

Factors Affecting Skill Acquisition in Visual Arts in Mission Secondary Schools in Nsukka

Chukwuemeka Nwigwe

University of Nigeria, Nsukka

chukwuemeka.nwigwe@unn.edu.ng

Johnson Arua

University of Nigeria, Nsukka

johnson.arua@unn.edu.ng

Abstract

The arts, particularly those concerned with three dimensionality, have been part of local tradition in this part of Africa long before Nigeria got its name. Traditional arts in clay (terracotta), brass, bronze and wood in various museums or images of such in print serve as a testament to a rich artistic tradition that thrived before the emergence of modern art in Africa. Although most of the ancient artistic traditions have declined due to certain modern influences, the local children's performance in art taught at various educational institutions in Nigeria and other countries today authenticate the naturalness of artistic flair among the people. This study takes a critical look at factors affecting the teaching of arts in three selected mission secondary schools in Nsukka, Nigeria. It contains analysis and interpretation of data gotten through a quasi-experimental research on the above subject. It argues that teaching of visual arts in post-primary schools, if all the necessary factors are in place, contributes greatly to individual and national development.

Introduction

The history of teaching of Visual Arts in local secondary schools in Nigeria appears entangled. However, the pioneering role of Chief Aina Onabolu (1882 - 1963) and Kenneth C. Murray (1903 -1972) and few other individuals are well documented. Onabolu is said to be the first Nigerian to practice modern art in the whole of West Africa. He began his art career without a teacher, practicing drawing and later painting. Gradually, he shot himself to the limelight through self effort and later, formal art training abroad. After acquiring the certificate, he returned to his home country in the 1920s and consequently played a key role in the introduction of art into school curriculum in Nigeria. He taught "art in private schools and in his own studio" –concrete steps towards establishing "the rudiments of an emergent art world.ⁱTo assist him in the enormous work, he requested the help of an expatriate teacher. To this end, Kenneth C. Murray, an English teacher and archaeologist, came to Nigeria in 1927. Murray taught many young Nigerian students, producing a crop of young, highly skilled, artists. Some of them practiced as artists, others as art teachers and educators.

Today, Nigeria has got many of such professionals who design and promote visual art programme in various level of education. At the lowest level, emphasis seems to be placed on the importance of drawing as a tool for communication and a means of nourishing holistic development of children. Hence, children begin their imitative writing attempt by scribbling lines on flat surfaces, usually on papers. This developmental stage of both drawing and written word is considered critical as it forms the basis of a productive adventure into world of images, colours and letters. As an integral part of children educational programme, art serves a tool to challenge the innate creative capability of children. Thus text books are filled with images of inanimate objects and shapes or images relating to geometry, flora and fauna. Some of the illustrations appear in outlines, without any colour or shade, so that pupils could engage *in a creative psychomotor process of coloring them*.

In post-primary education, especially in secondary school, Visual Arts has a place in the curriculum even before Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) subsumed it under cultural and creative Arts.ⁱⁱ Visual or Fine Arts has been one of the subjects offered in senior school certificate examination, administered by West African Examination Council. Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB) also provide the subject of study, especially for those intending to study Fine and Applied Arts in Colleges of Education, Polytechnic and Universities.

Although, students appear willing to engage in artistic exercise both in theory and practical, many schools lack the manpower and other requisite resources to render give such training. One of the resources scarcely found in many schools is art studio space. Besides pencils and papers which are common in several bookshops, other art materials that to enhance the teaching and learning of the subject remains scarce and expensive, thus inaccessible to both art students and teachers. In such situation, the junior school students (JSS), for example, are deprived of the opportunity to develop their artistic skill beyond the primary school education. If children could not get the requisite (visual) art education for a whole three years of junior secondary school education, the odds are that they might not be sufficiently equipped to do so at the senior secondary school, to get the required minimum credit pass to study art in a higher institution. These challenges which are antithetical to the objectives of post-primary school art curriculum could hinder growth of artistic potential of a child which probably received early boost during his early exposure to artistic experiments. It is in the light of this problem that few secondary schools in Nsukka, particularly some mission schools which offer art as a subject at junior secondary school (JSS) level, have been selected for a close study. The three mission schools include: St. Theresa's College, Nsukka, St. Cyprian's Girls' Secondary School, Nsukka and St. Catherine Comprehensive Secondary School, Nsukka. The study examines the challenges facing the teaching and learning of visual art among JSS students. It also evaluates the quality of selected drawing done by JSS students in three mission owned colleges in Nsukka.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Visual Art is a broad subject that allows for the skillful use of a particular medium say, pencil, pen, clay, thread, wood and colour, to produce something of value. The subject has both practical and theoretical aspects. The practical aspect consists mainly of painting, sculpture, ceramics, graphics, photography, print making, textile and fashion design. The theory aspect has to do with art appreciation, criticism, education and history. In various secondary schools across the country where visual art is taught, the theory and practical aspects are taught within the scope set out by the curriculum experts who plan the scheme. However, following the myriads of problems associated with the teaching and learning of the subject such as the relatively high cost of art materials, most teachers concentrate on theories of art and drawing. The emphasis on drawing over other practical areas is understandable – the drawing materials (especially, pencil and paper) are relatively cheap.

Drawing is the rudimental and most essential aspect of Visual art. It is the commonest forms of art that is practiced from childhood to adulthood. This is because drawing is considered as the cornerstone of any form of professional art practice. Smagula (2002, p.8) in his *Creative Drawing* remarked that "with proper guidance [especially as touching basic theories of drawing] and self-motivation any one can learn to draw" and added that "everyone has unique world view that can be enhanced through the art of drawing". This view is in stark contrasts with the notion that people had to have latent artistic talent to be able to draw or produce any worthwhile art.

The idea of form, content and skill is all embedded in the conceptual framework any aspect of visual art (Egonwa 2006). In the instance of drawing, the outline or shape of say, mango, chair, table, or anything else is the form, while the content refers to the message the artist tries to convey through his art. And It is only by means of skill or competence in using a particular medium developed over time that an art form is created.

Social learning theory of Albert Bandura, according to National Teachers' Institute's Psychology of Education, also referred to as observational or imitation theory is primarily based on what a child learns in his environment as he interacts with and observe others. The theory is vital in the teaching and learning of art because art is best taught by way of demonstration. Such method of teaching is attention grabbing. In practical art class, students acquire skill easily when they pay attention to the teacher while he or she demonstrates a particular method. They were often encouraged not merely copy but to use their imagination and intuitive knowledge when they are in involved in the creative process. The historical significance of drawing can be seen from the ancient images of cave drawings found in Lascaux and Altamira Spain. These drawings are instructive of the some ancient practices and beliefs as they were representational and illustrative.

Methodology

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire which has five parts – Section A - E. The upper part contained questions designed to provide information about the background of the respondents. The sections sought information aimed at providing answers to the research questions raised in the study. The questionnaire

was coded with no nominal values designed for each possible response that was accepted from the respondents. Each of the item was scored on this basis.

The instrument was subjected to face validity by experts – lecturers in visual art from the University of Nigeria – to ensure that it measures what it is designed to measure. The reliability of the instrument was by pilot testing method and this involved the administration of the same questionnaire to small group of people outside the population under study. The first and second scores of the respondents were collated using spearman's rank order correlation coefficient to determine the reliability. At the end the reliability coefficient is 0.7. This means that the instrument is reliable. The formula is a: $\frac{1-(d^2)}{N(n^2-1)}$

Students and teachers were given a number of questionnaires. The data collected from the three school included students' drawings. Few samples of the drawing are included here for analysis.

Method of Analyzing Data

The data collected for research questions one, two, three and five were analyzed using weighted mean. The data for research question four was analyzed using percentage.

Weighted Mean:

Responses	Points
Strongly Agree (SD)	4
Agree (A)	3
Disagree (D)	2
Strongly Disagree (SD)	1
Total	10

Mean (x) = $x = \frac{\sum fx}{\sum F}$

\sum = sum of the scores

F = Frequency

$\sum F$ = Sum of the scores

X = Sum of the scores

e.g. $\frac{4+3}{4} + \frac{2+1}{4} = \frac{10}{4} = 2.5$

Decision Rule

For the purpose of analysis, any mean score that is up to 2.50 and above is accepted while any mean score below 2.50 is rejected.

Below is the description of the procedure employed in carrying out this study.

Design of the study

The study was carried out using a survey research design. This is considered suitable following its analytical approach which requires the use of respondents who associated with the phenomenon under investigation.

Area of Study

The research was carried out in Nsukka urban, a town in Enugu State, Nigeria. The town is considered suitable for the research following the abundance of mission schools and their proximity to higher institutions which produce man-power for the schools. The selected schools – St. Theresa's College, Nsukka, St. Cyprian's Girls' Secondary School, Nsukka and St. Catherine Comprehensive Secondary School, Nsukka are relatively close to each other.

Population of Study

The population of the study consists of two main groups: JSS 3 students in the selected schools and the visual art teachers in these schools. The number of students and teachers are four hundred and sixty eight (468) and seven (7) respectively. Thus, four hundred and seventy five (475) students and teachers make up the population.

Sampling and Sampling Technique

The sample of the study is drawn from streams of JSS 3 classes from the three mission schools, a stream from each school. The stream used in each class and school was randomly selected. The visual art teachers in each selected school were also considered following their inclusion in the population.

Data Presentation

The data collected from the respondents were presented in tables. The entire questionnaires distributed were returned since most of them were filled and collected on the spot.

Research Question One

What is the place of art materials [drawing tools] in the teaching and learning of Visual art?

Table 1: Art Materials

S/N		SA	A	D	SD	T	\bar{X}	Remark
1.	The use of art material is very important	65	20	1	0	322	3.74	A
2.	There is need for art material shop in secondary school	20	34	8	2	200	3.13	A
3.	JSS students are always happy to handle some artistic material	29	38	12	4	258	3.11	A

4.	JSS students are always ready to buy art materials	9	32	38	7	215	2.51	A
5.	JSS students can acquire skills in art without using art materials	9	13	26	37	104	1.93	R

The table 1 above shows that items 1 -4 have their mean scores accepted. This goes further to affirm the relevance of art materials to art education. The mean score of item 5 is not accepted. This means that without art materials no student would be able to acquire any significant skill in visual art.

Research Question Two

How effective are the methods of teaching used by visual art teachers during visual art practical?

Table 2: Teaching methods

S/N		SA	A	D	SD	T	\bar{X}	Remark
1.	JSS students prefer teacher's demonstration to mere explanation	55	26	2	5	307	3.49	A
2.	JSS students prefer individualized instruction to general discussion	22	18	15	29	201	2.39	R
3.	JSS students like to be given visual art practical as assignment	34	33	15	4	269	3.13	A
4.	JSS students can do better in practical if they are group together	38	35	10	4	281	3.23	A
5.	JSS students like lecture method for practical	6	10	24	46	148	1.72	R

The above table shows that the mean score of the three out of the five items were accepted while two was rejected. This implies that JSS students prefer to be instructed generally. Again, the students do not favour lecture method for visual art practical. This is quite revealing as a teaching method can somewhat determine the success of the students' art experience.

Research Question Three

How appropriate is the time/period allotted to visual art in the school timetable?

Table 3. Appropriateness of Visual Art Time/Period

S/N		SA	A	D	SD	T	\bar{X}	Remark
1.	The time allotted to visual art is not enough	16	36	19	12	222	2.92	A
2.	The number of time Visual art is taught in a week is enough	16	20	26	23	199	2.34	R
3.	Visual art should be taught during morning hours	23	13	36	13	216	2.54	A
4.	JSS students can do more work at home than in the classroom	46	23	7	7	274	3.30	A

The table 3 shows that the mean score of all but one item was acceptable; this means that the number of period visual art is taught in a week is not sufficient.

Research Question Four

How much motor skills have the students acquired through visual art?

This was determined through observation and drawing test. Dale (1963) sees children's drawing as measures of intellectual maturity. This view renders credence to the choice of drawing as a means of evaluating the extent of the impacts of visual art on the student's psychomotor domain. The scores were presented and analyzed in percentage. Some visuals of the drawings are included as evidence.

Table 4. The extent of drawing skill acquired by the JSS students.

Scores	No of students	%	Remark
70 - 100	4	4	Excellent
60 - 69	16	18	Good
50 - 59	30	33	Credit
40 - 49	27	30	Pass
0 - 39	14	15	Fail
Total	91	100	

The above table shows that 4 (4%) of the respondents scored between 70 and 100, 16 (18%) of them scored between 60 and 69, 30 (33%) of them scored between 50 and 59, 27 (30%) of them scored between 40 and 49 while 14 (15%) of them scored between 0 and 30. This shows that 55% of the respondents scored above average while 45 % scored below average. Thus, this implies the extent of Visual art's impacts on the psychomotor domain of the students.

Research Question Five

What are other factors that can contribute to the rate of skill acquisition in visual art among JSS students?

Table 5. Factors that contribute to skill acquisition in Visual Art

S/N		SA	A	D	SD	T	\bar{X}	Remark
1.	The school should recruit more qualified teachers	54	27	5	2	309	3.51	A
2.	JSS students be visiting art exhibition / galleries/measure	72	5	2	3	310	3.78	A
3.	Some student's artworks should be sold for income generation	17	36	13	17	219	2.64	A
4.	The school, parents, and teachers should motivate students to study art	31	21	16	18	222	2.58	A
5.	The school should build art studios	65	15	1	3	310	3.69	A
6.	The JSS students' should take art lessons and assignment seriously	61	18	1	2	302	3.68	A

The table 6 shows that items 1 - 6 have all their mean scores accepted. This shows that the schools, students, teachers and parents have distinct roles to play in order to contribute immensely to the success of teaching and learning of visual art.

Summary of Finding

1. Art materials are indispensable insofar as the acquisition of skill in Visual Art is concerned.
2. JSS students prefer demonstration above all other methods of teaching visual art practical
3. The time/period allotted to Visual Art in many schools' time-table is insufficient
4. JSS students who have been taught Visual Art up upon JSS 3 class have acquire certain skills in the subject.
5. The successful implementation of Visual Art curriculum largely depends on the school, parents, teachers and students since each has a distinct part to play in the whole process.

Discussion, Conclusion, Implications, Recommendations and Summary

The findings of this study show that art materials such as pencil, cardboard, brush, gouache, among others occupy a very important position in the teaching and learning of art. This implies that effort should be made to provide art students with the necessary art materials.

More so, the findings on the effectiveness of teaching methods suggested that students do not appreciate lecture method when it comes to practical aspect of art. It was rather observed that majority of the students favoured demonstration method by teachers since such method aids easy transfer of skill. They (the students) imitate their teachers virtually in everything at that level.

In addition, the finding shows the need for appropriate or sufficient time/period for the teaching and learning of art. If the time is short, the learning or creative process will not be completed with the set time. Such sudden interruption affects the student's performance adversely and thus slows the rate of skill acquisition.

The researcher who joined in the assessment of the students' skill in visual art, especially in drawing, realized that students from the school where art is taught twice a week did better than those who received art training once in a week.

The students' idea of factor which can contribute to the rate of skill acquisition in visual art has to with the following:

1. Recruitment of more teachers who are competent in teaching theoretical and practical aspects of the subjects.
2. Visitation by students to art exhibitions and workshop etc.
3. Sale of some art works for income generation.
4. Motivation of the students.
5. Availability of the art studios, spacious classrooms and art materials.

6. Diligence on the part of the students with respect to visual art assignment and classroom lesson.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that following the findings of this study effective teaching and learning of visual art practical cannot take place in absence of some necessary art materials. Again, demonstration method is one the best methods for teaching practical aspect of art. The time factor affects the leaching and learning of visual art in the school setting. The drawing exercise given to the students is not without any impact on the students. Other factors such as the teacher's qualification and ability, level of students' interest in visual art among others determines the rate of skill acquisition in visual art.

Implication

The problem of apathy towards visual art and that of unemployment of many educated youth would be highly minimized through efficient implementation of visual art curriculum by those concerned in the secondary schools. This study embodies ideas in form of recommendations which will bring about the desired implementation of the art curriculum. When this is done JSS students will undoubtedly acquire sufficient skills or develop their artistic potentials through visual art lessons whether in the classroom/ art studio or at home. It is the belief of the researcher that anybody with sound knowledge of visual art with demonstrable or requisite artistic skills can be self-reliant. And this would imply reduction in the rate of crime occasioned by the problem of unemployment as a result of lack of worthwhile skills.

Recommendations

The researcher therefore recommends that:

- (1) Art materials should be made available for sale within the schools, especially by those who sell stationery. Parents should provide their wards with art materials or give them money to buy the same from the sellers.
2. Teachers who lack competency in the practical aspect of the art or/and in the pedagogy of teaching should enroll for further training so as to be qualified for such a job.
3. School managers/administrators should consider the nature and peculiarity of visual art when allotting time/period and space to visual art.
4. Students should believe in themselves and dare to do art practical from time to time since it is said that "practice makes perfect."
5. The school management, parents, teachers and students should play their part well with respect to teaching and learning of art.

Summary

This study has highlighted some issues which concern the teaching and learning of Visual art, especially among JSS students in three mission schools in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State. Indeed the impact of the Visual Art on the JSS students is evident from the drawings they were asked to do for the purpose of this study. These are proofs that the students have, to certain degree, acquired some drawing skill. If only the art teachers could use the most appropriate teaching method and the students on their part have access to and use the required material, visual art will continue to exert positive influence on its learners.

References

- Dale, B.H. (1963). *Children's Drawing as Measures of Intellectual Maturity*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc
- Diogu, G. O. (2000). *Essentials of Creative Arts*, Onitsha: Elites Publishers
- Edwards, L. C. (1997). *The Creative Arts* (2nd Edition). New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc
- Egonwa (2006) "Nigerian Art in the 20th Century and the Limits of Motor Skills" A lead paper presented at a conference organized by the Department of Fine and Applied Art, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- Enete, E. I. (1988) *Application of Art Teaching Skills in Senior Secondary Schools: A case study of Nsukka Education Zone*. An unpublished B.Ed. Thesis, Department of Education, University of Nigeria Nsukka.
- Katz, El et al (1995). *Themes and Foundations of Arts*, Johannesburg: National Textbook Company.
- Nganem R. M. & Udeagha G. I. (2004) *Students' perceived difficulties in learning Creative Arts in Junior Secondary Schools in Katsina-Ala LGA of Benue State*. AN unpublished B.Ed. Thesis, Department of Education, University of Nigeria Nsukka.
- Nnamolu, R. N. & Utoko J. O. (2003) *Constraints on the use of Art materials for the teaching of Fine Art in Secondary schools in Enugu metropolis*. Department of Education, University of Nigeria Nsukka.
- NTI (2009) *General Methods in Education - PDE 103*. Kaduna: National Teachers' Institute.
- NTI (2009) *Psychology of Education - PDE 106*. Kaduna: National Teachers' Institute.
- NTI (2009) *Introduction to Educational Technology - PDE 206*. Kaduna: National Teachers' Institute.
- Ogumor, E. (1993) *Certificate Art*. Ibadan: University Press PLC.
-