

Female Participation in Creative Arts Practice and Sustainable Development in Selected Primary Schools in Cross River State, Nigeria



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ABSTRACT: The aim of this paper was to discuss on how active participation of primary school pupils in creative art can bring sustainable development in the society. Generally, people do not see the subject "art" as an important course. They place more emphasis on other courses such as engineering, medicine, law and what have you. Art is of no value to most people in the society. Meanwhile everywhere man is, there is artistic presence. Right from the clothes we wear, the food we eat, chairs in our sitting room, the pots, plates and spoons in our kitchen, the desk, chairs and table in our schools. Our hair dos and decoration and even music from our radios and televisions are all artistic. So in order to recognize its importance and for the fact that we need these artistic values everyday of our lives we must lay more emphasis on the training of our children right from their tender age on the idea of Art Creativity. To discuss effectively on this topic, the following were looked into: Definition of creative art, Arts Creativity and the primary school child, problems of teaching and learning of arts, Arts creativity and sustainable development, Summary and conclusion were finally drawn

KEYWORDS: female, creative arts practice, sustainable development, primary schools, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Art is the process by which people express their inner feelings and emotions. The Online Dictionary (2020) defined art as the expression or application of human creative skills and imagination, typically in a visual form, such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional powers. Also Wikipedia (2020) sees art as a diverse range of human activities in creating visual or performing artifact (art work) expressing the authors imaginative conceptual ideas or technical skills intended to be appreciated for their beauty or emotional powers.

Robinson (2015) states that art is the ability to bring to mind things that are not present in our senses. This has a lot to do with imagination which is the root of creativity. Owogbonwan (2011) defined art as a means to express thoughts and observation. According to him, it explores, arouses and often intend to appeal, connect with human emotions and can be understood in several ways. Gune (2015) sees it as a tool which exists in human nature, supports his creativity and helps him express himself. According to him, art is important for all individual as it helps to develop aesthetic view point have contributed directly or indirectly to the cultural development of societies. According to Gevceker (2018), Art is a phenomenon from which people perceive the world aesthetically. He also went on to say that arts can be recognized in every human life. That is, it can be seen in the morning breakfast plate and even the cloths people wear. Arts expression can be done through different areas. These may be through literacy works which has to do with skillful use of words imagery and language in creating visual images as in painting or graphic art. In this, element such as line, shape, texture, stroke, light, space, social value and colour may be applied. In another aspect of visual form the artist may engage in artistic designs using cement, wood, ceramic, plastic, rod, stones etc. as in sculpture. In performing art, music, drama, dance, film and poetry feature prominently. In music vocalization and instrumentation are employed to achieve harmony. In drama an event either real or imagine is acted on stage, radio or television. In dance series of movement and steps are made to match the speed pattern and rhythm of music. Films have to do with recorded moving pictures of a story or event shown in a television. Poetry has to do with the collection of poems such as epic, lyric, dramatic symbolist performance may be in form of poetry reading. These are the different ways by which arts can be expressed.

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Art expression most often is done creatively. The artist may be so creative that what he brings out may be so outstanding, and original or natural. Maxim (1989) states that art experience is a creative process that encourages self-expression and original thinking. Idowu (2010) also states that art creativity is the production of a new entity or idea as never before known. Dere (2019) states that creativity is a procedure of man to create original things. It involves certain activities like sensitivity to problem analysis and synthesis fluency flexibility originality resourcefulness discovery or inventiveness and curiosity. Okoro (2009) states that art creativity is not forced, it flows out of individual freely. It does not need any copy work. It should be original and outstanding.

ART CREATIVITY AND THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILD

At the age of six every child is expected to be at school. The Federal Republic of "Nigeria has made education compulsory for all children and so all children from age six are expected to be at school. Before entry into school children must have had experiences that has to do with arts. As children play everyday their different activities are full of artistic expressions. For instance in their play groups some can take the role of parents, mothers, fathers and children. Some can pretend to cook delicious food to serve to others. At school, children should be more exposed to series of activities according to the well prepared curriculum for that purpose. The child therefore should be given every opportunity to be active in art activities. At this age of development the child is mature enough to acquire any knowledge. Also whatever is acquired at this stage cannot be easily forgotten. When children are provided with the necessary materials they can put in all their best to bring out something natural. The child's mind is creative; when he is asked to draw, or paint he goes into action to do whatever he thinks in his heart. Looking at what he does many adults may not feel comfortable with what he has drawn or paint. But to him it is wonderful work he had done. All the child needs is encouragement. He needs to be praised from time to time so that he can put in more effort. Let the teacher not feel that paint work is messy or the drawing is not beautiful. The teacher should note that art work should not be copied. Sometimes some teachers would draw something on the board and ask the pupils to draw what he has drawn. This is very wrong because creativity does not have to do with copy work. Creativity has to do with self-expression. What is expressed should be peculiar to the individual concerned. According to Maxim (1989) artistic expression is an excellent avenue through which children release their creative abilities. Also idowu (301 I) supports the idea that art education encourages pupils to think for themselves and develop their creative activities and increase muscle control.

There are a verity of material within any given environment that children can make use of to express their inner feelings. Apart from painting and drawing materials such as old newspapers, calendars, and even empty cartons can be used to produce items such as paper beads, and paper mache where soaked papers mixed with gum can be used to produce beautiful items that can be used for decoration. Children can also learn how to make greeting cards, hats, bags with raffia. Bottle tops can be used to produce foot mats. Apart from these already mentioned, children can be taught to make use of their hands in sewing. Needle craft use to be very important in those days where children were taught how to make designs on handkerchiefs, table cloth, and even on dresses. This can still be done because that is supposed to be a first step to fashion and design. There are lots and lots of things that children can produce with materials from the environment. Children just need the guidance of well-trained and dedicated teachers.

Also of great importance is the area of drama music and dance. Right from the nursery children learn a lot of poetry. They like to recite poems frequently. Infact the researchers have observed that before any lesson starts. poems are recited, this makes the children excited and ready for the next lesson. The area of drama and dance is also of great importance. So from childhood stage, the child should be encouraged to participate actively in plays. Roles are usually assigned to them and they learn to act according to those roles. When this is done continuously the idea of stage fright will not be there as they grow to maturity. They also learn how to dance in unison to the beatings of the drums and music. Children can be taught these which can be used for entertainment during celebrations in the school or even outside of schools.

PROBLEMS OF CREATIVE ARTS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

There are many problems facing the teaching and learning of creative art in primary school in Nigeria. Creative art is like any other subject in the primary school. But one of the major problems is that it is not recognized like other subject. Mathematics, science, social studies, English etc. are taken seriously. They are taught as their appropriate time, continuous Assessment and Examination are conducted on these subjects. But creative art does not seem to exist. When it is time for creative art something else would be done such as picking around the school environment copying notes or sometimes used for other periods that might have been skipped. The only art activity the researchers have observed in schools is the production of brooms. This is found mostly in rural schools where palm trees are easily found and children can enter the bush easily. Those in the cities buy their brooms from the market. This is a very wrong attitude. Art creativity need to be done creatively. Children need to make use materials within the environment and with their creative minds produce items not only brooms.

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Another of the major problems of arts is lack of equipment and materials. Other subjects like sciences have laboratories where experiments are carried out but creative art does not have any. Creative art need art rooms or studios where the room is spacious enough for pupils to move freely. Also there are some equipment that individual pupil may not be able to acquire. A research study carried out by Barnabas as presented by Okonkwo (2014) revealed that most schools are faced with issue of art materials and arts studios. There are lots and lots of materials that are needed for art activities. There are many that children themselves can get from the environment such as materials from the palm tree, raffia old papers, starch, gum, clay, bottle tops etc. but the art room or studio is what is really lacking. Children cannot operate effectively without these. The normal classroom space is usually too small to carry out art practical.

The next point is that there are no trained teachers in arts. There is no specialist to handle the subject in these schools. Okonkwo (2014) also states that despite the fact that National Policy on Education has recognize the teaching of arts in all levels of education the subject is faced with the problem of shortage of teachers. He went on to suggest that there should be a deliberate and purposeful training of art teachers. Since society look at this course as down-grading, no one feels comfortable taking it up as an area of specialization. Some people feel it is messy and can make one become dirty easily. For instance in painting, wood work, molding etc. these may be messy but at the end of it one can clean up. But be it as it may one can make money at the end of the day.

Generally art is not seen as a special subject. People do not have any regard for it. There is no parent who will purposely ask the child to fill admission form for Art. To them it is not as lucrative as medicine, engineering, law, etc. so people disregard it. Okonkwo (2014) agree to this also when he said that one of the problems of teaching and learning art in Nigeria is the negative attitude of the society and even the government towards the subject. Also Mbahi (2000) noted that there is the misconception in the society that because art is practical work and not academic, that art teacher is inferior in personality. This has made many teachers to loss interest in art.

CREATIVE ARTS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Even though creative art is not given proper attention in the primary school level, it is of great importance to the development of our society. One of the objectives of primary education according to Okujagu (2005) is to give the child opportunity for developing manipulative skills that will enable him function effectively in the society within the limits of his capacity. Creative Arts in its various forms provides every child with a variety of manipulative skills. The production of baskets with just ordinary materials from the palm tree can provide the child with lots of financial benefits.

When properly and well established at the foundation the child can contribute a lot to the development of the society and nation as a whole. Idowu (2011) agree that through the different art practices the child is exposed to. it can naturally be retained and can easily be recalled when needed.

Creative Art has been so important to people of all nations of the world. Art work can be found in our every aspect of life. These can be found in our homes, school, offices, the dresses we wear, the food we eat, entertainment etc. Oladime (2005) agree that the subject Creative art has been relevant and will continue to be relevant to the society. Art practices can empower individuals to be independent in their daily living. Many people through the idea of arts have open up workshops and studios and have become employers of labour. Those in the music and entertainment industry have offered a lot to the society. Making life enjoyable for many. It provides amusement relaxation and pleasure to many in the society. Oladimeji (2004) mentioned others such as painting, sculpture, graphic, ceramic, textile and fashion designs, Industrial arts and design, printing and theoretical studies are career opportunities in Nigeria art for national development. All these area of art can provide job opportunities in placed of the white collar jobs that cannot be readily seen.

Creative arts though not seen as an important course of study is closely related to almost all the courses. Artistic students, with the help of art can express themselves through diagrams and paintings e.g. in geography, maps are drawn and location of places are shown. In sciences such as engineering there are technical drawings which aid planning and production. In architecture, series of architectural drawings and designs are made through artistic creativity. All these are sources of national development.

Culturally, creative arts have a lot to offer. Nigeria has a rich cultural background. Behind every culture there are different dress codes, hair dos relationships in the society, mode of greetings, variety of food and different procedure that the foods are prepared. These are usually expressed creatively in drawings, paintings, sculpture and even drama, writing or poetry forms and folklore. Cultural dance groups are found in every ethnic groups. The duty of these groups is to provide entertainment in cultural ceremonies. Different ethnic groups have their ways of expressing their feeling in the song they while moving bodies their bodies and steps in unison to the songs and beatings of drums and other music instrument.

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Decoration is one of the aspects of Arts that is in Vogue. Different ceremonies such as weddings, both traditional and white, birthdays, thanksgivings, and even burial ceremonies make use of decorations to beautify the environment where the ceremonies are to take place. Artistic designs are used to make the place beautiful. These usually cost a lot of money and people who want the decorations pay easily this a great means of livelihood.

In a country such as this where thousands of students Graduate from school every year, one who read art can as a matter of fact establish himself instead of waiting for employment from government. Through this he can establish himself and provide for himself, his family open job opportunities for those who cannot make it. Through this effort development of the immediate community can be established.

SUMMARY

The importance of Creative art can never be over-emphasized. The definition of art and creativity was looked at from different authors. All point to the fact that it is a means by which feelings and emotions are expressed. The primary school is the first step of education for every child. At this stage the child learns actively and whatever he learns is the foundation on which other things will come to be established. So children should be exposed to a lot of art or creative art activities and practices. This may be a stepping stone to better performance in arts.

Some major problems of teaching and learning of creative arts in schools were identified. Some of which includes lack of art equipment and materials, lack of trained teachers and poor societal attitude towards the subject. Also how creative art can help to sustain and develop the society in which we live was discussed.

CONCLUSION

No reasonable individual would start to build a house without a solid foundation. The primary school is likened to a foundation of a building. If not well structured it may finally collapse. Children need to be provided with art activities frequently from the base to enable them stand firm and then move to higher heights. In conclusion therefore, the government should place more emphasis on this subject by training teachers on this course, and providing the necessary materials. Parents too should see this course not as a lazy man's course but a means by which they can make money and provide job opportunity for their children who cannot easily find a job after National Youth Service. Parent should always assist their children financially to enable them participate fully in arts practices.

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