

Analytical Survey on the Challenges of Teaching and Learning the Arts in the 21st Century and the Way Out

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Introduction

The concept “Arts” in the context of this study refers to the disciplines of Creative Arts and Humanities which are generally what Art disciplines entails. Despite the prominent and indispensable role the Arts could play in the process of Nation building in the 21st Century, it is quite unfortunate as it seems that governments all over the world, curriculum planners, and other stake holders in the education sector are not aware of the prominent role the Arts could play in making students aware of the fundamental problems that militates against the development of a nation, the solution to these problems and preparing them on how to tackle the future challenges that concerns their immediate community at large which will adversely encourage the process of building a nation.

However, research findings had revealed that the rationale responsible for this is not far to the fact that some problems militates against the teaching and learning of the Arts. In actual fact, this has made the Arts as subjects to easily become a mere worrisome array, especially in the secondary school curriculum.

Therefore, the problems facing the process of teaching and learning the Arts in the 21st century are multi-dimensional, ranging from non-professionalism of History teachers or facilitators, Government policies, lack of appropriate teaching aids to mention a few.

Nature of Art Disciplines

The Arts though uniquely different in appearance and method from each other, the disciplines employ similar cognitive processes, ultimately allowing language and thought to be expressed through a variety of representations. They are represented not in ordinary sense of language as written on a page, but in either a visual, kinesthetic, aural or tactile form. Engaging students and pupils, arts can allow them to communicate in potentially profound ways (Eisner, 2002). As Russell-Bowie(2009) points out: Because the arts can embody and communicate emotions, ideas, beliefs and values, they can convey meaning through aesthetic forms and symbols and evoke emotive responses to life with or without words. There is also evidence to suggest that school arts programs can enhance students’ potential to engage with school and learning and learning more broadly (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2004; Bamford 2006; Catterall, Chapleau & Iwanaga, 1999; Fiske, 1999). Unfortunately, there are gaps in our knowledge in regards to the cognitive process and social capabilities that can be effectively fostered through the arts. Evidence of this is that, studies into the academic impact of Arts education programs in schools conducted in the UK and US confirmed that much attention has not been given to the Arts. Also, Gibson and Anderson(2008) argued that within the context of Australian schools there is an urgent need for a detailed study of the impacts of Arts programs.

Internationally, there is a growing body that creative Arts learning and engagement has a range of positive outcomes in terms of the lives of young people both in and out of school settings (Bamford,2006; Catterall, Chapleau & Iwanaga, 1999;Deasy, 2002; Fiske, 1999). Sadly, despite a renewed interest in the unique benefits of creative Arts learning, it appears that the subject matter remained marginalized.

Challenges of Teaching and Learning the Arts in the 21st Century

Despite the prominent and indispensable role the Arts could play in the process of a nation building in the 21st century, it is quite unfortunate as it seems that governments all over, curriculum planners, and other stake holders in the educational sector are not aware of the prominent role the Arts could play in making the students aware of the fundamental problems that militates against the at development of a nation, the solution to this problem and preparing them on how to tackle the future challenges that concerns the community at large which will adversely encourage the process of building a nation. However, research findings had revealed that the rationale responsible for this is not far to the fact that some problems militates against the teaching and learning of Arts as subject. These problems however have made the Arts lost its value. In actual fact, the Arts as subjects or disciplines as the case may be in the secondary schools curriculum around the globe have easily become a mere worrisome array, burdened with facts and incidents thus making the Arts not exciting to students.

However, the problems facing the Arts in the 21st century as subjects or discipline are multi-dimensional, ranging from non-professionalism of Art teachers, the inclusion of lengthy notes and copious dates, governments' policies, lack of incentives for the available teachers of Art subjects, lack of appropriate teaching aids and many others which include:

1. Unawareness of the relevance of the Arts to the society and the curriculum planners:

Jayeola-Omoyeni (1983), "in 2005" was of the opinion that; *"the value of the Arts to human and community are never conceptualized by the learners before the actual teaching of the development of the kingdoms"*

The above statements however pointed to the fact that many people even those in the high places, and intellectuals in our society today are not aware of the important role the Arts as subjects could play in the process of nation building. Thus, they ascribe derogatory names to Art disciplines and to Art students.

Furthermore, the Arts had its problems from the misconception of its essence and role in the society in the 21st century. This is an indirect consequence of the way and manner in which many practitioners have been presenting the Art disciplines. To many people in the society, the Arts as a field of study are static, time-wasting, and uninteresting in contemporary events. Similarly, in National policy on education in the 21st century all over the world as revealed by research, are grossly marginalized owing to the prominent importance placed on science and technology. This clearly illustrates the status of the Art subjects as endangered academic disciplines.

2. Non-professionalism of Art teachers:

Fadeyiye (2004) advocated that *“there is no doubt that anyone who wants to become a teacher must have a good disposition to the teaching profession”*. In the same vein, Jayeola-Omoyeni (2005) postulated that *“the best teachers of Art disciplines include male and female indigenes and expatriates, who teach at all levels of educational institutions from primary to the university. He must have correct knowledge of Art disciplines, show enthusiasm and zeal to teach them (Art disciplines)”*. But unfortunately, many teachers of Art disciplines in the 21st century are birds of passage in the teaching profession. This is because many of the teachers in the Art disciplines that we have today lack interest in the teaching profession and in the Art subjects they teach. Such teachers take the teaching profession as a hobby and consequently pay less attention to it while they devote much attention to other areas. These sets of teachers without the necessary commitment and interest do not usually and sincerely pledge their loyalty to the teaching profession. They equally take the teaching of the Art disciplines with levity.

It is however important to note here that most of these types of teachers find their way to become part of the curriculum planners. Consequently, the non-professionalism and inadequate knowledge allied to lack of commitment and interest which they have initially displayed are also shown when planning the school curriculum especially for secondary schools and this has seriously plunged the position of Arts in the curriculum.

3. The government policy:

Attitudes of Governments all over the world towards the Arts are not encouraging now that “their attention and focus is on how to produce exporting goods, build railway, manufacture home-made goods and how to improve the technological standards of the country. In the context of such demands, the Art subjects do appear to be irrelevant. It is however clear that government all over the world in the 21st century has marginalized the Art subjects. Apart from this, only few periods are allocated to Art teaching on school timetables. Art lessons or periods are mostly taught in the afternoon when students are already tired and this makes the students bored and not active in the history classes.

In furtherance to the above, government preferred investing their money to finance seminars, workshop, conferences etc on Science and Technology subjects than using the fund on Art disciplines. They do not promptly organize lectures, symposium, seminars, and refresher course in order to make the subjects alive and productive.

4. Personality of the student or learner:

The performance and achievement of a student is affected by his personality, that is to say the general pattern of a person's way of reasoning, feeling, adjusting and behaving with particular references to other persons or an environment. It is the projection of ourselves to others. Personality is a product of heredity and environment.

Farrant (1980) grouped human beings into two personality groups' introvert and extrovert. The extrovert is always reaching out for new connection with people and things as he prefers the world outside himself. He likes to be the center of attraction and mixes well with others. His extroverted personality exposes him better in learning situation to ask and answer question to adjust well and confidentially interact effectively with the fellow students and teachers.

On the other hand, the introvert is observed to be concerned with the world within him. His real feeling are not easily recognized, he hates being the centre because of his withdrawing personality. In fact he is drawn inward with shyness, nervousness and calmness.

However, students are prone of falling into the two group students who find themselves in either of the groups should be very vigilant because of the nature of Art disciplines. Though, the Arts subjects is not like other subject that involves definitions, advantages and disadvantages etc but they deals with facts and interpretation.

5. Teaching skills of teachers and lack of appropriate teaching aids:

Despite the fact that there are some teachers of Art disciplines who possessed the necessary paper qualification, yet they are not effective in the teaching skills because they teach their subjects in an abstract manner. Owing to many researches by various scholars, it has been observed that many teachers of the Art disciplines in the 21st century engage in the teaching of Art subjects especially in the developing countries without the usage of necessary and appropriate audio visual aids such as maps, charts, models, pictorial illustrations, radio, television, tape recorders and players, films etc. As a result, many students in the secondary schools develop a very bad taste for learning the Arts because of the abstract manner in which it was taught since proper provision for specific teaching aids is not made by the curriculum, Arts as subject can never be meaningful in the school curriculum, delivered or taught without the necessary and suitable teaching aids.

Methods of repositioning the teaching and learning of Arts in the 21st Century.

Several solutions have been proffered to the challenges of teaching and learning the Arts in the 21st century by various scholars in the Arts and stakeholders in the educational sector all over the world. These scholars were of the opinion that if the teaching and learning the Arts could be repositioned, the lost value of the Arts will be revived and the relevance of the Arts in the process of nation building in the 21st Century will be manifested and this will undoubtedly make the society, governments at all levels and curriculum planners aware of the important role of Arts. However, considering the opinion of various scholars, if the challenges hindering the teaching and learning the Arts in the 21st would be addressed, then the following recommendations must be considered:

1. The usage of information and communication technology (I.C.T) to the process of teaching and learning the Arts.

Scholarly works and findings had proved that there is no general acceptable term or definition of I.C.T (Augustine, 1999). However, I.C.T can still be described as Electronics Technologies for collecting, storing, processing and communicating information. They can be separated into two main categories: those which process information such as computer system and those which disseminate information such as telecommunication system, (Butter 2003 and Gunton 1993) in Augustine (1999).

In the same vein, Ladon et-al (1994) in Augustine (1999): defines ICT as “information technology and system which include all the different means, methods and tools that humans have used through-out history to help manage information, conduct business, communicate with others and better understand the world. Therefore, in effort to curb the challenges confronting the teaching and learning of Arts in the 21st century, it is suggested that curriculum planners should adequately ensure that they make provision for the inclusion of information and communication technology in the teaching and learning of the Arts disciplines. Because the inclusion of information and communication technology (ICT) into the curriculum especially in the developing countries, will definitely make the teaching and learning of Art subjects more realistic and fascinating.

2. Inclusion of the usage of virtual library to the process of teaching and learning the Arts.

Fadeiye (2004) defined “library as a place (room or building) where people can read books, journals, periodicals, magazines and other printed matter with a view to collecting information”. In furtherance , Abimbola (2003) opined that “since the mid- 1980, the Art subjects has continued to record low numbers of enrolment of students. In line with the above, Oyekanmi (2002) elucidated upon the relevance of virtual library to the teaching

and learning of Arts in “Nigeria Journal of library, archives and information science, (NLAIS, 2003)”. He defined virtual library as “a computerized system, which provides multiple access to entire collections of a library by means of electronic media” worthy of mentioning is that the virtual library annexes digital technology and internet technologies to search, collect, organize, store and distribute information. The virtual library has the capacity to turn around the fortunes of teaching and learning the Arts in the 21st century .

3. Presentation and usage of appropriate teaching aids in the process of teaching and learning the Arts

To curb the challenges hindering the teaching and learning of Arts in the 21st century, various concerned professional on curriculum matters such as curriculum planners, the school administrators and Art teachers should always be mindful and ensure the prescription of the appropriate teaching aids to teach the Art subjects. While the curriculum planners ensure the prescription of the appropriate teaching aids to be prescribed by the curriculum, the school administration should strictly supervise and coordinate the teachers to make use of the prescribed teaching aids in teaching the Art subjects. Furthermore, local materials should also be encouraged in the curriculum as it will greatly help to aid the teaching and learning process of Art subjects in the 21st century.

It is very important to note here that the prescription by the curriculum and the use of appropriate and relevant teaching aids will sincerely be a good stimulant to generate interest in learning abstract subject endeavor to include the usage of audio visual aids for teaching the Art subjects. The audio visual aids include: pictures, chats, films etc which helps the students to have clear picture or description of what they have learnt. Television and computer will also go along in advancing their knowledge; the chalkboard which stands for clarity purpose and relevant textbook which provides relevant, vital and up to date information of current trends and developments in the Arts subject etc. If all these are incorporated in the teaching learning process of the Art subjects, it will definitely curb the challenges militating against the Arts subjects in the 21st century. Thus, Art teachers should not always wait till the government provides teaching aids. They should also source for teaching aids available within the locality.

4. The usage of relevant teaching methods in the process of teaching and learning the Art subjects.

Jayeola Omoyeni (2005), explained that “*good methods of teaching can improve the interests and enthusiasm of students to learn Arts subjects*”. In furtherance to the above, he further postulated that “*the usage of relevant and appropriate teaching methods to*

teach the Art subjects will erase the fear of students for learning Art subjects and their erroneous perception of the Art subjects as useless disciplines". In the same vein, Michael Omolewa(1987), was of the opinion that *"no teacher of Art disciplines that has the time, energy or experience to use all methods of teaching at a time but whatever the method is to be used, it should depend on general factors like age of the learners, aptitude of the learners, topic, purpose etc"* . However, research findings had revealed that some particular methods of teaching should be adopted when teaching the Art subjects. Prominent among these methods include:

- Excursion or field trip method.
- Group work method.
- Dalton method.
- Inquiry method.
- Socratic Method.

All these methods of teaching among others have been observed as good and appropriate in teaching, learning process of the Art subjects.

5. Encouraging local writers and motivating teachers of Art subjects.

Another way which the challenges hindering the teaching and learning of Art subjects in the 21st century could be curbed is that; governments at all levels, all over the world, should always encourage teachers of Art subjects to write relevant textbooks on Art subjects which will reflect on contemporary issues. Hence, these textbooks and materials produced by these authors should be incorporate and prescribed by the curriculum to be used in schools at all levels. Furthermore, since it is shown that there is scarcity of professional trained Art teachers, there is an urgent need of intensifying the training and retaining of Art teachers. Thus, Art teachers should be encouraged to attend workshops, seminars, conferences etc so that they can be integrated into the changing conditions of the 21st century. This will adequately enhance Art teachers to give students the right information and guide, thereby, making Art subjects interesting in schools.

Conclusion.

As vividly shown in the analysis above, it has been discovered that there are challenges bedeviling the process of teaching and learning the Arts in the 21st century. This however explained the reason why the relevance of Art subjects is undermined in the 21st century which has also accounted for the loss of student's interest in the Art disciplines. It could then be concluded that if the challenges facing the teaching learning process of the Arts in the 21st century could be curbed, the relevant of the Art disciplines will be known to all, and its rightful place accorded in the educational curriculum all over the world.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, if the challenges facing the teaching learning process of the Arts in the 21st century could be curbed, the following recommendations should be observed and adopted:

- Art teachers should avoid the teaching of Art subjects in abstract manners. They should ensure the use appropriate teaching aids.
- Government at all levels all over the world should encourage the teaching and learning of Art subjects through the means of providing adequate funds and equipments which will help the Arts education as Science and technology is encouraged in the 21st century.
- Art teachers should not embrace the excuse of lack of funds from the government or any education authorities thereby failing to make simple and useful teaching aids. They should improvise and experiment with whatever simple teaching aids materials they themselves can make use of in their lessons.
- Art teachers especially in the developing countries should ensure the usage and maximize the advantages of information and communication technologies (I.C.T), visual library and internet facilities in passing relevant information in the teaching, learning process.
- Art teachers should always attend conferences, seminars etc so that they can be integrated into the changing conditions of the 21st century.

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