



## **The Sad State Of Art in Nigerian Primary Schools: Focus On the Class Teacher**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper sees the teacher as central in causing the undesirable damage currently facing art in Nigeria today. The teacher is seen as one who can either make or mar the chances of the potential artist. The paper highlights that the teacher becomes the problem to art when he is poorly trained and has no subject content to offer, when he is poorly motivated or when he is poor monitored even when he is well trained. The paper concludes by way of suggestions that if the desired image and lost glory of art enjoyed in the past must be redeemed, deliberate actions must be taken to recruit the idle caliber of teachers who possess the requisite qualification to handle the teaching of art in the primary schools, as this is very crucial in these formative stages of the child. It also recommends that; the teacher who champions the development of individuals deserves every encouragement and motivation to keep him going. Relevant authorities should on their part ensure that the teacher is closely monitored if the best is expected from him.

**Keywords:** Primary School, art teaching, motivation, Fine Arts

### **INTRODUCTION**

It is very disheartening to note that the teaching of Art at the Primary School level has not been fully implemented despite the fact that the National Policy on Education (2004) provided for the teaching of Art at all levels of Education. The deteriorating state of art at the primary school level of education which ideally should be regarded as the foundation for the formation of an artist, truly calls for urgent attention. It is an established fact that any foundation that is shaky, results in the collapse of such a structure. Art as a subject lacks such solid foundation, and this must be addressed urgently if the interest and attention of the young children must be arrested at their formative stages. If this is not done, then it is guaranteed that other areas or subjects will hijack the interest and attention of these pupils to the disadvantage of Art. It must be remembered that, we must catch them young.

This paper sees the Teacher as one who can either make or mar the chances of the potential artist. From the current position of the teacher, this paper discusses the likely areas the teacher can be central in causing the undesirable damage currently facing Art in Nigeria today. This is however

not to say that there are no other factors contributing to the decay and fallen standard of Art in Nigeria today.

### **The Poorly Trained Teacher**

As rightly stated by Mazilla and Gukas (2009), art teaching has been found to be inadequate in our schools. At the Primary Schools level, there is a great vacuum created by the non-existence of specialized teachers. The teacher can constitute a problem to art if he is poorly trained, poorly motivated or poorly monitored. The commonest practice in the primary schools especially the public primary schools is that all subjects are taught by the class teachers who are not subject specialist, as a result, the time allocated to art is not utilized to benefit the learner or to encourage him in the subject (art).

Egbo (2005) observed that, the problem of the teacher is further compounded by gross shortage of man power as most schools do not have adequate teachers. As such, even the non specialist teachers that handle the teaching are left to battle with overcrowded class rooms. Since nothing is taught to the learners, it becomes exceedingly difficult to conduct an assessment or examination for the students. The common practice by such teachers has always been to ask pupils to buy items like brooms, tissue paper, soap, or worst still, pay some money and the pupil who buys the most expensive item or pays the highest amount is given the highest marks in the subject for the term. This is how bad it has become. If at the primary school level pupils are taught to pay money for marks, the big questions to be asked are; what will they give when they attain higher levels of educational pursuit? What skills have they learnt or developed in arts by buying items from the market, or by giving money to the teacher? To what extent have they been encouraged in the subject area by the teacher? It is a clear fact that the teacher who is untrained cannot give what he does not have.

### **Poorly Motivated Teachers**

For the optimum to be expected of any teacher, it is natural that he deserves every motivation and encouragement to enable him put in his best. It is sad to observe that most primary school teachers are poorly motivated. To say the least, their salaries are nothing to be proud of as they can hardly make ends meet from their take home pay. To worsen matters, the salary payments are very epileptic, the school environment (the class rooms are overcrowded and are of very poor standard; sometimes without windows, doors, furniture and with bad floor space. In most cases, other learning materials like paints and brushes are not provided). This is very discouraging and can certainly dampen the moral of most teachers who naturally will feel they have not gotten their ideal job yet. This feeling has always made teachers feel they should leave their best for the better jobs that are yet coming. As Mbahi (1990) would say, motivation and encouragement are very good tools for effective class room learning. This is not limited to pupils alone; the teachers deserve motivation and encouragement also. James (2004) confirmed this when he said that the system from primary to secondary and tertiary institutions must have the necessary human and materials input required to do the job. James also opined that, tertiary institutions must have the necessary human and materials input required to do the job. James also added that the Nigerian population has further compounded the problem reconciling quality and demand for educational expansion. Schools according to him are being expanded at every nook and cranny of the country without due consideration for manpower and needed necessary equipment. In the same manner, Ewule (2004) maintained that, proper buildings, equipment and learning materials should be established for effective teaching as according to Ewule, these are the sure ways of motivating teachers and pupils alike for effective teaching of arts. Ifejike (2004) reiterated that one of the imperatives for effective vocational (art inclusive) educational development is the provision of sufficient, equipped and staffed environment. He adds that, the lack or shortage of facilities in the schools removes the activity components of a lesson which makes a real and practical learning. Gukas (2005) also affirms these by adding that there cannot be practice unless there is adequate supply of the

necessary facilities to work with. As can be seen from the above, the teacher who is badly deprived of these facilities is said to be badly motivated as such not much can be expected from him, not to talk of the best from the teacher.

### **Poor Monitoring**

It is sad to state that, art curriculum which has been well designed to cater for all levels of education including the primary is not just poorly implemented but also very poorly monitored by the respective authorities concerned. The head teacher who probably is not an artist himself may not be in the right position to know if the right thing is done or not. Here again is the case of a blind man leading other blind men. In like manner, the primary education board which is to a large extent poorly staffed may not be able to conduct its desire routine monitoring activities as expected. The obvious that will follow is poor implementation.

Even though Uzoaba (1982) and Ifejika (1990) opined that it is important and desirable that every child studies art from the primary school due to its importance in acquiring knowledge of the appearance of things and the techniques of draughtsmanship, unfortunately at this level, many schools de-emphasize the teaching of Fine Arts. The time allocated to arts on the school time table for instance is not enough compared to other subjects offered in the same schools. Unlike English, Mathematics and other subjects that feature daily on the time table, the highest allocation of time to Art as a subject in a week may be one double period and in some rear cases an additional single period may be added (Talabi 1979). This, to many Head teachers and monitors from relevant monitoring bodies is good, but to the artists, this is grossly inadequate and unfair to art as a subject as it require a lot of time for both teaching and practice.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

If the desired image and lost glory of art enjoyed in the past must be redeemed, deliberate steps must be taken to recruit the idle caliber of teachers who possess the requisite qualification to handle the teaching of Art in Nigeria Primary Schools. This is necessary at these crucial and formative stages of the child. It must be recommended that the teacher who champions the development of the child by way of imparting knowledge and skills, deserves every encouragement and motivation to keep him going. Relevant authorities concerned should on their part ensure that the teacher is closely monitored if the best is expected from him.

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