



Dynamics of the Art Teacher's Competence and Desirable Art Learning Outcomes in the Nigerian Senior Secondary School

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Abstract

Visual art is taught in the Nigerian Senior Secondary School as a subject designed to build creativity, skills of critical thinking as well as art-making in the learners. While learning the subject, these creative qualities are developed and nurtured through hands-on activities in divergent areas of art practice that combine to form the Visual arts. A detailed curriculum has been designed for the subject to be implemented at all levels of education and qualified teachers are also provided for its teaching. However, the art teachers' success in engaging the students purposefully to achieve desirable learning outcomes is dependent on competence, a phenomenon which is different from certification and also varies from one art teacher to another. Thus, this paper sought to investigate the complexities of art teachers' competence and how it may influence the learning outcomes of Visual Arts students in the Senior Secondary School. This is in order to appreciate the need to understand the place of teachers' competence and relate it to what students learn. The study relied on secondary data in categorising art teachers' competence. Findings revealed that mere certification of art teachers is not enough to guarantee competence, especially in realising art learning objectives in the Senior Secondary Schools. Based on the findings, the paper recommended that oral interviews alone should not be used in selecting art teachers' employment. It further suggested that teachers who already possess certificate qualifications should take mandatory Operational Competence Test in form of Micro Teaching, which should



combine art theory, art practice and instructional pedagogy before employment.

Keywords: Learning Outcomes, Visual Art, Critical Thinking, Creativity, Teacher's Competence

Introduction

Teaching and learning of art in school involves theory and practice. However, the expected outcomes of Teaching art in the 21st century are broad; and the teacher who is at the forefront of curriculum implementation must be prepared for the attainment of these outcomes. Apart from becoming artists in future, knowledge of art help Senior Secondary School students in other subject areas such as Geography, Biology, Agricultural sciences, Technical drawing and more. It therefore becomes necessary to engage the students meaningfully, for them to be able to acquire and develop critical thinking skills and its application, towards art making. When students are at the peak of their learning in art, the products of their creativity and the confidence with which they perform are often amazing. Swapp (2016) explains that increased self-confidence and self understanding with which students can learn and apply artistic skills and creativity effectively are among the many reasons for teaching art in schools.

Furthermore, Visual art educators and other stakeholders are keenly aware of the significant contributions art can make to the growth and development of young children as it provides unique opportunities for personal expression and creativity (Gibson, 2003). Art thus, is considered an important vocation to be learnt in schools, world over. However, it is disturbing that many art teachers are not attaining the peak of students learning outcomes due to probable deficiencies in their depth of competence. Studies such as Omoye (2023) and Lauchande, Passos and Howie (2017) show that, teachers who are skilled more in art practice are quick to give the students practical tasks, while those who are more proficient in theories rely on theoretical teaching, and only engage the students in areas of practice once in a while so that the deficiencies in their levels of competence may be covered. On the other hand, there are also those who lack the methodologies to lead the learners into meaningful teaching even if they possess practical and theoretical proficiencies. This is because they lack aptitudes in



instructional methodology. In all, for the visual art teacher to be considered competent, he must possess some levels of aptitude to receive art training, do art, teach art; and it is only by being competent that the students can benefit maximally from his depth of knowledge. This study thus seeks to bring the issue of art teachers' competence to the fore in order to remediate the perpetually unnoticed deficiencies in our art classrooms for better outcomes.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Theory of Competences in Education proposed by Westera Wim in (2001). It holds that there are two distinct denotations of 'competence' in education; a theoretical perspective where competence is considered a cognitive attribute that facilitates specified behaviours and an operational perspective which opines that competences cover a broad range of higher order skills and behaviours that represent the ability to cope with multifaceted situations. It expatiates that competence encompasses knowledge, skills, attitudes, metacognition and strategic thinking, while it also presupposes conscious and intentional decision making; thus, competence in this perspective is considered individuals' cognitive structures which contain considerable theoretical and practical knowledge and highly professional performance.

This perspective is found to have a direct connection to the field of education and teachers' professional competence. It is especially correlated to the mainstreams of visual arts and its teaching which involves theoretical (cognitive) and practical (psychomotive) experiences. The perspective is therefore the justification for its adoption for this study.

Structure of Visual Art in Nigeria Senior Secondary School

In Nigeria, Senior Secondary School is the next stage after Basic Education which covers to six (6) years of Primary Education and three (3) years of Junior Secondary School. Art is offered at the Junior Secondary School level as a core subject referred to as Cultural and Creative Arts, while in the Senior Secondary School, Visual arts is offered, though as an elective subject. Visual arts are a combination of areas of art practice and products that can be identified and appreciated through sight. They are a key component of arts education taught in



school, and visual skills developed in visual art classes can plausibly be used in non-arts settings; they are an important dimension of professions such as design, marketing, advertising, photo journalism and so on which require sharp visual skills that might be learnt through visual art classes (Winner, Goldstein & Vincent-Lancrin, 2013). The name ‘Visual arts’ is an umbrella term for a broad category of art which includes a number of artistic disciplines from various sub-categories (Encyclopedia of Art Education, 2021) taught in schools. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Commission (2009) packages art learning areas in visual arts into six main themes for the purpose of teaching in the senior Secondary School; these are: (i). History of Art (ii). Introduction to Visual Arts (iii). Two-Dimensional Art (iv). Three-Dimensional Art (v). Art Appreciation and (vi). Applied Design.

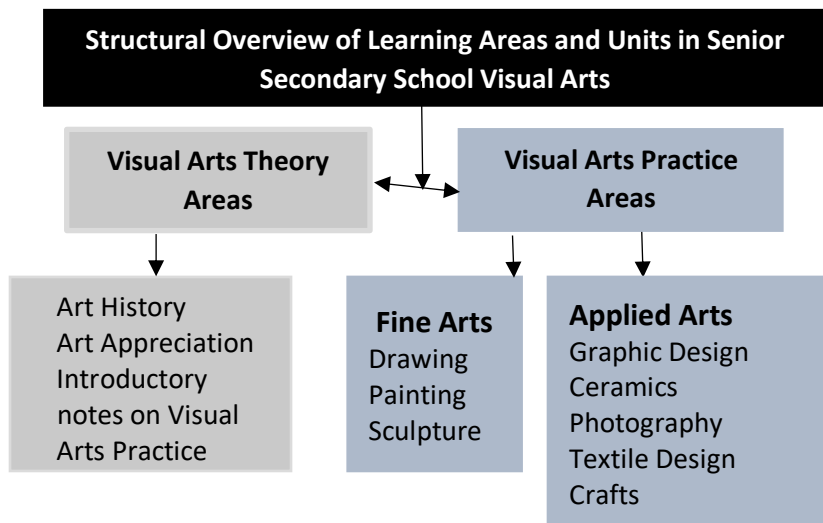


Figure 1: Structural Overview of Visual Arts in Nigerian Senior Secondary Schools

(Source: Authors (2024))

With this structure, there are two learning areas of visual arts in the school curriculum, these are: art theory and art practice, and they have both been effectively represented in the thematic arrangement; where: History of Art, Introduction to Visual Arts and Art Appreciation



fall under the theoretical aspect of art while Two-Dimensional Arts, Three-Dimensional Arts and Applied Design are areas of art practice. It is essential at this point to categorise the theoretical and practice areas of the subject according to the activities involved and how they are represented and taught in the senior secondary school syllabus as Visual Arts.

At this stage, art theories become a stand-alone field, while art practice areas are split into other two divisions of visual art. Art as a subject in the Senior Secondary School is thus broad and combines both theory and practice; accordingly, some students are better in the theoretical aspects, while others have considerable aptitude in both; notwithstanding, everyone in the art class must be given the opportunity to develop the creativity he possesses (Gandonu, Azeez, Aderinto & Oridola, 2019).

The Art Teacher

Art teachers get qualified for the job and subsequently employed as teaching personnel after receiving professional training in art knowledge and teaching pedagogy. They are thus considered as custodians of art knowledge and instructors who guide students through art practice with instructions and demonstrations of creative skills in a structured and measurable approach. This is because they are able to impart art, using appropriate methods. According to The Good Universities Guide (2021), to become an art teacher, one needs to complete an integrated tertiary education in the College or University in which art as a subject area and teaching components are taught throughout. The Wing Institute (2021) points out that there is an abundant knowledge-base to inform that in schools, teachers play critical role in students' learning and achievement. This assertion further makes the teacher's onerous task in teaching and learning clearer. Nichols (2013) suggests that art teachers should be cheerful, stay calm, consistent, very clear and unemotional.

Competence as a Concept

The concept of competence stems from the world of human resource management and labour markets, and later found its way into education; its pragmatic description affirms that it is a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context, that is; a



disposition to act or perform successfully and responsibly in a certain domain (Haanstra, 2013). Gandonu (2019) refers to competence as qualities, abilities and attributes held or acquired by an individual that confer on him or her the aptitudes to do certain things successfully; they are context specific, trainable and closely related to real life; a blend of skills, knowledge, and aptitudes that are prerequisites for effective performance in a task.

It is well documented that teacher's knowledge of the subject matter, and their pedagogical skills and motivation have a strong effect on pupil achievement in primary school (Lauchande, Passos & Howie, 2017). Competence is a defined behaviour expected from an individual to be able to work effectively in any kind of work environment. It is a word most often used by the education sector (Leyale & Iringan, 2016). Chandel (2018) opines that there are three components of competence, which are skills, knowledge and ability.

Key Competences of an Art Teacher

The intention of teaching is the inducement of learning in students, it is therefore necessary that teachers should have the understanding of pedagogy and how it relates to students learning. OECD (2013) opines that teaching competence is thus complex combinations of knowledge, skills, understanding, values and attitudes, leading to effective action in situation; much more than a task, and involves values, learning and society. Dele-Giwa, Omiyale and Oduale (2010) also specify the key skill areas of a teacher as communication skill, interpersonal skill and intellectual skill. character and quality of life of the teacher. In general terms, the success of the teacher according to Babarinde and Oshodi (2010) depends on three vital elements, which are: the knowledge of the subject matter possessed by the teacher, the pedagogical skills possessed by the teacher, the general personality. Teacher competence is a broad term referring to the ability to meet complex demands in a given context by mobilizing various psychological resources ranging from cognitive, functional, personal and ethical means (Guerriero & Revai, 2017). Similarly, Olasehinde, Lasiele and Owolabi (2018) explain teaching competence as learning paths that basically qualify individuals for the teaching profession.

The source further explains that in Nigeria, the courses are categorized in two areas which include combined core teacher education courses (Pedagogical Knowledge) and minor teaching subject courses (Subject Content Knowledge). These are taken for a period of three to four years, for the award of the Bachelor in Education Degree. Secondly, individuals may first obtain an Honours degree (Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Arts) in one or two subjects (Subject Content Knowledge) and later undertake a one-year Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) Certificate (Pedagogical Knowledge). Pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge are key components of teacher competence that affect student progress (Klieckmann, Richter, Kunter, Elsner, Besser, Krauss & Baumert, 2012). These are very important dynamics of teachers's competence.

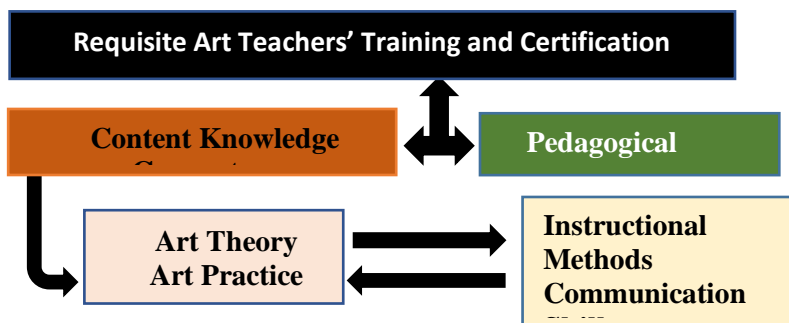


Figure 2: Chart of Art Teachers' Competences

(Source: Authors (2024))

Content Knowledge Competence

To teach is to first understand purposes, subject matter structures, and ideas within and outside the discipline; furthermore, teachers need to understand what they teach in several ways (University of Northern Iowa, 2021). Teachers with relevant content knowledge are able to make better and more appropriate decisions about teaching, learning and to arrive at more appropriate solutions to problems than a teacher without such knowledge (Richards, 2015). The content of Visual art as taught in schools exist in two categories which are inter-woven with both interacting in the process of art learning. These are Art Theory



and Art Practice. Art Theories are basically cognitive and involve reading and writing of basic concepts, historical development and processes involved in art and art making; while art practice is the aspect of hands-on activities in all art fields that lead to creation of art products. These areas include: drawing, painting, sculpture, graphics, textiles, crafts, photography and ceramics. If well-taught and learnt, learners can become young entrepreneurs and make money from these skills as students and beyond.

Art Teachers' Competence in Art Practice

Visual Art is principally a skill-based subject; therefore, this aspect of competence can take care of the psychomotor domain of learning. As a school subject University of North Carolina School of the Arts (2021) describes it as an exploratory programme designed for high school students who have artistic interest, dedication and enthusiasm they wish to pursue in a structured course of study. Practice is central to Visual arts as a school subject. As a result of the hands-on nature of the subject, art teacher training programmes provide a platform for art teachers-in training to experience all basic areas of art practice and be examined as prerequisites for art teaching qualification. The Good Universities Guide (2021) argues that art teachers in secondary schools must be able to teach students the practical skills, theory and history of art; while visual art students receive tuition in aspects such as painting, sculpture, drawing, printmaking, photography and ceramics though they may specialize in one or more aspects in their tertiary studies.

With this, every qualified art teacher should possess the fundamental understanding of the requisite areas of practice despite the issue of specialization during the teaching qualification programme and as well be able to teach and demonstrate same to students. The activity of demonstration is understood to complement art instructions as it enables the art teacher to talk through his actions, decisions and practices in order to enhance the learners' understanding (Gandonu et al., 2019). Art teachers' ability to practically demonstrate these areas of art skill is important in the process of art teaching and learning as it leads the students to better comprehension of concepts, together with processes. This subsequently increases learners' confidence and guide them through meaningful art making experiences and further creative



explorations. An art teacher would teach the students practical skills in a wide variety of forms and encourage them to express themselves in such areas as painting, drawing, sculpture, digital design, photography and textiles (The Skill Development Scotland, 2021). Knowing how to creatively utilise a variety of mediums to create works and sharing the techniques with the students is an important part of the equation of being an art teacher (West, 2018).

Art Teachers' Competence in Theoretical Concepts

Theory is cognitive, but most practical endeavours have the theoretical underpinnings which are often relatively academic and documentary. Practice areas are usually theorised especially for the purpose of advancement of such practice; thus, every field of professional practice is either led or backed-up by the theoretical aspects. Mathewson (2015) argues that in examining the concept of practice there is an expanse of literature to draw on. According to him, such body of work variously represents a range of approaches, drawing on different frameworks. Visual art theories fall within the realm of cognitive experiences, which and it is a basic aspect of the visual art curriculum in the Senior Secondary school. Theoretical topics are well structured and enmeshed in schools' art learning programme. These include art history, art appreciation as well as the introductory notes that lead the students into practical activities in varieties of art making endeavours in visual arts. Davis (2021) asserts that arts education has its roots in drawing, which with reading, writing comprised the basic curriculum in the seventeenth century. It notes that drawing continued to be a basic component of the core curriculum throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. But the 1970s also ushered in a period of intense work by art educators, so work began on the implementation of a transformational theory (Discipline based Art Education (DBAE)) which brought about the thrust of expression informed by attention to the complementary disciplines of art history, aesthetics and criticism which has been instrumental in reinvigorating art education and gaining a place for art in school reforms.

Cognitive skills are by definition restricted to internal (mental) processes; they play an important role in the way humans interact with reality and may give rise to various observational behaviours, causing a



person to intervene in the environment, while performing planned operations and applying available knowledge (Westera, 2001). In order to lead the students into successful art creation, the Education Hub (2021) advises that teachers need to talk to the learners before they start making or building their artworks, as this will help them envisage what they might achieve and imagine in the next steps. Wahid, Bahrum and Ibrahim (2017) alert that it is problematic that many teachers cannot teach art appreciation and history, and the implications for this is that the students' learning is mostly based on psychomotor without aggravating the cognitive and affective domains it ought to address. According to McSorley (1996), teachers put more confidence in teaching art which focused only on practical art production rather than on the critical appraisal of artworks.

Art Teachers' Competence in Instructional Practices

The word instruction is synonymous to pedagogy, which refers to teaching. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary refers to pedagogy as the study of teaching methods. It has to do with instructional methodology and delivery; which is an important aspect of the teaching and learning process. Meanwhile, the fact that someone is good in art does not necessarily make one an art teacher; teaching art requires one to be familiar with effective teaching approaches which are generally referred to as pedagogy: one of the most important skill of any art teacher (Joseph, 2020). Art teachers' pedagogical competence includes:

i. Teaching Methods

Teaching can be considered as the practice of dissemination of learning materials to learners; it is synonymous to instruction. Onwuasoanya (2009) explains that the process of instruction refers to teaching and a good art teacher is one who structures his teaching in relation to the teaching methods that build on a foundation of knowledge already possessed by the students. In other words, the art teacher is expected to employ teaching methods that ensure that learning grows out of useful experiences and experimentation as well as makes effective use of specific art teaching strategies to enhance learning. Similarly, The Education Hub (2021) opines that learners' self-expression is best supported by carefully designed and intentional teaching that promotes skills and knowledge development. This refers to methodology, and



should be purposeful according to the peculiarity of the topic, students' age, or tasks involved in the class. No one method is best in art teaching; therefore, an effective art teacher uses a variety or a combination of methods that produce the best results.

ii. Communication Skills

Communication skills of a teacher include vocabulary, reading and writing expertise (Dele-Giwa, Omiyale & Oduale 2010). Students respond well not only to boundaries and consistency, but will also have greater opportunities for success when they understand exactly what the teacher teaches and what he expects from them. When a teacher's communication is clear and directional, students in the visual art class engage their creative works successfully getting every step of an activity right. This is why Blömeke, Kaiser, König and Jentsch (2020) maintain that instructional quality reflects observable teaching performance in terms of instructional processes implemented in classrooms. Art making is interesting to children when they understand what they have been asked to do clearly, but they may lose focus and become unwilling if the teachers' communications are not clear, misleading or ambiguous.

i. Interpersonal skills

The art teacher's attitudes and behaviours towards the students have a way of either encouraging the students to continue to exert efforts in learning and understanding art practice or otherwise. It is quite understood that art requires practice and the aptitude to do it varies from one student to the other, meanwhile everyone will learn and understand if the teacher is patient with them. Gandonu et al. (2019) emphasize that it should be reasonably understood that due to the nature of art, it is often more hectic teaching its skills to students; some of whom might be slow in learning creativity. The teacher therefore needs to be patient if desirable learning outcomes are necessary. Hamilton-Ekeke (2012), opines that the characteristic of a competent teacher is that the teacher encourages students to reflect on social reality and empowers them to transform the existing conditions that shape their lives. Since not all students are naturally endowed with artistic skills but are willing to learn, the teacher need to gradually lead them through creative experience that will keep on endearing them to the subject. His personal characters and mentoring are sincerely required in the art classroom.



Art Teachers' Competence and Students' Art Learning Outcomes

Art teachers' competence in required key aspects is important if desirable students' art learning achievement is to be achieved. According to Rivkin, Hanushek and Kain (2005), teachers' competences have powerful effects on student achievement; up to three quarters of school effects on student outcomes can be explained by teacher effects. Similarly, The Wings Institute (2021) and Ezugwu, Dadzie and Ocheni (2024), establish that there is an abundant knowledge-base to inform people that in schools, teachers play critical roles in students learning achievement. So, art teaching staff also need the competence to constantly innovate and adapt; this includes having critical, evidence-based attitudes, enabling them to respond to students' outcomes (OECD, 2013). Expected learning outcomes in visual art at the secondary school level can be evident through the realization of art learning objectives, which include: examination success, evidence of critical thinking skills, art appreciation and ability of the students to perform art tasks successfully. The students are further expected to be able to apply appropriate critical thinking to interpret artworks and art concept verbally and in writing; while they equally demonstrate technical ability, originality and craftsmanship that may lead to professionalism in art practice. These however, may not be attainable with an incompetent art teacher that relies basically on certification or the one that lacks relevant aptitude in any of the basic areas of competence required of an art teacher. The students are therefore left in a state of uncertainty, as they hardly learn the required art content statutorily earmarked for their level.

According to Sarwat and Shafi (2014), the teacher is a fundamental variable in the teaching-learning framework. Their importance in what the students achieve in the subject cannot be overemphasised. Art is one of the school subjects that teaches creativity and encourages entrepreneurship and it is important to discuss the issue of art teachers' competence in order to improve art learning outcomes for the benefits of individuals and the society. UNICEF (2019) and Wu, Zhang, Tadesse, Duan, Khalid, Tian, and Gao (2024) further highlight the issue of educational gaps and students' achievement. They alert that as the link between the levels of learning which education systems are providing is getting wider, the needs of children, communities and



economies are also growing; thus, the breadth and depth of this learning crisis provide the greatest global challenge to preparing children and adolescents for life, work and active citizenship.

Furthermore, a recent World Summit on Teaching noted that teachers need to help students acquire not only “the skills that are easiest to teach and easiest to test” but more importantly, ways of thinking (creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making and learning); ways of working (communication and collaboration); tools for working, Information and Communication Technology; and skills around citizenship, life and career and personal and social responsibility for success in modern day (OECD, 2011). Students’ learning achievement will increase when quality instruction is used to teach instructional standards; a teacher influences the quality of instruction, set expectations for learning and measure the level of understanding (Carter, 2021). Similarly, Aina (2016) and Kaur, Rai, and Kaur (2024) clarify that learning achievement can not be separated from learning activities and its processes, so learning achievement is the result of the learning process.

Conclusion

This study concludes that competence is very important in art teaching business. It does not only require being able to verbally instruct the learners; rather, it equally involves the ability to practically demonstrate art skills where necessary and the ability to make his art classroom interesting. Many art teachers who lack any of these competences may not be able to attain desirable art learning outcomes in the students. They pretend to teach, while the students pretend to learn, since the teacher cannot give what he does not have. A reason why the students been turned out at the Senior Secondary School level cannot do much in art practice and see motives to further their studies and carrier in art, despite the expanse of creativity and art talents that abound in 21st century children.

Recommendations

For art studies to yield desirable outcomes that will benefit the students, teachers, parents and the society, the following recommendations are put forward:



- i. Oral interviews alone should not be used in selecting art teachers' employment since the subject also involves practice. This is to define the cognitive and psychomotive competence of the would-be art teacher.
- ii. Prospective Art Teachers who already possess certificate qualifications should be put to Operational Competence Test in Micro Teaching combining art theory, art practice and instructional pedagogy before they are employed.
- iii. Schools and Governments at all levels should consider and encourage Art teachers' professional growth through relevant in-service developmental programmes such as conferences, seminars, workshops.
- iv. Art Teachers should engage sincere self-assessment competence trials and practices; these will reveal their deficiencies and stimulate the urge to improve.

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