

# PROBLEMS OF ART TEACHING IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS SYSTEM: IMPLICATIONS FOR TRAINERS

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## Abstract

This study looks at the problems associated with the teaching of Fine Arts in Nigerian Secondary School System. With the purpose of ameliorating the present situation, the study was conducted through the use of a set of 22 item questionnaire on causes of some of the problems concerning Fine Arts teaching. The population for the study comprised fifty-two (52) experienced Fine Art teachers who were undergoing the Part Time Degree programme of Obafemi Awolowo University between 1994 and 1999.

Results from the analysis of data indicated that lack of materials constitutes problems since eighty-four percent of the responses from the respondent was positive about this fact. The absence of art studio in many schools was next in ranking of the identified problems. Fifty-five point seven-seven percent of the respondents (55.77) attested to this. It was also found that 78.85 percent of the subjects of the study could not increase the drawing skills of art learners. However, 96.15 percent of the subjects submitted that involvement of the media like radio, relevant pictures and charts could be used to improve art teaching. When the arrears of specialization that the student teachers for the study intended to go into were investigated, graphic design and textile design arrears were found most attractive to them. The implication of this finding is that trainers need to organize refresher courses and mount workshops periodically in order to re-orient art teachers towards the goals of art teaching.

## Introduction

Teaching can be viewed as an art as well as science of imparting knowledge and skills, the creation of awareness for things that are known and those unknown. Awareness can result as the teacher makes effort through the act of information dissemination to a specific target audience. But it is possible to learn from media as well. Examples are printed materials like textbooks and pictures, radio and television and audio tapes, are other devices through which learning can take place.

Similarly, the environment in which one lives in, can also do the teaching. Simply put, teaching is regarded as an embodiment of communication. From the above definitions, it will be observed that the term teaching is both vague and ambiguous. (Aisiku, 1980) confirms this. However, before a learner can acquire as well as gain knowledge, skills and competencies intended to be imparted by the teacher, the channel through which communication is supposed to take place must be clear, (Morgan and King 1975, and Sleeman et- al 1979).

Clarity of the channel of communication implies that the teacher must select a medium found suitable for the dissemination of information – such that concepts can be easily understood. It also implies that communication gap that often causes problems for

learners as a result of contrast in the use of language considered unfamiliar to the target audience (learners), demand that teachers should take cognizance of the entry levels of learners and select appropriate instructional delivery system found suitable for processing information within the ability levels of learners. It is known that a properly planned programme of instruction which takes care of the interest of learners very often eliminates the impediments that make communication difficult. These include the avoidance and use of such terminology and lexicons that do not adequately describe concepts and situations under consideration. However, in view of the fact that trained teachers spend time and make commensurable efforts in planning and in writing of lesson notes, and in spite of the fact that teachers sometimes do involve scanty media in the teaching and learning process, despite the efforts made, the level of learners achievement at the secondary school level is found to be relatively low.

Evidences abound on poor performances of learners at all levels of learning, including training colleges and the tertiary institutions. Akanbi (1994) confirms that teaching and learning environment is characterized by declining quality of delivery systems, leading to deterioration, mass failure and low creativity development. Compounding the problem which teachers have, is knowledge explosion and their management problems. It is therefore not surprising that examination results are often poor. These anomalies in teaching explain why learning problems require an urgent attention.

Student teachers undergoing the 1994 summer part-time degree programme of Faculty of Education, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, attest that they encounter problems when teaching Fine Arts at the Secondary School level. Some of the problems referred to include the problem of imparting knowledge and skills. Learners' inability to understand the basic principles that guide the learning of Fine Arts is another general problem.

Fadare (1994) puts it that lack of emphasis on the aesthetic values when Fine Arts is being taught may partially be responsible for some of these problems. However, the problem of effective teaching and learning of Fine Arts may be adduced to such variables like readiness and students learning interest. The teachers competence and expectation from learners in terms of skill acquisition and value which the society have for Fine Arts, all have different effect on learning.

The Fine Art subject areas have problems. Such learning problems often come up as a result of lack of teaching materials and the absence of facilities for adequate demonstration by teachers. The added problem is that since learners do not often have the opportunity of watching the teacher demonstrate, this compounds the problems as learners find it difficult to produce 'prototypes' to expected standard.

Inadequate space area for learning Fine Art is another problem. Now that Fine Art subject has been made compulsory for the Junior Secondary School classes one to three, the consequent problem caused by this development is overcrowding of learners in the little available space. In addition, absence of art studio, where learners can examine samples, exhibit prototypes, and store away inventions, is seen as another problem that

affects the teaching and learning of Fine Arts in the secondary school education system. From the foregoing problems, it can be observed that creativity ability will be very low among art teachers and art learners. This may also increase the loss of interest in art by learners.

The attitude of the society to Fine Arts is a cause for concern. The impression which people have is that Fine Art is an expensive subject. Some consider it as one of the hobbies that could be embarked upon as a 'past time', while others seem to detest Fine Art programme because of the involvement of time factor and the high level of concentration period required for the mastery of skills, like those found useful in drawing, painting, and calligraphic writing and so on. It has been found that people do not like Fine Arts because it will dirty their hands and their fine dresses. One can therefore imagine the ridicule being made of some specialized areas like in painting where 'tube' and oil paint are used, or in sculpture and ceramic areas where clay is used for modeling purposes. It can therefore be deduced that the perception of the society concerning Fine Arts Education needs re-orientation, since negative opinions formed about Fine Arts affect learners a great deal. Many more people have failed to appreciate Fine Arts as a school subject. As a result, only few students pursue it with zeal and dedication to higher school level. Failure to get young learners to develop interest in Fine Arts may be seen as a problem that may continue to weaken the technological take off in Nigeria. However, it is believed that artists have roles to play in the realization of this objective. For example, artists are needed to think creatively, to solve problems and bring to reality their weird ideas. It is upon this concept that the scientists operate. It is found necessary to enumerate some of the roles which Fine Arts play in Education.

### **The Role of Fine Arts in Education**

Whereas, the importance of art education has been realized since 1874, the aims and objectives of Fine Arts as stated in Klar, Winslow and Kirby In Bloom et-at (1971, p. 27) is as follows:

1. To offer consistent development in the faculty of sight.
2. To develop an appreciation of the beautiful.
3. To develop the creative impulse.

It is clear to note from the above statement made concerning what Fine Arts can offer to mankind that learners therefore have much to gain as regards personal development and appreciation of the self. For learners to become aesthetically aware of their environment, there has got to be a gradual development of the power of sight. Art helps in the development of taste and the ability to discriminate between what is beautiful and what is not. Art training helps in making learners see what others have missed out. For example, Adeyanju (1990) observed that "the development of creative impulse is engendered by knowledge of Fine Arts". This is so because artists are relatively good observers. The ability to observe helps them in creativity. Arising from the above roles which the knowledge of Fine Arts can bring to the learner, there are other problems that inhibit learners effort in attempt to acquire skills of Fine Arts. There is therefore a felt need to probe into the experienced problems of students art

teachers, in an attempt to find solutions to problem of learners in the secondary school education system.

### **Objective**

The paper makes a survey of problems of art teaching in the secondary schools through a twenty-two item questionnaire. Specifically, the paper sought for direct information experienced by art teachers in their various schools concerning the causes of the problems. Recommendations were made for the purpose of ameliorating the problem encountered by art teachers.

### **Methodology**

#### **Subjects**

Fifty-two (52) male and female students undergoing the Fine Arts Education Part Time Degree Programme, who registered for the art history course while in the second year of the programme of their course, were subjects for the study. There was therefore no form of randomization in sample selection. All subjects are secondary school teachers. The demographic information of subjects are given in Table 1.

#### **Instrumentation**

A twenty-two (22) item questionnaire, comprising four sections, was drawn for the subjects to respond to. The first seven questions in section one sought from subjects the following: name, sex, experience, population of students being taught, ratio of teacher to students and facilities. Section two, comprising only two items, sought for subjects response with regards to special problems they encounter in art teaching. Section three sought for subject's knowledge about students they teach. It addressed individual learners drawing ability, the teachers' methods and his perception about the involvement of media in teaching Fine Arts. There are nine questions in this section.

Section four, specifically asks respondents to state what arrears of specialization they would prefer. The area of specialization is important in Fine Arts as teachers are expected to exhibit competency which would enable them perform in the areas of choice. The last question asked in this section was related to topics in Fine Arts which subjects find difficult to teach to learners. The subjects were also told to give reasons why they found such topics difficult to teach.

#### **Validation**

The questionnaire was scrutinized by colleagues in the Faculty of Education and from the Department of Fine Art, along with the researcher. Questions which were found ambiguous and unrelated to the issue of problems of art teaching in Nigeria secondary schools were thrown out. The modification of the instrument resulted in only twenty-two (22) items.

#### **Procedure**

In class situation, subjects involved in the study were instructed to respond to the set of questionnaire items distributed to them. The completion time for the questionnaire

items took up to forty minutes. Since the responses expected of the subjects were either positive or negative or supply of information, all the questionnaires, after completion, were collected the same day for the purpose of analysis.

### Analysis of Data

Data was analyzed as follows using simple percentages where necessary.

**Table 1**

### Availability of Teachers, Teachers Experience, and Availability of Fine Arts Studio

| Location     | Estimated Students Population | Estimated Population of Teachers on Ground |     | Teaching Experience (year) |            | Arts Studio |               |
|--------------|-------------------------------|--|-----|----------------------------|------------|-------------|---------------|
|              |                               | High                                       | Low | Adequate                   | Inadequate | Available   | Non-available |
| Rural Centre | 280                           | -  | 02  | -                          | 01         |             |               |
| Urban Centre | 400                           | -  | 04  | 15                         |            | 23          | 29            |

Average students in class = 45

**Table 2**

### Provision of Facilities

N = (52)

|             | Student Self Provision | P T A Parents Teachers Association | Federal Government | Proprietors |
|-------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| $\bar{x}$ : | 44                     | 02                                 | 04                 | 02          |
| Percent:    | 84.62                  | 3.85                               | 7.69               | 3.85        |

**Table 3**

**Responses to Art Questionnaire Items**

N = 52

| Item No | Response |          | Percent  |          |
|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
|         | Positive | Negative | Positive | Negative |
| 10      | 09       | 43       | 17.31    | 83.69    |
| 11      | 44       | 08       | 84.62    | 15.38    |
| 12      | 09       | 43       | 17.31    | 82.69    |
| 13      | 08       | 44       | 15.38    | 84.62    |
| 14      | 11       | 41       | 21.15    | 78.85    |
| 15      | 51       | 01       | 98.08    | 1.92     |
| 16      | 38       | 14       | 73.08    | 26.92    |
| 17      | 50       | 02       | 96.15    | 3.85     |
| 18      | 46       | 06       | 88.46    | 11.54    |

**Table 4**

**Responses of Subject to Reasons Why Fine Arts is Difficult to Teach in Secondary School**

N = 52

| Description                            | Response | Percent | Negative |
|--|----------|---------|----------|
| Lack of Materials                      | 42       | 84.00   | 16.00    |
| Lack of Interest of: Principals        | 16       | 30.77   | 69.33    |
| Students                               | 12       | 23.08   | 76.02    |
| Parents                                | 04       | 7.69    | 92.31    |
| Teachers                               | 03       | 5.78    | 94.22    |
| Lack of Incentives from the Government |          |         |          |
| Overpopulation of Students             | 07       | 13.46   | 86.54    |
| No Arts Studio                         | 04       | 7.69    | 92.31    |
| In-appropriate Timetable               | 29       | 55.77   | 44.23    |
|  | 11       | 21.15   | 78.85    |

Below is the graphical break down of areas of specialization which respondents claimed to be their interest areas.

**Table 5**

Subject Area of Specialization

| N = 52    | N  | Percent |
|-----------|----|---------|
| Ceramic   | 01 | 1.92    |
| Sculpture | 04 | 7.69    |
| Graphics  | 13 | 25.00   |
| Textiles  | 21 | 40.38   |
| Painting  | 08 | 15.38   |

**Discussion**

Item 10, sought for the subject opinions as to whether junior secondary school classes can draw accurately what they observe. Response from (43) 82.69 percent of subjects to the question is negative. However, the ability to draw is important if learners will perform successfully in Fine Art areas.

Item 11 of the questionnaire asked if the eleven year old (JSS 1) would draw what they knew. Forty-four (84.62 percent) of the responses was positive about this issue. But it is known that a learner who draws what he knows rather than what is seen may have a set-back in the acquisition of drawing skill. Art teachers should carefully help learners to see that learners draw what they see. This task can be accomplished by encouraging very careful observation of objects to be drawn. Forty-three (82.69) of all the responses was not in favour of subject's ability to draw accurately what they see in the analysis of data with regards to item 12.

Item 13, sought from respondents the way by which their personal drawing ability can be improved. Forty-four (84.62) of them believed they could not improve on their ability. However, it is known that constant practice leads to perfection. If student's teachers have negative opinion about increasing their drawing ability, how would they encourage young learners under their supervision? Responses to item 14, which asked student teachers whether they could increase the drawing skills of the junior secondary school learners, proves that forty-one (78.85) of them could not. Analysis of item 15 of the questionnaire confirmed that art and music go together. Fifty-one (98.08) of the response was positive about this. It is believed that some kind of (sentimental) type of music increases the power of concentration as well as stimulates the artist when creating, such that he/she does not get tired too quickly. The secondary school education system ought to use music in an art activity lesson, since it is only at the higher education level that students play music as they work in the studio.

Item 16, sought from the respondents if radio could be used to teach art. Thirty-eight (73.08) of the response was positive about this. But none of the respondents had used it to

enrich art activity. Item 17 sought information from the respondents if charts and some relevant pictures could be used to teach art. Fifty (96.15) of the respondents believed that it is possible. It was however not known if any of the respondents had used them to teach art before. Item 18 of the questionnaire sought information whether student teachers considered it necessary to make Fine Art subject compulsory in the secondary school system. To this question, forty-six (88.46) responses were positive. It is considered that knowledge of art should be imparted right from the elementary school system rather than at the secondary school level. The benefit of making Fine Arts compulsory at the secondary school level will go a long way to help students who may find it difficult to proceed to the senior secondary schools. It is considered that students who fail to get to higher institutions could begin some kind of vocation by using Fine Arts rudimentary knowledge as a take off point. Since the Federal government has made Fine Arts compulsory, the implication is that of provision of adequate facilities, materials, and qualified teachers. These should also be planned for as well. In recent times, the population of secondary school students has been on the increase, and this has been very problematic for the few available teachers. The questionnaire item 19 sought information regarding the student teachers possible areas of specialization. The result of the analysis of data is stated in table 5.

Table 4 above indicates that lacks of materials and non-availability of art studio, constitute problems for learners in the secondary school system. As regards lack of materials, forty-two (84.00) responses of the teachers signified this as a major problem. While non-art studio was also found to affect the teachers, twenty-nine (55.77) of the responses was positive of need for provision of art studios in schools.

The opinions of the respondents were sought concerning the aspects of fine arts which they found difficult to teach. Results indicated that twenty (38.46) of the subjects found history of art difficult to teach. Six (11.54) of them found drawing difficulty to teach, while five (9.61) of the subjects enumerated painting as difficult to teach. Some of the other areas of fine arts include textile design, carving/sculpture, and ceramics. But none of the respondents indicated any of these areas as difficult to teach.

Perhaps learners find it easy to express themselves when modeling, than when using other medium of self expression. And, perhaps art teachers do not really encourage expression in this medium of the use of clay.

A critical analysis of the subject's choice of specialized areas indicates that textile and graphic design prove attractive to student teachers. For example, 40.38 percent of the respondents opted for textiles, while (13) 25 percent would want to specialize in graphic design – see table 5. These two areas are most lucrative and learners may use acquired knowledge in the areas in an industrial set-up. The implication here is that in the absence of enough teachers, media could be involved in information dissemination in these specialized areas, since the two subject areas would continue to be more attractive to students for a very long time. Painting has (08) 15.38 percent choice, sculpture has (04) 7.69 percent, while ceramic art attracted only (01) 1.92 percent of subject interest used for study.

### **Implication for Trainers**

It is pertinent to recommend that workshops and more refresher courses be organized for art teachers generally. For this, in many ways, would contribute towards the professional



growth of teachers in fine arts in both private and public schools. Resource persons, especially, will play a significant role through presentation of lectures and demonstrations. The use of the media could stimulate and generate workable ideas in art teachers on the management of overcrowded learners.

The first Africa and the Middle East Regional Congress of International Society for Education through Art. (INSEA) 1988, recommendations to the Federal Government of Nigeria concerning art teaching at the 6-3-3-4 levels, should be vigorously pursued.

The submission of the respondent's (5.61) which deals with the need for the provision of facilities and instructional materials for teaching creative art, should be intensified.

Conclusively, it is realized that if the knowledge of creative art begins at the elementary education level, it can bring about technological development faster since the learner's orientation towards technologies would be advantageous in the pursuit of this objective.

### Conclusion

Art is believed to serve man. It is also considered as a medium of expression. The teaching of fine arts in schools, therefore, need encouragement, since almost every learner can use it. The problems of teaching fine arts are many. Efforts should therefore be made to ensure that trainers train student teachers properly in order to make it easier for them to face squarely the challenges of teaching Fine Arts.

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