

## **PARENTS ATTITUDE AND VALUE FOR ART: A CASE STUDY OF MAIDUGURI METROPOLITAN COUNCIL (MMC) BORNO STATE, NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

In life, either socially, educationally or otherwise, before things or situations can be understood and considered, its definition has to be made clear to the people. Its importance has to be noted and identified with examples. So it is for art in this paper. Parental responses from oral interview conducted formed the main thrust of the paper. Educational experience and ways forward have also been included and in conclusion main points were highlighted on the need for appraising the value of art and ways to educate the general public for its adequate appreciation. The paper posits also that, the duty of parents is to counsel the children right from pre-school age and to guide them towards their area of interest. This guidance is determinant on whether the child is good in art, science or commercial subjects. Some of the comments made by the respondents during the interview and discussion have been noted as part of the concluding sections of the paper.

**Keyword: Art, Parental Guidance, Education, Value, Attitude, Art Appreciation**

### **Introduction**

Different definitions of art have been made by experts in the field of art. Scholars like Mbahi (2001), Barnes (2007) and others have proffered various definitions that arrive at almost the same meanings. However, the definitions could be summarized as thus: Art is the ability to think, initiate, compose, communicate, express, build, construct, write, organize, produce, combine things or objects to come up with meaningful and useful result at all levels for educational, social, cultural, economic and political purposes and development.

According to Mbahi (2007) art is self-expression. It signifies doing, mixing, fashioning, or pasting together, and it usually implies that art is a thing that is accomplished by human skill. He explained that for any expression to be really artistic, it must create pleasing forms – forms which satisfy our sense of beauty. It should be aesthetically pleasing. It may have other functions such as utilitarian, religious, cultural, social and political but it will still be considered as art in so far as it aims at beauty, visual interest or some other visual aesthetic value and standards.

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (2000) defines art as an ability or skill that you can develop with training and practice. As stated by Barnes (2007) art is the product of creative human activity in which materials are shaped or selected to convey an idea, emotion, or usually interesting form. The word art can refer to the visual arts, like painting, sculpture, architecture, photography, decorative arts, crafts and other visual works that combine materials or forms. He noted that we also use the word art in a more general sense to encompass other forms of creative, and gestural activities, such as

dance, drama, and music, or even to describe skill in almost any activity, such as the art of bread making or the art of travel.

Russell (1993) posits that art is a creative act, activity or product of a human being. Art means different things to different people. As such the attitudes and value of art, appreciation and understanding varies in accordance to the society. Definition of art that may be suitable to Western countries is likely to be different for non-Westerners, or tribal societies and in other historical periods. Similarly, the way that the western, southern, eastern and central parts of Nigeria understand the definition of art and appreciate its value could be different from those in the northern part of the country. This could be due to some factors in line with belief, awareness, education, the availability and use of finished products. Such notions mentioned above could be the result of misguided conceptions about art and artists in general by the larger society in Nigerian. In our misguided conceptions about art, we have reduced its essence to simply mean drawing and painting. This is simply because the correct type of art education exposure and knowledge have not been adequately provided by the right person's i.e. artists.

The importance of art cannot be over emphasized in human life at all levels in every society and in the whole world. It has been of the highest importance to every human being on earth since the creation of man till date. Basically, art implies value – monetary, social and intellectual. Once an object is regarded as art, it acquires monetary, social, spiritual and intellectual values. For example, a flower vase that is well produced and well glazed in Nigeria may be sold at reasonable price at America or England but may not be valued and appreciated by the indigene (Nigeria). Similarly, a product produced in the western countries may be of more value to the Nigerian and taken for granted by an American or English man.

#### **Attitude and Challenges towards Art Development in Maiduguri.**

Many people lack the full awareness of the importance of art. The ordinary people parents and the government seem to classify art as a recreational subject. Most people in our society regard an artist as someone who simply draws, paints, sings and dances. To correct this notion, the educational planners are in a better position to remedy the misconception about art and the artist. That is, the educationist should be educated by artist so as to pass on to the parents, individuals and the society at large the relevant and proper information for correct understanding of art and artists.

It has been observed that, some headmasters and principals do not consider art as important as other subjects like accounting, science or mathematics. They see art as play or an enjoyable subject. Art periods are usually placed on the timetable in afternoon not in the morning. The departments of art in the schools at secondary level are usually not regarded in terms of funding, equipping and materials, because there are no value and importance attached to art.

Some headmasters, principals and educated parents lack proper exposure to art education throughout their educational pursuits. Such lack of exposure and knowledge of art lead to their lack of interest and

lukewarm attitudes and sometimes derisive statements about art. The negative attitudes and perceptions of art as a subject by some school heads are usually transferred to the entire school community. This resulting to an uncondusive environment for teaching art as a subject in schools (Mbahi, 2000, 2007). Such transferred attitude cause students to make fun of their colleagues who take art as a subject and go further as to label such students as; dondies, lazy, No Future Ambition (N.F.A.), etc. Such assertions weaken the interest of talented student artists. At a stage the students that are selected or allowed to offer art in schools are those students who are seen to be unable to perform very well in other areas of academics. This is because of lack of awareness of art by the officers concerned. The author as a former Head of Department, at one time had to explain to an Examination Officer the whole situation and this brought about a change of attitude in some secondary schools in Borno state.

The essence and importance of art were further made clearer to some of the principals when an Indian artist visited some of the schools in Borno state in 2006 to share, show and sale art products and materials to students, teachers and principals of such schools. Since then art started to gain some regard within such schools. Art is no longer regarded as play, forbidden by Islam, as fantasy and so on.

The aforementioned change in attitude is further indicated by one of the respondents during an interview, where she stated that art is very important in society and that it is a fundamental aspect of life because it is found in every aspect and area of life. Be it in the house, office, church, mosque, school and others”.

She further said:

Art is in every subject. Example in Architecture, buildings are artistically designed and in Home Economic before you teach it very well, you should be able to put in some artistic effort, towards designing and decorating the meals and environment it will be served in. The manner of mixing the ingredient together could be also be considered as art. That the most fascinating area of art is pottery (ceramics) which has been in existence since the beginning of man on earth till date. That the only aspect of art that is forbidden in Islam is the human and animal figure in three dimensional form which is strongly against the Islamic system of belief. Three dimensional art in Islam is considered as idol worship. It is believed that angels will not visit your house if such objects are in your house. That all other areas of art is beneficial to every human being, example of such are textiles – from cotton to clothes of different colours. Pottery/Ceramics –from clay to household utensils etc. That art is a self-employable profession (Barrister Nanna Shettima Liberty, face to face discussion, 2008).

In line with Hajiya Nana Shettima Liberty’s comments, art is one of the important and multi-disciplinary area that is practiced by talented, gifted, composed and all-round individuals and it need to be considered and encouraged in the society for societal development.

Another parent/teacher Mr. Bukar Alkali [Hisa] indicates his opinion:

Prior to the advent of the colonial master, the Borno people were acquainted with many arts forms. He states that, all the cooking utensils of the Borno people in those days were made of clay (ceramics/terracotta). Products such as pots for cooking and house hold utensils such as bowls (buar), wooden food flask were used for eating and preserving food which is equivalent to present day food flasks/warmer. These objects were all crafted/made by skilled persons which were/ are the equivalent of artists in today's society. Wheat grass were used for making mats, baskets, (faifai) local tray (matankadi) as well as basket bowl "Kindai" was used to place the local food flask to avoid contact with the ground using the said "buar".

Another fundamental aspect of art is the tie/dye which is part and parcel of the Borno people's culture. It has been in practice for long in a variety of colored materials used as clothes. Weaved out of natural cotton, which is cultivated within the local communities and even became part of export materials especially to North Africa which dates back to 11<sup>th</sup> Century which shows a clear evidence that the art has been in existence among the Borno people Only the figure of human beings and animals are forbidden in Islam when placed in houses for worship based on religious beliefs of Islam (Bukar Alkali Hisa, 2008).

#### **Parents General Comments during Interview**

Below are some of the parent's comments concerning art. A staff of the Teaching Service Board Maiduguri stated, "I want my child to study art in school at all levels of his/her education for the following reasons: he/she can be self-employed, and can create beautiful things for different purposes for mankind".

A retired civil servant also with the Teaching Service Board said: "I want my children and grandchildren to study art because of its numerous importance to the society. For example, cloth making, production of decorative materials like flower pots for both interior and exterior decoration, greeting cards and many others".

A staff of the Ministry of Agriculture, Maiduguri commented: "I want my children to study art very well. It is a profession which one can be self-employed in many multipurpose business and benefits. For example, tie dye, pottery making, calligraphic writing, card making, drama, singing and others. It is also full of knowledge and creativity. For example, a graduate of Federal College of Education Technical Potiskum is now self- employed and my daughter has trained and benefited greatly from the knowledge of art she obtained and because of the availability of materials and equipment in the college".

Despite the positive remarks of people, there are still others who have a less than staler opinions of art. A retired civil servant with the Ministry of Education Maiduguri, explained her views: "unlike geography, history, agricultural science, English, mathematics and other courses of study, I do not think art exists in schools. Even if it does I do not know what they do. As such I will not want any of my children to study art in school".

Statements/views like this require artists to come together and create awareness and exposure to the general public about the importance and value of art in schools, where the awareness could be grasped at the appropriate level of learning for the betterment of the individuals and the communities of Borno, Nigeria and the world at large. Artists anywhere they find themselves should also endeavor to put in the best in educating people on art and create awareness on its importance in their various localities and societies through appropriate means.

### **Methodology**

Oral interview was conducted to find out parents attitudes and value of art in MMC of Borno state. Some randomly selected parents were interviewed in Borno state. They were forty [40] in number.

### **Sample of Questionnaire Administered to Respondents**

Parents attitudes and value for Art in MMC of Borno State Maiduguri Metropolitan Council of Borno State (MMC).

1. Are you interested in art?
2. Do you want your child to study art in school?
3. Is art important to you and your community?
4. Is art recognized and valued in your community.
5. Is art forbidden in your community.
6. Give some comments about art.

Thank you very much for your kind responses

**Table 1**  
**Results and Analysis of Responses**

<b>Strongly Agreed</b>	<b>Agreed</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagreed</b>	<b>Strongly disagreed</b>
20 (50%)	10 (25%)	6 (15%)	4 (10%)	0 (0%)

Some of the responses are as follows: Fifty percent (50%) strongly agreed that art is a valuable and important (course) subject as such their children could go for art in the school if they so desire, 25% agreed that they may allow their children to go for art in schools, 15% were undecided on whether their children should study art or not, 10% disagreed. None of the respondent have strongly disagreed.

From the above responses made by the respondents most parents have positive attitudes and value toward art in MMC of Borno state. The smaller negative responses came from parents who had no art experience. They did not see any value of art. These are parents who would prefer their children to do science subjects like biology, physics and chemistry.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

As pointed by Willett (1991), art has always been subject of change, but our knowledge is still too sketchy for us to make reliable assessment of rates of change. Islam discourages the representation of living

creatures but encourages instead, elaborate ornamental design. From the responses on the parental attitudes and value for art in MMC of Borno state, parent's attitudes and value for art in the MMC of Borno state is not bad as shown by the data collected and analyzed. Those who were undecided or disagreed made such responses due to lack of understanding of the value and importance of Art. This knowledge could be (created) through conferences, publications, workshops, media, exhibitions, dialogues and seminars. The artists on the other hand should work hand in hand with the parents through their children. They should also work hard towards perfection in their various fields of art considering the technological aspects, knowledge should also be shared with other professionals like engineers, technologists, scientists and others for better outcome to the individuals and the general public for the appreciation of this valuable aspect/area of art.

### **Recommendations**

Art is one of the fundamental area in human life that should be given its due regard by the government at all local, state and the federal levels. This could be done by assisting in provision of Art materials and equipment at all school levels to release low income parents.

Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA) should work harder by communicating to the government and schools the importance and value of art. This could be achieved through visitation, exhibition, media, conferences and dialogue.

Artists should work harder in their various aspect of the field so as to attain perfection.

Parents should be attending Parents Teachers Association (P.T.A.) meetings in schools to know the general knowledge of their children and their attitudes towards learning, art, mathematics, English and so on.

Parents are solely responsible for the attitudes of their children on the value for art. They should direct their children at the pre-school age. They should be able to dictate whether their child is good in art, science, and commercial and so on, then counsel the child appropriately without bias.

Qualified art teachers are required in Borno state schools for basic and proper foundation.

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