HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CREATIVE ARTS EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

MANGIRI, STANLEY GOLIKUMO.
Department of Fine and Applied Arts Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Abstract

This paper focuses attention on the evolution of Art Education in Nigeria before and after independence. It also looks at the background to the various policy statements which have affected the provision of Art Education of the policy statements and the attendant problems in implementation. In addition, the concept and characteristic of art education policy are examined, and in the light of these, the government strategies at implementing the policy are evaluated to determine the extent to which the needs of the nation in the area of arts education have been met.

Key Words: Historical Development, Creative Arts and Art Education.

INTRODUCTION

ART EDUCATION BEFORE 1842

Art is precisely one way in which a society elaborates the modes of thoughts and behaviour, designed by man. Every man who is himself an art work has a purpose and direction on this earth plane. That direction is guided by creative thinking and creative activities for the upliftment of humanity and his environment. No society developed without these factors in their traditional or indigenous education system. The Nigerian society is no exception; it was prevalent in Nigeria before the advent of Islam and Christianity. Odeyemi (1977) affirms this:

Each society has its indigenous system of training and educating its youths. African education placed emphasis on social responsibility, job orientation, political participation, spiritual and moral values. Children and adolescents engaged in participatory education through imitation – demonstration. Practical farming, animal husbandry, fishing, hunting, weaving cooking, carpentry, painting, building, decoration, smiting, catering, boat making, pottery making, dyeing, carving and knitting were some of the vocations, in which they were engaged. Their recreational subjects include wrestling, dancing, drumming, acrobatic display and racing while their intellectual training include the study of local history, legends, deities, the environment, poetry, reasoning, riddle, proverbs and story-telling.

The end objective of traditional African education according to Odeyemi (1977) and Ajayi and Awoleye (1985) is to produce an individual who is honest, respectful, skilled, cooperative and who conforms to the social order of the day.

Ifeyemi (1979) and Fafunwa (1985) also state that education in the pre-colonial period was functional and purposeful and the subjects taught include ethical principles, religious beliefs and various skills, which include arts and crafts. The various skills training were largely run through apprenticeship system and not any formal setting, as we know them today.

However, when the missionaries came in 1842, their focus was on the religious beliefs. Art and craft were not much important. Even when the colonial government became involved in education, it was only interested in clerical staff to help it govern (Evans 1962; Fajana, 1970; Biobaku, 1970; in Akolo, 1990). Therefore, indigenous arts according to Carline (1968) in Akolo (1990) did not have a place in the education policies of the British colonial Government. Nevertheless, arts and crafts continued to flourish in the villages. It is clear from the above that indigenous education system developed the child’s latent physical skills, intellectual skills, and made them to acquire specific vocational training and to develop a healthy attitude towards honest labour.

DEVELOPMENT OF ART EDUCATION BETWEEN 1842 AND 1900

At this period of educational development, art was classified as a mere vocation other than as art education.
This is because art had no distinctive features in the education policy. There was no well-planned pattern of curriculum design as would be termed art curriculum, but was categorised as unspecified subject under technical and vocational education. Therefore, art education was within the exclusive missionary activities, minimal government participation and continued missionary efforts and period of active government involvement.

Between the periods 1842 and 1900, the churches – missionaries of Methodist Mission, Church Mission Society, Presbyterian Church of Scotland and Roman Catholic Mission established Grammar Schools to train people for preaching, interpreting, teaching and clerical jobs. At this period, the goal of their education was mainly religious activities with focus on how to convert souls for Christ. According to Fajana (1978) in Anuna and Ofoeze (1996), the mission schools were no more than evangelical agencies aimed at mainly, promoting knowledge of the Bible and religious tracks translated into vernacular. It is well to note that there was no specific education policy or philosophy of education by both the British colonial government and the Christian missionaries.

During this period there was a remarkable change. In 1882, the British administration passed the first education ordinance in Nigeria. This second education ordinance was that of 1887. These ordinances rested on only administrative policies.

MINIMAL GOVERNMENT PARTICIPATION (1900 – 1925)

In the words of Oloidi (1990), the art of drawing and painting, “true art”, as style in western art tradition was deliberately not introduced to Nigeria for political, racial and religious reasons. Before the 20th century, the art of singing, music, drama or entertainment were already a part of Nigeria’s colonial education. Craft or handicraft was happily accepted in schools, that was mainly to sustain the colonial domestic or utilitarian needs.

Between 1905 and 1922, there was a noticeable change in the concept and practice of art in schools. Aina Onabolu – founder and father of modern Nigerian Art made fruitless but relentless efforts to convince the colonial government that he is creatively and biologically fit to introduce the art of drawing to schools to deter the colonial stereo –type that no black man was capable of drawing and painting the white man’s way (Oloidi, 1990).

With persistence and courage, Onabolu continued the struggle despite humiliation and negative reactions from the government. He persevered and with much determination presented his last letter in 1919 to the education department Lagos. This time the answer or reply to his request was positive. In 1936, Onabolu taught art in the Methodist Mission at Calabar had developed a technical programme in tailoring, carpentry and some commercial subjects and Nassarawa school established by the government had courses in metal work, carpentry, waving and leather work (Osuola, 1998). These were taught as craft under vocational education and not in any specified art curriculum. In 1916, Lord Laggard’s Education Ordinance emphasized the adoption of the vernacular as a language of instruction in various parts of the country and the recognition of local specimens, materials and/or contents (subject matter) in such school subjects as biology, chemistry, geography and history (Adeyinka, 1993).

Even when the government started to participate in the control and administration of education, the British colonial government attitude was that the provision of technical education, that is vocational or art education for Nigeria (beyond very limited artisan training for government development) was neither necessary nor feasible. However, according to Osuola (1998) a new education policy for British African colonies was set up to raise the efficiency of Nigerians. Even though art education was not specifically entrenched in the school curriculum, there was growing awareness about the growth and development of individual’s creative and aesthetic perception towards his environment.

THE PERIOD BETWEEN 1925 – 1960

Quite interestingly, after the introduction of arts, it continued to received attention by the very enthusiastic students. In 1923, Onabolu taught art in the Methodist Boy’s High School, Lagos. He also taught art in many other secondary schools such as the kings colleges, Baptist academy both in Lagos and in many other schools. In 1927, a Briton, Mr. Kenneth C. Murray arrived in Nigeria and in 1928 taught art in Queen’s and Kings colleges, Lagos. Murray eventually helped to take art out of Lagos to other provinces. Within this period, he also taught art in Ibadan and Umuahia government colleges. This is when he started to spot and select young Nigerians for training. He encouraged many young Nigerians to take up art as a career. It was through his efforts and those of others like H.E. Duckworth, J.D. Clarke and Dennis Duerden that the emergence of a new breed of modern Nigerian artists such as Ben Enwonwu, Udo Emma, Clara Ugboadaga-Ndu, Uche Okeke, Bruce Onobrakpeya, J.B. Akolo and other exponents of modern Nigerian art became possible (Olaosebikan, 1982; Ogumor, 1993).

Onabolu, Murray and a few others tried to produce the first indigenous art students and leaders. Between 1937 and the 1940s, Nigeria was able to boast of some indigenous artists and art teachers needed to accelerate the growth of the tradition (Oloidi, 1990). Udo Emma before 1936 fought relentlessly for the inclusion of art in the school’s curriculum. He won the battle. In 1936, he started to teach art in a number of schools in the former
eastern Nigeria (Ogumor, 1993). Art teaching and its activities became pleasure and acceptable to Nigerians. It continued to flourish like the Bible story — “The parable of the Sower”. Art fell on a very fertile ground and produced many folds.

By 1984, seven trade centers were established at Kaduna, Enugu, Ombo Rivers, Bururu, Ahiara, Ibadan and Sapale. Trade training was proposed in ten crafts; fitting and turning, engine fitting and body building. Carpentry and joinery, cabinet making, painting and decoration, electric wiring and plumbing (Osuola, 1998). However, art or art related courses or subjects were always grouped with other crafts under technical education.

The 1950s printed more indelible marks that had permanent bearing on art education policy in Nigeria. 1950s had new dawn that led to the establishment of more art schools and museums. They are:

1. Dennis Duerden “Flame of the forest school” at Government College, Keffi in 1950.
2. Establishment of art and printing department of the technical institute, Yaba (now Yaba College of Technology) in 1952.
4. Establishment of the art department at the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology, Zaria in 1955 and also at Enugu in 1955.

The regional government established “handicraft centers”. According to Osuola (1998) in the former Eastern and Western regions, each handicraft center served several primary schools in its community. In the Northern region, handicraft centers were associated with middle schools. The handicraft centers were set up to produce the youngsters with an opportunity of developing mechanical skills as part of their general programme of education.

Following “Memorandum 1925” which encouraged the private sector on skills developed amongst the youth, government departments, public corporations, foreign and small-scale, Nigerian employers planned their own schemes for artisans and craftsmen. The government department were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land and Surveys</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Works</td>
<td>1931</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post and Telegraph</td>
<td>1931</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railways</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The foreign firms were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Firm</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Holt</td>
<td>1936 &amp; 1939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United African Company (UAC)</td>
<td>1954 &amp; 1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shell – BP (SPDC)</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE PERIOD BETWEEN 1960 - 1999

Despite the fact that Art Education was not given considerable attention, Ashby’s report observed what it sees as major defect in Nigeria education thus:

There is strong bias towards the traditional literacy and academic subjects. This is reflected in a lack of respect on the part of the public for manual skills and technical achievement. We strongly believe that the most effective way of correcting this would be to introduce manual subject as an obligatory ingredient of all primary and secondary schooling; not as a vocational training, but because such subjects have educational value which entitle them to a place in general education.

This perhaps was the motivating factor that saw the slight modification of the curriculum of the craft school. The early sixties experience tremendous development in the arts. The Mbabi writers and artists club at Ibadan was formed in 1961. In 1962 the Mbari-Mbayo club was founded and later at Enugu. Mr. Ulli Beier “the founder” was with the extra-mural department of University College, Ibadan and the Oshogbo school was founded by both Ulli Beier and Susanne Wenger. These schools including the Enugu Mbari were established to develop the talents of young Nigerians. They actually produced prolific artists, designers and skilled craftsmen in areas as batik designs portraying wired spirit world and mythological scenes, Yoruba folklore, sculptural design in clay and cement form.

The early sixties also witnessed the establishment of Fine and Applied Arts Department at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and much later the University of Ife, Ile-Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University – OAU). The products of the schools and the university had independent and group exhibitions, which showed relevancy of art and artists to national development, and unity and the socio-dynamics of culture. These artists among others created organic relationship between artists to revitalize the spirit of professionalism and also encourage creative professional competitions through a social and intellectual vehicle, that is, the society of Nigerian artists in 1964.

With all these developments art was not entrenched in the curriculum of the primary and secondary levels of our schools. That was the situation until the National Curriculum Conference of 1969 that was convened to re-examine and restructure the philosophy and objectives of our educational system. Various workshops, seminars were held to design new philosophies and curriculum for various school subjects at all levels of education. The report of the National Curriculum Conference called “A philosophy for Nigerian Education” was published in 1977 as a policy statement after many deliberations from people in all works of life both of the public and private sectors.
After much deliberation it finally emerged as the National Policy on Education, which was first formulated and published in 1979 and revised in 1981. It is in this that art is given some attention. In section 4 of the policy on secondary education, art and music are entrenched as core subjects. One of the objectives is to teach all basic subjects, which will enable the public to acquire further knowledge and develop skills. Section 7 on adult and non-formal education is where vocational, aesthetic, and culture education are fully or adequately stressed. Sub-section six (6) of section (7) seven says:

A new nation-wide emphasis will be placed on the study of Nigerian Art and Culture. The national commission will work out the overall strategy for the inclusion of Nigeria Arts, Culture and Languages in adult education programme” (NPE, 1981).

Section 3 (15) 2 and section 7(6) state, further among others, “government prescribes … the encouragement of aesthetic, creative and the teaching of local crafts … A new, nation-wide emphasis will be placed on the study of Nigeria art and culture. The National Cultural Policy emphatically states that:

The policy shall promote creativity in the fields of the arts … ensure harmony with contemporary realities and the demand of change and development and to prevent a mindless sweeping away of our cultural heritage.

Based on the above ideas, the 1970s saw a wide public awareness of the need for cultural revival and creative activities through art. Organization of cultural meetings, production of more artists, and rise of new middle class have been on the increase both at state and national levels and cultural centers are built in almost all states of this Federation. In 1982, the 6-3-3-4 education system was launched in September 29th 1999, the Universal Basic Education. Subsequently, it was launched on the 27th May, 2000, in all states of the Federation. These programmes focus on the Nigerian child to expose him to art education. According to Olasebikan (1982) the hosting of FESTAC 77 marked the climax of his cultural and artistic awakening. In addition, many universities among which are;

University of Benin
University of Port Harcourt
University of Uyo
Imo State University, Owerri
FUTA – Federal University of Technology, Akure
NAU – Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
University of Lagos
University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri
OSUA – Ondo State University, Akungba-Akoko
ABU – Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria
UNN – University of Nigeria, Nsukka
OAU – Obademi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State
LAUTECH - Ladoke Akintola University of Technology
Ogbomoso, Oyo State
AAU – Ambrose Ali University, Ekpoma, Edo State
ABSU – Abia State University, Uturu
DELSU – Delta State University, Abraka
NDU – Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt
Others are:
College of Education, Kano
Alvan Ikoku College of Education, Owerri
Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo
Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Onitsha
Tai Solarin College of Education, Ijebu Ode
Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku
Federal College of Education Panksin, Establishing the department of Creative Arts or Fine and Applied Arts.

There are also some polytechnics that offer fine and applied arts (JAMB, 2000).

One major development in the 1980s is the formulation and publication of the creative arts programme at the Junior Secondary School (JSS) level. In 1985, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Technology published the curriculum for the junior and senior secondary schools. The 1980s and 1990s experienced encouraging enlargement of artistic development and actually portraying the academic and intellectual multidimensional vision of artists and of art education.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of any project or endeavour has its double face of effectiveness and constraints. From the trend so far, art education is making progress despite the pitfalls. Because government has started to recognise and having greater awareness through the different art clubs and associations, credence is given to Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA), National Association of Fine and Applied Arts Teachers in Colleges of Education (NAPAATCOE) and others.

This is apparent from National Curriculum for Colleges of Education's laudable practice of organizing exhibition for art teachers in the colleges of education. Corporate bodies that recognise the importance of art education in technological development now organise and sponsor exhibitions in this century. Bodies such as Central Bank of Nigeria, the National Gallery, Didi Museum and Unity through art under Guinness Plc and other individuals and groups not mentioned are exhibiting and creating more awareness in the society.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

In this paper, an attempt has been made to present factual historical outline on the development of art education in Nigeria and the implementation of policy statements on art education. The following recommendations are made for the future of art education.
1. Government should address, and very urgently too the lack of qualified art teachers in our institutions.
2. Adequate space for classrooms and studios.
3. Provide enough equipment for schools, colleges and universities.
4. Increase the funding of art education, which is the bedrock of technological development.
5. Parents and corporate bodies should not relent on their efforts.
6. All the art clubs and associations should increase their jingle for more effective teaching, preaching, and disciplining the citizenry through art.

REFERENCES

Olasebikan WA (1982), Culture and Creative Arts. Ibadan: Evans Brothers (Nig.) Publishers Ltd.