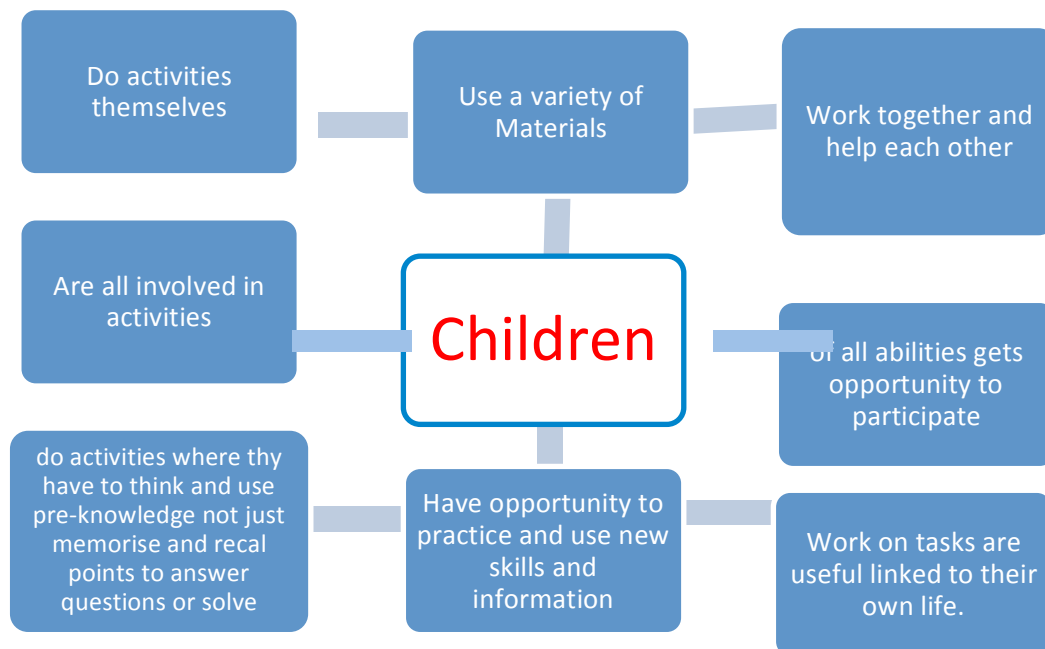


Figure 1: Best Teaching methods adopted by the Public Schools in Enugu State by ESPEEN (Education Support Programme in Nigeria)

Below are class works from the Junior secondary 2, in Visual Arts colour work (painting) the class work is drawn from the class best, the class average and the class lowest performers, their performance suggests the impact (impart?) proper delivery of the creative arts curriculum as

outlined by Martin (2014) could exert on the overall performance of pupils in other subjects and especially the basic technology aspects.



Figure 2: Class work Landscape painting 1



Figure 3: Class work Landscape painting II



Figure 4: Class work Landscape painting III



Figure 5: Class work Landscape Painting IV

Summary and conclusion

The research continues and so far, the paper suggests;

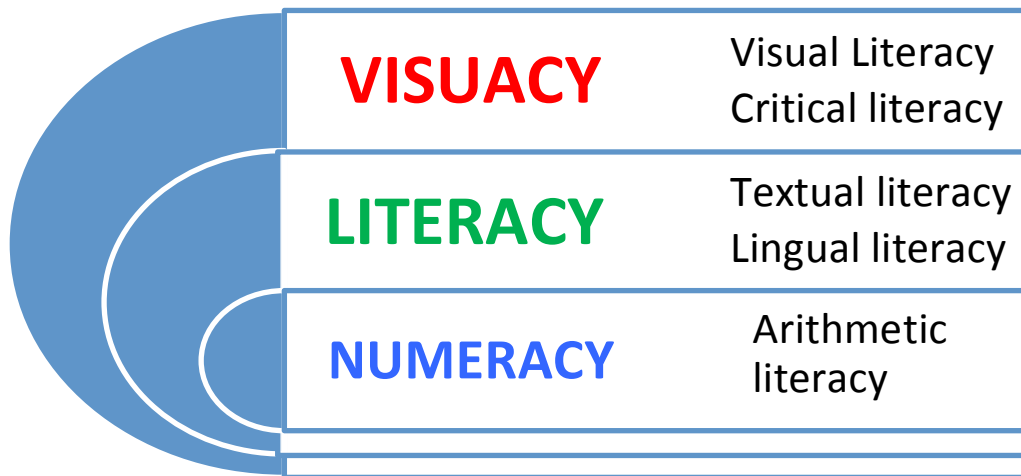
- A rapid and vigorous curriculum re-engineering and enforcement of proper delivery of the Cultural and Creative arts subject in the 9-year basic school system provision of complete curriculum infrastructure and funding needed in schools especially public schools.
- Schools should give priority time allocation to art teaching since it requires time for practical sessions.
- Training in art education should be increased and made compulsory for basic education school educators.
- Art Educators in Nigeria need to come together and redefine their goals and include technological advancement as one major priority. Finally, cultural studies cannot be successfully divorced from sustainable technological development and therefore, should be properly embedded in the Cultural and Creative Arts curriculum.

The proposed model for basic education is specified below.

- To pursue the sustainable educational model that gives priority to
- Visuacy – Visual literacy as it does to
- Literacy – Textual literacy, and
- Numeracy – Arithmetic literacy

Believing that amongst other things Nigeria's tech production and uptake will be enhanced and all will reap the benefits.

Proposed Model for pedagogical priority in Nigeria



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