

## VISUAL ART EDUCATION IN NIGERIA, OVERSCHOOLING AND PAPER QUALIFICATION

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### Abstract

*This paper posits that the academia in visual art should not lay too much emphasis on schooling and paper qualification, to the detriment of the practical results as it bears on the dynamic society. The following questions were raised. (1) What is education? (2) Must it be only those who can do quality art that can teach art? (3) How much schooling is appropriate? (4) What should be the ideal prerequisite for art teacher's employment and promotion? The data used to address these issues were obtained from personal observations and contributions from journals, books and some electronic sources. As a panacea, the author recommends that those who are practically, theoretically fit and pro-active to what is relevant in the society should be employed. The government should provide equipments for the institutions and educate and engage the preceptors with current meaningful educational activities. The paper concludes that education informs and transforms the individual and the society; if this is not accomplished within the time it is needed, it is tantamount to nothing but educational ab-surd-ism.*

**Keywords:** Overschooling, paper qualification, visual art, education

### Introduction

The visual arts are very practically oriented courses beside the theory. They embrace the fine arts- painting, drawing, sculpture and architecture and the applied arts-ceramics, textiles, photography, as well as graphics, interior design, metal design and furniture which today stand between the duo in contemporary practice. There are other related courses like the performing arts, which are; music; film and video arts dance e.t.c (Banjoko A, 2000). These courses are very practical and can be easily accessed by nearly everyone to a reasonable extent depending on your exposure. To be a teacher, the preceptor himself must be a professional (expert in the field). Bell-gam (1998), portrays the teacher as "a master of his subject, an encyclopedia of his subject". Ideally this is what it is supposed to be; but today the academia in the field have laid too much emphasis on schooling and paper qualification, without paying enough attention to current relevant practical works that make sense in the society they live in.

Many crave to go to school and continue schooling, not because they want to achieve a special skill to develop the society or themselves as regards this profession but just to get a certificate/degree to enable them secure a job, especially teaching of what they themselves are not master of. Sometimes, they find themselves in this trade because that is where they could get entrance into the tertiary institution. The end result is that these students after school are not useful to themselves or the society. They end up seeking for a position in the teaching profession (visual Art). This is where they crave for school and higher degrees lies in most of our profession in Nigeria, especially Art. Combined with the harsh effect of the economy globally, the next point to anchor is where to get a daily or monthly pay. Supported by corrupt vices of nepotism, favoritism, bribery, cultism, many square pegs have plugged themselves into round holes for decades, destroying the profession day by day.

Egonwa (2007), and Odiboh, (2009) sharing their views in support of the point mentioned above said many desire and crave to have higher

degrees just to gain promotion and retain their jobs as lecturers in the tertiary institution and most time they want it anyhow, anywhere, any means. They lamented that this is not healthy for the profession.

To address this issue, some questions were raised.

- (1) What actually is the goal of Education?
- (2) Must it be those who can do quality Art that can teach Art?
- (3) How much schooling is appropriate?
- (4) What should be the ideal prerequisite for Art teachers' employment and promotion?

### Literature review

The inordinate crave for paper qualification and pride in plenty of academic activity without any concerted effort to utilize them practically for tangible development of the society has concomitantly produced some inimical results in the society, classified under the following sub- heading; (1) Sub-standard output of staff and graduates (2) weak economy/ Technology (3) Dependency (4) Lukewarm academia (5) Examinataion malpractice and vices (6) Low enrolment in the field of visual Art. To every action there is a result. The strong emphasis on paper qualification in the society and much respect for supposed scholars, without commensurate attention to what these (graduates) have to practically offer the society and themselves have led to some inimical practice or results in the society.

#### **Sub-standard output of staff and graduates:**

The quality of graduates from our institutions will not have much difference from those who produce them, except another form of education rescue such a graduate. Some teachers have found themselves in places they are not qualified to be because they have paper qualification to show for it. Yet the job they are hired to do is left undone. This has been the situation in some of institutions, nationwide. Oriafio (2006) in his keynote address highlighting some points causing the failure of the nation's educational planning and implementation programme said mediocrity among the academia is a problem. He explained that the quality of staff in most of our institutions is poor and some are camouflage of what the original is supposed to be. This he lamented is affecting the implementation of some good government policies in Education.

Imonikebe (2009) supporting this view noted that, the National policy on Education (1981) spelt out that "Teacher Education will continue to be given a major emphasis in all our educational planning because no education can rise above the quality of its teachers".

**Weak Economy/ Technology-** The manpower produced to work in our industry is either from a formal school or an informal school. If the training of this manpower is poor or weak, there is no way he/she can do better. It is what we invest (put) into the society/industry that it will give us. According to Onokerhoraye (1984) "the successful production of any development programme depends on the quality of human resources available as much as it does on the possession of material capital" He went further to say "where a high proportion of human resources are not trained (experienced) in the specialized skills essential to development purposes, planning objectives may be in serious danger".

**Dependency:** The nation attained political independence in 1960, yet it is not independent economically to a very large extent. Nigerians are still importing ceramics, textiles, food, furniture and a number of things which we claim to teach and practice. Considering the vast number of goods and services, the emphasis paper qualification is misleading.

**Lukewarm academia:** Scholars in the field have developed lackadaisical attitudes towards academics, because they feel the ultimate is to find a way of getting the degree or certificate; to them that is what matters. So they go ahead getting it anyhow and by any means. Students/lecturers copy projects without actually doing research or work. Some hire people to write or do their writing/practical work. They go through the system (school) and come out with certificates to lord it over others. What a deadly system! Iyela (2002) holds that lecturers in tertiary institutions as a result of the desperate crave to get their paper published or perish, engage in several fraudulent means ranging from forgery, hiring of other lecturers to do their writing, lobbying and so on. He concluded by saying; "less emphasis should be placed on the "publish or perish concept" while greater attention should be given to the element of

integrity and morality in Nigeria Tertiary institutions”.

**Examination malpractice/vices:** Examination malpractice and all sorts of vices are now a common thing at all levels. This is fueled up with the fact that the individual just needs the certificate or degree. In some occasions those who are even supposed to check this practice, aid and abet it for selfish reasons. Oriafio (2006) who also noticed this development has lamented that “Examination malpractice, certificate forgery, fornication and many other vices are some problems bedeviling the educational system today.

**Low enrolment:** Those practicing in the field and those producing this manpower are the vanguard of the profession or trade. Though a number of factors contribute to the poor number of students who apply to read or do art in secondary and tertiary institutions, the performance of the preceptors will go a long way to influence people, not just certificates, degrees or number of papers published. Nigerian and many other people all over the world will never queue up in a filling station where there is no fuel.

Onokerhoraye (1984) also agrees with Abraham Maslow’s theory when he said when an individual is recognized, respected and adequately remunerated for the work he is trained to do, he will perform well. If these ingredients are lacking in the visual art profession or not adequately met, what do you expect?

#### **What actually is the goal of Education?**

Several scholars have shared their views concerning Education. Ebighigbo (2000) submits that “all the programmes in different cadres of education are geared towards achieving one goal- to get in touch with reality, define it within the ambits of that discipline, and use the knowledge so acquired to better the public”. The objectives of a positive education should be to prepare the young for a meaningful life (Egonwa, 2007). Education must be for a useful purpose to the individual or the society wherever that individual finds himself.

#### **How much schooling is appropriate?**

Man can never and should never stop studying. The entire life circle of a man is a circle of continuous learning until death; but it is not how much study one acquires that makes sense, it is how much of the study applied to develop oneself and the entire world. Egonwa (2007),

noticing an anomaly in the visual art sector said “the apparent level of much academic activity in the visual arts in terms of theory and practice is not commensurate with the development accomplished so far in the visual arts”. He advised, “Nigerian Education should re-orientate its recipient towards productivity, if we are to see development in the near future”.

#### **Must it be only those who can do quality art that can teach art?**

Art is so practical and real that it should not be delivered or accomplished with theories or story telling alone. They are so real and practical that if you do not know these things you can never do them well. Though some amateur will try but it can never be like the master in the field. Onokerhoraye (1984) supporting this view said: “the successful promotion of any programme depends on the quality of human resources available as much as it does on the possession of material capital.” He went further to say “where a high proportion of these human resources are not trained (experienced) in the specialized skill, essential to development purpose planning objective may be in danger”.

#### **What should be the prerequisite for art teacher’s employment?**

Art is a course that embraces the three forms of learning and reasoning - the cognitive, affective and the psychomotor domain. To be able to effectively perform as a teacher in the field of art, the preceptor should be sound in all these areas, theoretically and practically. Egonwa buttressed this point when he said, “though the theoretical aspect of art is very important, it does not override the import of having the work of art practically done as a finished product”. He strongly recommended that “operators of Nigeria’s art education sector must embrace productivity, not solely measured by paper certificates” He opines that, “mental productivity will definitely manifest in physical products which are bound to be respected if socially relevant and functionally appropriate” (Egonwa, 2007). So the art teacher should be able to practically and theoretically prove himself.

#### **Recommendation**

Those who are practically, theoretically fit and pro-active to what is relevant in society should be employed. Beside this, emphasis should be laid

on qualitative practical output along with other values of schooling and certificate, degrees and paper publication. Physical products are what will convince the world, not rhetorics.

The government should provide relevant equipments for all the institution and support them with all that it takes to make education in the present generation meaningful, enjoyable, a solution centre, and inventions taking place to spur and enhance speedy developments. The preceptors should constantly be educated and engaged with meaningful educational activities like exhibition (national/international) conference and seminar/workshop, in house training and upgrading of its staffs with modern trends, or research work with grants and loans given to them with little interest.

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