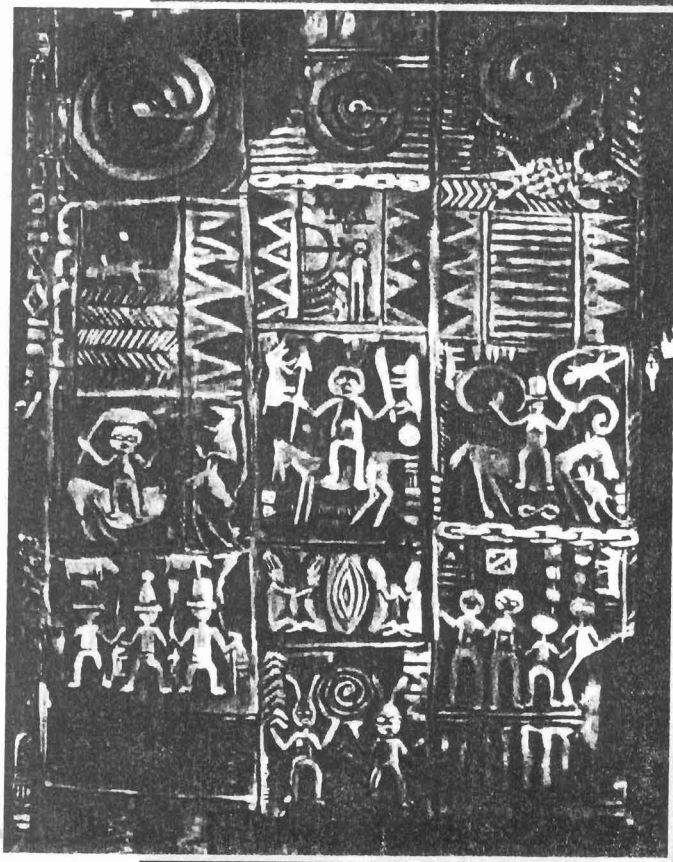


# Contemporary Issues in Nigerian Art:



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# THE PLACE OF COMPUTER IN FINE ART TEACHING IN THE DIGITAL AGE: A CASE OF CURRICULUM REPOSITIONING.

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## Abstract

*The effect of computer has swept across all the continents of the globe and has impacted positively on our economic, social, political, religious and educational spheres. Computer is no longer an amazing wizard as it used to be almost 20 years ago. It is now a commonplace and it continues to spread and affect our lives and work. In education, teaching and learning modes are undergoing rethink. Researches are in top gear to examine the 'effects' of computer and its possible integration into the curriculum vis-à-vis theories/principles guiding teaching and learning process. As part of the cases made in favour of computer as an effective teaching and learning mode is that it develops an open-ended exploratory experiences in the students based on its ability to stimulate constructivist's philosophy to learning. This paper principally focuses on the benefits and process of computer integration into the Fine Arts curriculum in both tertiary and secondary schools. It also presents a computer integration model, which can be adopted. The positions taken in this paper thus guide the recommendations provided.*

## Introduction

A deeper examination of styles from one age to the other is usually characterized by the concept of change. A change is usually caused by evolution/knowledge of new ideas, means, systems and schemes of goal achievement. The great names behind the outstanding and pronounced inventions in our history wanted a change from the ancient and cave man's ideas. The breakthrough in printing by Gutenberg for instance in 1495 resulted into the proliferation of books especially the Bible. The United States Military's style of sending and receiving signals waned around late 70's with the invention of the internet. The internet apart from being faster is more information and message accommodating than the radio and enhances both efficiency and effectiveness of the military.

Computers came into the classroom in America in the 1970s and were adopted as the new mode of instruction. The classroom teachers were not replaced by the computer; it only enhanced their efficiency and effectiveness. It was to them a gradual departure from the analog mode of teaching to the digital mode of teaching. Students were enabled to think critically through exploratory experiences offered by the computer. Students were given the opportunity of "coming to know" (learning) at their own pace, being part of lesson planning and thus the classroom situation shifted from teacher centred to learner-centred/controlled classroom. Classroom thus becomes more enjoyable, more interesting, challenging and less passive because students are actively engaged in the learning and teaching process.

The effects of the digital age can be perceived everywhere. From school to the industry, there is a connection between the school practice and the industry's expectations. This does not obtain abroad alone; Nigeria is experiencing the same trend. Generally the digital age is here. Vital questions therefore await our sincere responses as Art teachers and educators. Will the digital age effects pass us by without making the best use of it? Is the traditional/conventional method of chalk and talk still

relevant in this computer age? Will sable brushes, canvas, plaster of Paris, pencils, and pastels and so on (analog materials) give way for CorelDraw, Paint, Photoshop (digit art tools)?

Nevertheless, the definition of Fine Arts does not change. Fine Art remains the language in images (and texts) by which man communicates his ideas and reflects his culture, which has remained a means of preserving the culture of the society. This representation is absolutely done in visual form, a product of intellectual endowment and the development of the artist's creative ability. Kahler (1959:64) defines art as a human activity which explores and thereby creates new reality in a supranational, visual manner and presents it symbolically or metaphorically, as a microcosmic role signifying a macrocosmic whole. In essence, the artist's intuitive/inspiration usually transcends the rational thought, an unusual kind of knowledge or experience that at times defies logical explanation of an ordinary mind. Art is therefore regarded as a special form of communication. The main task of the artist is to provide the message – colours, images etc (Franke, 1987). The description above suggests that (arts) Fine Art is a process and could be accomplished through several means as long as the artist can still be inspired. Teaching and learning modes are other sources of inspiration for students. An effective mode of teaching facilitates learning and inspires students.

Nevertheless, these innovations in the classroom would not actually call for a change of our existing curriculum the curriculum will only experience review (repositioning) to accommodate the new concepts. A basic factor, generally believed to call for the review of the curriculum is "feedback" from its process of implementation- information about its effectiveness vis-à-vis modes and methods of instructional delivery. Data gathered have shown that performance of students in the secondary schools is dropping at an alarming rate and this calls for an urgent attention. This paper will therefore attempt to position the computer at an advantage as an effective mode of the artist's inspiration as we try to deliberate on how the Fine Arts curriculum could be repositioned

## The Definition and Concept of the Curriculum Repositioning

Broadly speaking, Zais (1976: 7-11) opined that curriculum could be viewed from any of the following concepts: as a 'planned learning experience'; as 'experiences had under the auspices of the school'; as a 'structured series of intended learning outcome'; and as a 'written plan for action'. Zais has pointed out here that the concept of curriculum has something to do with activities intended to elicit a set of outcomes. Beauchamp (1968) thus defined curriculum as a "system" within which decisions are made about what the curriculum will be and how it will be implemented. It is referred to as a system because it involves a process-development/design and also implementation. This definition equally leaves us with the idea of the content of the curriculum. Wojtczak (2002: 2) defines curriculum as: an educational plan that spells out which goals and objectives should be achieved, which topics should be covered and which methods are to be used for learning, teaching and evaluation. Cortes (2003: 1) argues that curriculum is more than that. According to him, a curriculum is more than a list of topics to be covered by an educational programme, for which the more commonly accepted word is a "syllabus". A curriculum is first of all a policy statement about a piece of education, and secondly an indication as to the ways in which policy is to be realized through a programme of action. It is the sum of all the activities, experiences and learning opportunities for which an institution or a teacher

takes responsibility either deliberately or by default. Wilson (1990: 4) definition of curriculum is everything and anything that teaches a lesson, planned or otherwise.

Curriculum review however, which in this paper is referred to as curriculum repositioning is synonymous to Taba's (1962: 47) concept of curriculum improvement. He described curriculum improvement as changing aspects of the curriculum without changing the fundamental conceptions of it or its organization. Repositioning the Fine Arts curriculum does not also change the fundamental/original conception of its organization: it will only bring about improvement of it. Moreover, it does not give a new definition to Fine Arts, the instrument/tool is the only change that has occurred.

### Preparing to use technology (Computer)

Handler (2002: 2) suggests that when preparing to use technology maximally in the classroom the following uses of the computer must be well acknowledged.

- To teach the students.
- As a tool with which students can learn
- As a tool to assist in the learning process.
- To develop open-ended exploratory experiences for the students

A closer look at these four uses suggests that the use of computer in the classroom affords us to apply the learner-centred method of teaching rather than the teacher-centred approach which is rigid and renders students passive. Teacher centred learning approaches often favour passive reception of knowledge, whereas learner-centre approaches encourage a process of active enquiring.

Learners are best motivated to learn when they take responsibility for their own learning and processing information, their motivation, initiative and results improves (Trinidad, MacIvish, Aldridge and Fraser 2002: 8). Fine Arts classrooms are expected to be learner-centred whereby students can really express themselves while the teacher only assumes the responsibility of guidance. To maximally achieve the goals of computer integration teachers must have the technical-know-how of the working of the computer.

### Challenges of Computer Integration: Model and Theoretical Construct.

The challenges of computer integration into the Fine Art curriculum are considered from the angle of its relative newness in the field of education and generally. This process is simply a matter of skill development in a time of transition from a conventional mode to the digital mode. Helping teachers and students to develop this skill is not an easy task because there is always a tendency for resistance on the part of the teachers, students might find it interesting, but teachers have different perspective to it. As such a model as presented by Lloyd and Welliver (1989: 21-32) in their paper titled "Infusing Educational Technology into mainstream Educational Computing" will be adopted for the purpose of this paper bearing in mind that we are addressing both the students and teachers. The model presented three phases of integration: Familiarization, Utilization and Integration.

**Familiarization:** It is a process of getting acquainted with a new object/concept. It involves (i) *Presentation* by someone knowledgeable about the concept-its use, challenges and prospects, (ii) *Acceptance* on the part of those to whom the concept was presented (non-resistance), and (iii) *Exploration* for the purpose of mastery. The exploration stage extends to the second phase, in fact, the mainstream of the second phase.

**Utilization:** This stage is simply an extension of the third stage of familiarization- the stage of try-out and training. Teachers/teachers in training are expected to undergo on-the-job-training/in-service training to properly equip themselves with the necessary skills in preparation for integration. The keyword therefore is "*Professional development*". Professional development is collaboration between partners to provide opportunities for teachers to strengthen their ability to contribute to the students they serve (George et al. 2000: 81). These skills could be acquired by attending seminars, workshops and conferences where *best practices* are shared amongst stake holders.

**Integration:** The third phase is integration. This phase involves the actual integration of computer into the curriculum. It is called the pre-implementation implementation stage. The phase requires what Faw (2000: 5) calls 'putting together a technology team'. He identified three types of technology teams that could be put together in integrating computer into the curriculum, which is equally adaptable in our context.

- (a) The Full time technology staff: They have a two-fold role: **working with** students, who are project facilitators, and **working with teachers**, who are instructional designers (Brunner and Williams. 1999: 27). They are to act as guidance to students while on the computers and also assist teachers in developing instructional modules for both theories and practical. This role places them as technology staff because they have the technical skills and can also assume the role of computer maintenance.
- (b) The committee of teachers with extensive computer knowledge: **This second team has more challenging and engaging task** considering what each teacher inputs into the integration process. They are expected to instruct students, collaborate with other teachers and maintain the technology while they continue to manage their own classroom. They assume this role because they have extensive computer knowledge thus making them become less dependent on the technology staff. Another advantage **this team has is that** such teachers will be able to work directly with students based on learners' needs assessment and be able to integrate appropriately what mode, software and environment a particular concept can best be taught.
- (c) The hybrid team: This is a combination of the two technology teams. The main advantage is that such team will combine what both of the teams identified would have done separately. They can work with students, teachers, maintain systems and collaborate professionally to bring computers into the classroom. Faw (2000: 5) strongly believed that at least three factors must be considered when deciding what type of technology team is best for a particular school: the size of school, school's budget and teachers' prior computer knowledge.

### Prospects of Computer Integration into the Fine Art Curriculum

"Technology has provided artists with new tools throughout history. As new technologies become available, artists learn to use them and traditional means of expression are transformed or entirely new means of expression are developed" (Olejarz. 1999: 1).

Throughout history, advances in technology continue to provide artists with diverse means of expression. The tools of artistic expressions change as man's quest

for high taste appreciates. Olejarz's above position as expressed boils down on the fact that though conventional methods of expression are relevant, but they could be transformed for more relevance in the digital age. Some of the prospects of integrating computer into the Fine Arts curriculum as pointed out by Olejarz (ibid) put computer as (i) compact tool kit, (b) enhances creativity, (c) technology for storage, (d) enhances problem solving and critical thinking, and (e) reduces time and costs.

Computer as a compact tool kit: It is amazing to know that almost all, if not all, the materials that are used by the artists could be readily found on the computer. Packages such as CorelDraw, Photoshop, and Paint etc provide artists with a wide variety of art materials. It is also possible for the artist to have a mobile studio if he can afford an art-functional laptop, which he could carry around and work with anytime anywhere. In a nutshell, artists need not travel distances to acquire expensive materials.

Computer enhances creativity: In a study by Egbedokun, (2004), it was found that computer assisted instruction enhanced the performance of students in creative design when compared with students exposed to the conventional method of teaching Fine Arts. Craft (2000: 62) defined creativity as imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value. Craft's definition combines the ability and the sensitivity of user with his manipulative ability to compose ideas on the computer. The computer has no power of its own to improve creativity, it is the user who has the control, hence the need for users' technical-know-how.

Computer enhances problem solving skill and critical thinking: Beamish and Au (1995: 1) remarked that one of the major aims in contemporary education is the development of problem solving and thinking skills among students. Artists need critical thinking to meet the demands of the society. Computer will allow students reflect thoughtfully on ideas and knowledge they have acquired from a particular source and logically incorporate such ideas to make a whole.

Computer reduces time and costs: Cross (1976: 87) found that students who were exposed to computer assisted instruction spent a less significant time in task completion when compared with students in the conventional classroom. This result was also supported by the findings of Egbedokun (2004) in a study that compared time spent by learners exposed to CAI and those in the conventional classroom. It was not achieved through magic, but was basically dependent on the fact that students need not wait for colours to ferment, board to stretch and other conventions. It was made possible because those conventions have been digitized and thus make it faster to achieve. In terms of costs, this is reduced to the initial cost of the computer system.

### Conclusion

The invention of the computer has been a technological wonder in man's search for the mastery of his environment and maximal utilization of resources. The remarkable landmark it has left in the soil of technology-based industries, corporations, and educational institutions will remain a celebrated event as more events unfold in such places. A computer integration model has been presented in this paper, which is believed will enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of both teachers and students. Ranging from enhancing creativity to reducing time and cost of production, the computer has been found helpful in the enhancement of critical thinking for the students in the process of their works.

### Recommendations

In view of the foregoing, the following recommendations are proffered:

- Teachers should be made aware of the potentials of integrating computer into the curriculum to reduce the incidence of resistance
- Curriculum planners and administrators must be consulted by authorities in Fine Arts for proper repositioning and integration process.
- Regular seminars and conferences should be held as a form of in-service training for teachers on the use of computer for instructional purposes in Fine Arts.
- Government and corporate organizations should be contacted for the provision of computer sets for the initial take-off.

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## FINE ARTS AND THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

by

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### Abstract

*Government policy planners view education as a means to service the national economic interest, but art education does more than that. While the curriculum theorists like Eisner (1992) sees arts as playing the key role in educational reform, evidence indicates that man use the arts to express the self and this act cuts across the stages of creativity and mental development of man. This paper advocates for the inclusion of relevant creative art practices in early childhood education. Suggestions on methods of using arts as foundation of education were provided.*

### Introduction

The Federal Governments Policy statement on early Childhood education (NPE1998) Section

2 page10, states some of the objectives of early childhood education as:

effecting a smooth transition from the home to their school;  
preparing the child for primary level of education; providing  
adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents  
are at work ( on farms, in the markets, offices etc)

However, the policy statement that has bearing with Fine Arts is stated in item (e):

Inculcating in the child the spirit of inquiry and creativity through  
the exploration of nature and the local environment, playing with  
toys, artistic and musical activities etc;

The statement made in item (e) is a pointer to the usefulness of Fine Arts in the teaching and leaning process.

### Objectives

This paper focuses on the ways by which young learners can get into the activity of creative art. The theory of education, art and their relationship to the aims and objectives of art are discussed with the intent of providing teachers with creative approach to handling early childhood learners.

Some of the aims of art teaching in schools includes: training of the eye and hand for co-ordination and skills development; training learners for self expression; creating opportunity for aesthetic development etc (Adeyanju 1994).

### Objectives of instruction in art education.

Over the years, art educators have written lists of objectives that have clarified their values and attempted to justify the importance of art education to those who have been concerned with the seemingly more practical and useful aspects of education. One of the first comprehensive lists of objectives was written in 1899 by a committee of Ten on Drawing organized by the National Education Association (Klar, Winslow and Kirby in Adeyanju 2005). In the report, the committee listed the following as the primary aims of art education.

1. To offer a consistent development in the faculty of sight.



2. To develop an appreciation of the beautiful.
3. To acquire the ability to represent
4. To develop the creative impulse
5. To prepare pupils for manual industry is purely accidental.
6. The development of professional artist is not an aim of art in public schools.

The aims listed in one (1) to four (4) sound prophetic of the primary goals for art education spanning several decades. They provide a frame of reference from which the current objective in art education was formed. The objectives five (5) and six (6) are a turning point.

At the early childhood years, the teacher merely plays with the learners while the objectives stated in 1-4 usually are applied with some flexibility. It is pertinent to examine some of the theories of art and criticism.

### Theory of art and criticism

Art theory or aesthetics is concerned with defining the nature of art while teachers of art feel that art cannot be taught effectively unless teachers can state truly the nature (Weitz 1966). Theories of art thus serves as guides to direct the experiencing of the work of art and without them our experiences with art stand to be less rich and full. The most important influential theories of art includes; '*Imitationalism*'. This doctrine defines properties of works of art having certain features that imitate the world outside art. Next is expressionism, the doctrine is a product of creative imagination. The next is the theory of emotionalism. In art, this doctrine defines arts as the embodiment in artistic media of an emotion or a collection of them. *Formism's* doctrine defines work of art as certain organizations of element that produces certain effect. Organism is the last doctrine that defines works of art as essentially having unity.

In early childhood education, theories are learned through practical demonstration by the teacher. Learners are provided opportunity to express the self through different play media as they explore their environment. Horovitz and Luca in Adeyanju (1996) stated that the learner passes through some stages of creativity and mental development. The early learner passes through the stage of scribbling that occurs between the age of 2-5 years Old. The child activities during this period are characterized by use of irregular lines and shapes. The child scribbles on surface of wall meaningless objects. What the child scribbles has been described as mere activity that develops his/her ability physically as the drawn expressions made.

The child learner is always ready to express the self using what-so-ever medium placed in his environment. He explores using chalk, paint and pens, provided the materials are there to get him/her stimulated.

### The Curriculum

The concept of curriculum defies interpretation, however, Fafunwa (1977) believe strictly that the broad aim of the childhood curriculum is to help the child develop his/her natural abilities. In other words, the planner of activities of learning has to provide a stimulating environment that could challenge the child, as well as get the child involved. Such design would positively affect his/her social being emotionally, physically as well as his/her intellectual activities because they get modified as he/she learns.

The curriculum has also been described as involving the totality of the planned and unplanned experiences. The planned experience refers to the formal curriculum as learned in the school's setting. The unplanned involves all other experiences, including accidental learning.

The creative art learning at the early childhood level makes use of discovery, play activities and flexible curriculum. Since early childhood age falls between age 2-5 years, very little but organized curriculum is required. It is known that at this age level, all activities point towards creativity and it is the activity that makes general learning takes place (Schiller 1993)

Ajala (2003) lay emphasis on the need to carefully plan the curriculum as well as instructional processes since they are directly linked with the child's learning experiences, his/her learning strategies, the teacher's style and the type of institutional resources made available to the learner.

### Importance of using creative arts to instruct learners

Art reflects our way of life. The young learner needs to develop his/her potentials as he/she learns from culture. The need for him to learn how to draw paint, and model at the early age gives him/her the needed skill to conquer the world. Learning how to do things prepare him/her for other technical knowledge needed for him/her to grow. Basically, the child's lingua Franca is art. Every growing child can express freely his/her feelings with whatever medium is made available. The child's 'pent up' feelings is expressible through creative / fine arts. Art provides a medium through which other disciplines of life are seen clearly. Art helps sharpens mental consciousness, precision and also assist in learning to appreciate what is beautiful..

### Contribution of philosophers to early childhood learning theories.

Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Frobel and Montessori in their different contribution to ideal learning demonstrated the need to make learning child centred. Maria Montessori (1870-1952) in Rome taught little children with concrete materials in order to get children close to reality of their learning environment. She found that learners get their motivation through activities that involve the use of several of the sense organs. In creative art, learners gain the skill of manipulation as they model in clay, scribbles and play with paint and wet sand.

Frederic Froebel's (1752-1852) contribution to learning during the early years is significant. He stressed the need for children learning through creative work and play. He believed in a continuous link between the home and school. From Froebel's theory, the teacher should use stories to lead learners and not force them to learn using teaching-learning materials, rather he puts it that children's imagination can get stimulated when taught with fairy tales, fantasies and fables.

Unfortunately, important as the Fine Arts subject is, it is despised and looked down upon by those who fail to see the several contributions that it makes at ensuring all round development of man. At the higher school, enrolment into Fine Arts programme is low; schools do not have materials to expose learners to creativity, and it has been found that Art studies are non existent in most secondary schools. Compounding the practice of Fine Art further is the perception that people generally have about the Fine Arts, the materials make their hands dirty, etc. (Adeyanju 1994)

The fine artists however are one of the neatest minds that the world should value in terms of provision of useful and workable solutions to the myriad of problems of living, be they natural or man made. Artists form a large percent of problem solver

because they dream as they create for the societal future. This is one reason why the young learner should be encouraged to use the Fine Art techniques in learning since they would naturally come by challenges that require practical solution. Hess and Croft (1975) has packaged some activities for the use of early learners. Some of the activity can be used by teachers to encourage creativity.

### Suggested Activities for young children

Some of the suggested activities for the young learner as experience have shown include finger etching, footprints, string pictures, tissue collage and blow out pictures, etc.

#### String pictures

Children can dip yarn or string is mixture of paint and white glue, designs are later made on coloured paper.

#### Tissue collage

Children can be made to use large brushes to "paint" liquid starch on cans, and construction papers or even tins of milk. Pieces of coloured tissue paper are then attached.

#### Blowout pictures

In the creation of Rorschach-like designs, a plastic straw is used to suck up tempera paints. When the load of paint is dropped quickly on paper and air is blown on the paint directly, pictures are created. When the design is folded an exciting repetition of the design results. This is a creative play.

#### Finger etching

An area on a smooth surface table is masked out. The size could be that of newsprint. The child is allowed to finger paint on the surface with liquid starch and powdered paint. When the activity is finished, it is taken off by smoothing newsprint over the design.

### Conclusion

Young learners have no definition for art or crafts. All children do is activity of play, drama, mining and creating ideas using what ever materials that exists in their environment. Young learners require guidance as they grow up. However, a sympathetic teacher could allow them lead activities such that their creativity would develop.

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