



# The Training and Pedagogical Orientation of Aesthetic Learning Educators in Promoting or Impeding the Program in Nigeria's Basic Education

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**Abstract:** This paper argues that the training and pedagogical orientation of aesthetic educators in the primary and secondary levels of Nigerian education could be one strong factor that impedes the effective teaching and learning of aesthetic enhancing subjects in Nigeria. The qualitative methodologies of philosophical and documentary analysis vide: language and logical analysis; argument by analogy; and deductions and inferences there from were used to appraise the issues and arguments of the paper. It is the paper's observation that many aesthetic educators because of their lack of professional exposure to requisite pedagogical principles for the subjects often inadvertently create apathy among their students for the subjects. By this type of impedance, students develop aversion towards aesthetic learning at this fundamental and critical stage of their educational development. This has consequently led to low level of enrolment of aesthetic enhancing subjects at various certificate examinations in the country. The resultant effect of this is that students often come out of the basic level of Nigerian education as aesthetic illiterates. To help reverse this dismal trend, it is recommended that the teacher-education programs for the primary and secondary levels of schooling will need a serious overhaul. This is to meet up with the challenges of aesthetic learning and therefore develop and sustain the interests of the students.

**Keywords:** aesthetics; aesthetic experiences; aesthetic pedagogy

## INTRODUCTION

A vital component in the teaching/learning triadic process is the teacher (A) who teaches the student-learner (B) the subject (C) in pedagogically rational ways to bring about (X)-the expected outcome of learning. This is why the success of any teaching and learning encounter is often hinged on the prowess of the teacher if all other components are near normal. The teacher is not only an embodiment of the particular epistemic experiences he professes but also attempts to also impart to the learners. This underscores the importance of the popular saying that "one cannot give out what he does not have". In spite of this, there is also the likelihood that giving out what one has in an inappropriate manner may elicit a wrong signal in the receiver, and invariably defeat the purpose of this giving. A hallmark of a good restaurant is the way that the meals are usually served in courses that make dining not only delightful to their patrons but also portray the culinary dexterity of the chefs and stewards. This is why like a good chef; a good teacher should reasonably not only be very well immersed in his subject matter, but also have at his disposal, a repertoire of skills to impart

his knowledge. It is for this reason that any teacher education program would not only aim at developing the teacher immensely in the subject matter he would be teaching in the future, but also be exposed to the pedagogical strategies relevant to impart the knowledge of his epistemic field. As posited in the various views of Hirst, and Peters, (1970) Peters, (1973) Hamlyn, (1971) Rich, (1971) and a host of others, teaching is a logical process which attempts to bring means to an end through various activities and strategies. The end of the teaching process may sometimes be successful or not in most cases. It is because of the general concern by educationists to make teaching more relevant that there are several efforts by teachers and researchers to improve pedagogy in all disciplines. This is with the overall aim to improve knowledge delivery in pedagogically rational ways. In a study, Aghaosa, and Nwanze, (2008), in contending against a view by some academics that they do not need to undergo a program in teaching methods at the Institute of Education of the University of Benin, to be efficient lecturers in their various disciplines; it was argued that: "one may be teaching the right thing in the



wrong way; and vice-versa also teaching the wrong thing in the right way".(p.222) This argument perhaps illustrates the way energy is sometimes erroneously dissipated by many persons involved in the teaching and learning industry under the guise of appropriate pedagogy.

One area of learning in which this problem is also prevalent, is the area of aesthetic education. This is especially in the primary and secondary levels of education in Nigeria. Here, many teachers of aesthetic enhancing subjects especially the visual, auditory and literary arts, rather than make their lessons interesting and captivating to their students, have inadvertently made the subjects repulsive to them. Most often in secondary schools, students are often heard to complain that they do not like the subject fine art, because they are unable to draw the human figure as often insisted on by their teachers. Even when it is brought to their notice that figure drawing is only one of the many aspects of visual arts, their sense of abhorrence often over take their reasoning in this respect. If one goes further to investigate some fine art teachers, it is likely that they may be accomplished trained artists but lack the pedagogical skills to impart their specialist knowledge to their students. This is especially so of the many who initially saw teaching as a stepping stone to other presumed lucrative careers and detest any suggestion to acquire pedagogical skills to be more effective aesthetic education teachers. The resultant effect of their attitude is that aesthetic education subjects especially the visual arts, have gradually assumed a halo of a difficult area of learning in Nigeria's basic education level. It is very likely that this aspect has not been fully and effectively investigated in the various quests for solutions about the ever dwindling enrolment trends in the various aesthetic enhancing subjects in Nigeria basic education and at public certificate examinations. It is these preliminary observations added to the researcher's experience as a visual art teacher in Nigeria's primary and secondary levels of schooling that gave impetus for this study.

The problem of this study was to discuss how the training and pedagogical orientation of aesthetic education teachers impact on their jobs at the primary and secondary levels of Nigeria's education. Are aesthetic education teachers by their pedagogical orientation, promoting a positive attitude or otherwise among the students for their subjects?

The purpose of the study was to appraise the plausibility that dwindling enrolment in aesthetic enhancing subjects in various public certificate examinations could be as a result of waning, interests of

students occasioned by teachers pedagogical orientation in trying to teach the subject(s).

This study would be significant in the sense that it could draw attention to this neither explored nor explained syndrome – apathy for aesthetic enhancing subjects in Nigeria's basic education. In addition, the study may be able to elicit actions from educational policy makers on how to take concrete actions that may reverse this trend for the good of aesthetic teaching and learning. It would also hopefully make aesthetic education learner friendly for Nigerian primary and secondary school students.

## METHODOLOGY

This paper is essentially, a qualitative based enquiry not an empirical based study. It therefore relied on these theoretical and philosophical methods of analysis: language and logical analysis, argument by analogy, deductions and inferences; and inspection of relevant documentary evidences. The paper appraised the basic concepts, issues and arguments of the study. These were followed by a critical assessment of the issue raised in respect of aesthetic learning in Nigeria's basic education. It was from these that deductions, inferences; and conclusion were eventually made. Finally suggestions were proffered on how the perceived lapses could be rationally ameliorated in order to improve aesthetic learning strategies in Nigeria's basic education.

## CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

### *What is teaching?*

What constitutes teaching parse raises a lot of arguments. This is because of the multiple activities, theories and conjectures and the sometime difficult tasks of evaluating most teaching encounters. Peters, and Hirst, (1970) are of the view that teaching like gardening, involves other non-teaching tasks such as child-minding, socialization etc which supervene on the proper tasks of teaching in most learning situations. In addition, Rich, (1971) surmises the problem as one in which much energy is often expended trying to decipher the link between learning theories and classroom tasks rather than what constitutes teaching proper. The author advocates the need to distinguish between teaching as an enterprise as well as an activity or process.

### *Teaching as a process*

Elaborating from the perspective of teaching as a process, Rich, (1971) states:

*The activity of a person – A (the teacher) the intention of which is to bring about an activity (learning) by a person B (the pupil) the intention of which is to achieve some end state (e.g. knowing, appreciating) whose object is x (e.g. a belief, attitude, skills). From this, it follows that to understand what is called*



*teaching; one must start at the other end of a logical chain of relation with an understanding of the end of achievements, which it is directed. (p.97)*

Succinctly the concept of teaching is totally unintelligible without a grasp of the concept of learning. But the issue is sometimes complex when it is put in view that there are various ways of learning such as discovery –which is rather accidental than deliberate-sometimes in the absence of a teacher.

The need for the preceding insight about teaching as an enterprise as well as a process is premised on the following:

- I. guide against teachers being more concerned with non-teaching activities such as child-minding, socialization, counselling etc at the expense of the real teaching - the pedagogical tasks of learning;
- II. enable people to be able to assess critically, the core questions of what constitute successful teaching in learning encounters;
- III. identify the achieving teachers and their pedagogical characteristics;
- IV. effectively formulating the goals of teaching as well as education in terms of learning content and processes; and
- V. knowing the strengths and weaknesses of teachers generally and how their pedagogical skills can be improved upon.

However, the crucial point that can be gleaned in the preceding is that teaching as a process has a triadic relation – learning content- B and student (learners) C. The end of this process- X is the expected or desired outcome from the teaching and learning process (Rich, 1971, p.97)

As simple as the above enumerated process of teaching appears, it also raises some other complex questions which bother on what should constitute: teaching strategies, methods and desired out-come of learning. What for example is the relationship between teaching and other quasi notions of teaching such as indoctrination, conditioning, and instruction in skills acquisition (training) to the philosophical desired tasks of teaching pedagogically speaking? Is it for example proper to indoctrinate or condition learners to even valid truths in spite of the totalitarian and authoritarian halo of these presumed teaching methods? To what extent should the inculcation of psychomotor skills by drilling be encouraged in teaching and learning encounters? Does socialization through indoctrination to some desired civic goals like singing of the national anthems and blind love

for one's country, appropriate and justifiable in the teaching / learning triad? These questions constitute the core of philosophical and empirical analysis about the efficacy or other wise of teaching, learning and educational goals and how to set and evaluate them. They have also in their strides raised a variety of arguments and theories about how to assess learning outcome. Educational philosophers such as Hirst, and Peters, (1970), and Rich (1971) advocate attention specifically on the pedagogical process *parse*. However, learning behaviorists such as Brunner stress attention on the indicated outcome of the instructional process –as perceived in the students' intellectual and moral change(s) in behavior.

### ***The logic of teaching methods and subject Matter-curriculum***

What constitutes successful teaching is highly speculative considering the myriad of issues inherent in teaching. Hirst, (1975) has averred that there is an intricate link between subject matter and pedagogy. As he puts it:

*Questions about the teaching of history are quite different logically from the question of historical scholarship and where is the evidence that there is any correlation in these two domains (P.116)*

Explaining further, Hirst, (1975) States:

*It would be argued that thinking historically is thinking in, irrespective of the private thought sequence, involved results in the preposition which constitute valid historical accounts and explanations. Historical thoughts necessarily involves the recognition of the rules that govern the meaningful use of concepts, and the validity but this involves no necessary temporal order to thoughts (P.118)*

*Likening the sequence of teaching of history to that of playing chess, moves are made based on the intuitions of players. He holds that thinking historically involves thinking in accordance with historical criteria, though it involves no particular sequence of thought. This point is also corroborated by Hamlyn, (1971). In his conclusion about the sequence of knowledge (Subject Matter) Hirst, (1975) holds that this depends on learning certain features which can be discerned only by logical analysis of the meaning of historical thinking, though once the criteria for this plain, empirical evidence based on the uses of these criteria become important too. (P.119)*



From the foregoing, it is evidently clear that pedagogically speaking for every subject to be meaningfully taught to learners, the teacher must circumscribe to the particular logic of the subject matter. This is in addition to the use of the appropriate teaching strategies of the subject. In essence, subjects like Mathematics, Biology, History, Physics, etc have their particular ways of teaching them for meaningful impact on the learners.

In spite of lack of a general agreement on how to evaluate teaching and learning outcome, the syntheses of opinions on what should guide rational actions in evaluating teaching in practice are posited in the following.

1. The teacher must be cognizant of the learner(s) in order to teach and evaluate the outcome of the teaching /learning encounter. This can be assessed from the interest and output of the learners.
2. The teacher should be knowledgeable of what is to be taught the students putting in to consideration: their individual differences in terms of learning potentials and outcomes. Summative, teachers must have grasp of the current psychological potentialities of learner as well as their epistemological content (and their under pinning) of what is taught the learners.

#### ***The state of teaching of aesthetic enhancing subjects in Nigerian basic education***

Compared to other secondary schools' subjects, there are relatively fewer teachers in those subject areas that promote aesthetic learning. As expressed in the Nigerian National Policy on Education, (FRN, pp 18-21) the current aesthetic learning subjects such as Fine arts Music History, Local crafts to mention a few are accorded only a modicum attention in the academic time table of primary and secondary education in Nigeria. This is especially in music and visual arts. The cause of this low priority attention to these subjects is traceable to the Federal government's pursuit of science and technology education at the expense of the humanities that encompass the aesthetic enhancing subjects in Nigeria. There has been a declining enrolment of students in the humanities and humanities education programmes in higher institutions of learning. This point is attested to by the observations of Lawal, (1987) as well as Igbafe, (2006). In some cases, humanities education programmes have had to be scrapped off some institutions' programme of learning. A case in point is the College of Education, Ekiadolor, Edo State of Nigeria that closed down the Fine arts department (among others) of the college for a period of ten years

with the excuse of rationalizing the teaching force of the state. This is in spite of the paucity of teachers to teach this aspect of aesthetic knowledge (Aigboduwa, 2002). As earlier noted, many school heads and education policy makers do not see this development as a threat to the healthy and balanced development of secondary school students. In some schools even the Humanities' teachers are often compelled to teach other subjects such as citizen education, social studies etc that they were not educated to teach. This coupled with the noted absence of a professional Aesthetic Education Subject-Teachers' Association makes an advocacy for the development of teachers in this area non-existent.

In another perspective, some aesthetic learning programs' teachers are not professionally trained. This is especially in the curricula and pedagogical aspects of this area of knowledge. A great percentage of teachers (especially the pioneer teachers) even though professionals in the specific vehicles of their studio training e.g. painters, sculptors, graphic and textile designers, pianists, play-wrights, screen actors do not have the requisite pedagogical training or know-how to impart learning in this domain of knowledge. Quite often, these teachers tend to stress their particular area of specialization and personal interests at the detriment of others. This orientation corroborates the findings of the different studies of Linderman et al (1962) as well as Doeter (1963) that college art professors tend to treat with disdain works of students that deviate much from their own styles of painting .This is in spite of the whole array of areas available in the aesthetic fields for exploration and exploitation by the students. Moreover, many students have different inclinations in the visual, audio, and tactile arts (and a combination of these in various degrees) in the aesthetic learning endeavours. By this orientation of not taking cognizance of the vast aesthetic phenomena that could be tapped for successful teaching and ignoring the different talents and proclivities of their students in this regards, many unprofessionally trained aesthetic educators create apathy for this interesting area of learning. This orientation runs contrary to rational thinking and practices with respect to teaching and learning. As succinctly posited in Wilson's (1975) attempts at taxonomy of the characteristics of what being a teacher logically requires, it is that:

*The concept of being a teacher entails that people must acquire these characteristics to be teachers, though it does not follow that they must be part of formal preparation. First, there is knowledge of the subject matter. A teacher must be "inside" his subject to see to the learning of others .He must know his subject in a way that is most useful for the*



*learning of his pupils; and whilst of course this will usually include possessing a good deal of relevant information, we should more naturally stress the idea of having a clear understanding of what it is to make progress in the subject--the type of reasoning involved, its logical structure, the marks of "a good historian" (scientist, mathematician, etc.), and so forth. (Wilson, 1975, p. 111)*

In some extremes for instance, young students have been consciously or unconsciously goaded to develop apathy for aesthetic knowledge. This is simply because they are unable to draw the human figure according to the conception and expectation of the expert teacher/painter. Children have different psychological stages of Aesthetic development that correlate strongly to their expressive abilities (Lowenfield and Britain). Even geniuses take time and patient guidance from an understanding teacher-guide to develop. This researcher has always been in constant struggles trying to convince students, parents and even art teachers that figure drawings are not all that visual art entails. People can be talented in other aspects e.g. tactile and auditory areas of the aesthetic learning encounters. In effect some teachers in this area of knowledge by omission or commission of their educational training and orientation create apathy for aesthetic learning.

#### ***Low Level of Exposure of Students to Aesthetic Learning Activities and Experiences at the Primary Level of Schooling in Nigeria***

Aesthetic learning activities at the pre and primary level of Nigerian public education are very few. In some schools they are even non-existent. The above situation exists in spite of the National Policy on Education's prescription for aesthetic learning activities for this level of schooling. In section four (4) of the policy that dwells on pre-primary education among the listed purposes of this level of schooling is:

*(e) inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys etc; and*

*(f) teach the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms etc through play*

*In section 3- primary education the policy spells one of the goals of this level of schooling as:*

*(h) to give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that enable him to function effectively in the society within the limits of his capacity. (FRN, Pp. 14-17)*

It is in pursuance of the goals of primary education that the Policy prescribes that the following subjects be listed in the curriculum for this level of schooling.

1. (a) *Language of the environment,*  
( b) *English*
1. *Cultural and creative arts (drawing, handicraft, music and cultural activities).*
2. *In subsection C of primary education, among other services to be provided include:*
  - (i) *specialist teachers of particular subjects such as Mathematics, Science, Physical Education, Language Arts(in relation to English and Nigerian Language) Music, Fine art and Home economics (FRN, P.15)*

These no doubt are laudable objectives and provisions in Nigeria. In practice, how far and well are they being carried out?

In many pre-primary and primary schools in Nigeria, aesthetic learning activities such as drawing, painting, modelling with clay, music and drama in the curriculum are still being paid lip service to. Even though they may be listed on the schools' academic timetable, they are still being carried out in essentially an uncoordinated manner. This is in spite of the abundant benefits these activities hold for young children. The pre-primary level of schooling is not dubbed 'play classes' for just the name. In practice, young children between the age of three and twelve years old because of their nature at this stage of growth and development learn essentially through play activities. This is through activities like singing, drawing, basic modelling with clay, dancing, painting, drama and storytelling etc. These activities apart from entertaining these kids, serve as the bases of the development of neuro-muscular control and kinaesthetic balance. The serious attention and inclusion of play activities in their learning activities are often ignored by teachers and school administrators. What is obtained here are mostly recitation of poems and drills in basic numbers and language skills- often boring to the children.

The essence of play activities for the basic levels of learning are attested by the findings of the studies of Ecker et al.(1963) who advocate that art activities should be patterned after Dewey's project method in school learning. This thinking is also implicit in "Restriction and individual expression in the "play Activity/Zoke – Asobi"" by Yoko Hino's (2003) study findings about the importance of "Zouke" (Japanese for play) as part of art activities in Japan's elementary schools.



In Nigeria's primary schools, the situation is not as cheering also. Creative arts activities that promote aesthetic awareness are given very low priority attention on the timetable and in practice. Exposure of pupils to these activities is extremely low. Handicrafts or 'handwork', which is intended to expose students to some basic manipulative skills, is a rarity. These crafts would include: rope making, mat and basket weaving, broom making, modelling with clay, simple wood carving etc are hardly practiced in Nigerian primary schools. What obtains in many cases is that students buy these craft items to present to their teachers or make financial payments in lieu of them. Teachers and school authorities never consider the thrills of the process of making and end product of the craft items as vital ingredients of developing the pupils. Drawing, painting and basic musical instruments playing are virtually extinct at this level of public schooling. The plausible causes of this dismal situation of aesthetic learning at this level of schooling are not farfetched from those enumerated in the secondary level of schooling. The resultant effects of the neglect of aesthetic learning activities in this crucial – fundamental level of education can be deduced from the followings:

1. Lack of interests (?) by students for aesthetic learning – their interest and appeal are stifled at this level of schooling. This situation is analogous to what Broudy, (1975) observes about the situation in United States of America's elementary schools with respect to aesthetic learning. That is "the low exposure at the elementary level of schooling often does not create a universal appeal – i.e. appetite for further experience in performance"(P.9). This attitude and aversion are often carried over into the secondary level of schooling in Nigeria. This researcher has often watched with dismay students in secondary schools jump out of the (window) on his approaching their classes for Fine art lessons.
2. Many primary school leavers in Nigeria are essentially aesthetic illiterates. This is because of limited media experience (in aesthetic vehicles and formal practices). Many Nigerian primary school leavers it is doubtful, are able to differentiate between different media and end products of aesthetic phenomena and learning. In some extreme cases many of the students' – (like some of their parents' also) conception of aesthetics learning or creative arts is limited to drawing. Secondary school students' attitude to aesthetic learning activities it is speculated, to be one of the sources of apathy.
3. Because of the above stated, and the carry over effects into secondary schooling, aesthetic education in Nigeria like in the United State of America gives very limited opportunities for intended professionals. The

plausible cause of this can be extrapolated from the psychological and pedagogical theory that some interests and eventual habits are often formed from childhood. These if given encouragement, blossom in adulthood. This researcher has been privileged to watch two children at the ages of four and five and half year's old being respectively, proficient piano player and water colourist. These feats were courtesy of their respective parents who made such provisions for them at home in terms of materials and practice time at an early stage of their growth. The importance of this very observation is that perhaps there are a lot of geniuses in the various aesthetic vehicles in the Nigerian society whose capacities for development may have been stifled and atrophied as a result of the lack of basic working materials of aesthetic expressions; and pedagogically skilful teaches to midwife their talents to fruition. It could also be speculated that some disruptive students' behaviours in schools are likely due to bottle – up aesthetic emotions and experiences calling for expressions. This is much more so in the Nigerian education context that is authoritarian inclined with respect to school discipline and control.

This paper, a qualitative based enquiry, argued that the training and pedagogical orientation of many aesthetic education could be responsible for the growing apathy by students towards aesthetic learning in Nigeria's basic level of schooling. In other words, a majority of aesthetic enhancing subjects' teachers by their lack of pedagogical techniques rather than make their subject interesting and captivating to their students, impede their learning in them.

## CONCLUSION

Many aesthetic educators in Nigeria's basic level of education who lack pedagogical skills in teaching the subjects have by their teaching orientation not helped in promoting students' interests in these subjects. This has not only led to students' apathy towards the subjects but also resulted in low enrolment and performance in the subjects at the various public certificate examinations in the country. A direct consequence of this is that the basic level of education is turning out aesthetic illiterates. In addition, this also spells doom for professional aesthetic practices and occupations that depend on their skills.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To help halt the seeming increasing apathy for aesthetic learning in the country's basic education, the following are recommended.

1. Aesthetic learning programs in Nigeria's tertiary institutions of learning should incorporate courses in pedagogy – methods of teaching the subjects in their curricula. This is because experience has shown that more than three-quarter of graduates in this area of learning often end up teaching, especially at the



secondary level of education. Even though some may see the teaching job as a stop-gap or stepping stone to other jobs, they often end up in them as their eventual careers. In the alternative to this, many of the teachers without requisite pedagogical exposures and experiences should be made to undergo post-graduate diploma programs in education to develop the requisite skills to effectively impart their knowledge.

2. In line with the above, tertiary institutions of learning that offer aesthetic education, professional aesthetic practitioners and other federal and state agencies – museums and monuments, Art galleries and ministries of culture should collaborate to assist in educating practicing teachers through workshops and seminars of new pedagogical trends in aesthetic education. The effort of Bruce Onobrakpeya- a foremost Nigerian artist printmaker at his centre in Agbarha-otor, Delta State of Nigeria which organizes workshops for practicing and budding creative artists in this regard is quite commendable.

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