

THE CHILD'S CREATIVE GENIUS AND NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

TIJANI KHADIJAH IYABO (PhD)

Department of Fine Arts,
Faculty of Environmental Design,
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

Abstract

This paper examines the issues considered significant in the development and proper harnessing of the natural tendencies of the creative genius child in the scheme of Nigerian educational system. It employs the Analytical Approach as its method of explaining issues and raising vital questions relating to the teaching of art and availability of an enduring environment where the child genius will be allowed to flourish thereby leading to development. It concludes that proper planning and effective execution of educational programmes is required for the creative genius to triumph in Nigeria.

Keywords: Child, Nigerian Educational System, Genius, Creative, Technology

Introduction

Nigeria's quest to become a technological advanced country is enshrined in the National Policy on Education (2004). To achieve this, all levels of education as well as education types have been listed and emphasis placed on improving child education. This underscores the importance of education as the bedrock for national development and self-reliance. The Primary level of education as well as Visual Arts i.e. highly creative course was not left out. For the child at the Nursery and Primary School levels the creative genius inborn in everybody finds vent in play and visual arts. While Visual Arts in its sculpting, drawing and painting therapeutically exercises the fingers of the child it opens up the creative genius latent in the child.

Technology is material science, production and creative utilization to produce items used for the purpose of making life a lot easier for man. In view of the fact that Visual Arts is all about creativity, it is indeed the bedrock of life; the nursery and primary levels of education, children are not vigorously exposed to. The creative ability is buried and replaced with learning what already exists in nature or that which Isman-made.

Today, the country is hugely an importer nation and produces little or nothing other than raw materials repackaged as finished products by foreign developed members of the international community, and sent back to Nigeria with price tags that the Nation accepts immorally. This has led to job loss and unemployment thereby leading to increased juvenile delinquency among youths. Street children mill over the roads, youth's crime and bus touts menace the public. There is now increased apathy to work as it is a lot easier to engage in cyber-crimes or simply kidnap someone and release him later at a handsome price.

The Problem

The nationwide apathy to Visual Arts has brought in its wake the consequences that are readily noticeable in our over dependence on foreign technology. It has greatly affected our nursery and primary schools today where many of them do not offer Fine Arts as a course. The outright consequence for this is the neglect of the creative genius child which becomes buried, untapped and undeveloped. Once the creative instinct is buried independent thought and novel ideas die and the child is unable to associate it to design, production and display of new products. The child does not consider himself the author of solution to problems but looks outward for help.

The Child and the Development of the Creative Genius

Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic theory states that any stagnated libido in a child expresses itself adversely at adult stage. In order words permit a child to let go certain normal oral enjoyment and it will develop normally. Conversely, what a child is taught is retained in him/her until adulthood where it governs his/her view of life and directs his action if the creativity inborn was developed through Visual Arts, a highly creative will grow up providing solutions to problems and above all, creating new things in technology. Wallin (2017) supports this when she stated that Frequent and positive contact with nature before age 11, especially in active and playful experiences, is likely to foster pro-environmental affect, attitude, values, and behavior in adulthood. The sense of purchase will give way to that of production, sale and wealth-building.

This is self-actualization process using creativity, and it will mature through trial and error. This can be encouraged further through incentives that will create the drive for more creativity in the child. Rewards of novel ideas that have been visualized by the child will increase the drive to produce newer things. A nation of creative minds cannot become indolent, idle, and hungry and a nursery bed of juvenile delinquents.

Successive Nigerian governments prescribed compulsory teaching of art from the primary level through junior secondary level (NPA 1981) because of the need to preserve our cultural heritage through inculcation of artistic skills and competences into the children.

The Context of Child Art

Child art is described as the art, which appears only in childhood; which is fresh, lively and spontaneous and which begins to die when the child approaches adolescence. (Cizek, 1921; Richardson 1948). Tomlinson and Fitz Maurice (1948) avers that child art is the moment of awakening in a child that marks the way towards the true growth to an adult mind. It is a time of wonder expectation because the door of experiences begins to open slowly, exposing the child to the endless experiences to follow. With hands and materials at his disposal, the child therefore seeks to develop ideas, which come out of his mind; ideas which are sincere, fresh and untroubled. The art teacher therefore holds something precious in his hands, something that can be so easily and quickly dulled or encouraged to grow and develop.

Lowenfeld (1957) opines that the primary concern of an art teacher should be what the child is thinking because the child's drawing holds the key to his understanding. It is argued that because visual expression is in fact the first language of children, art activities are particularly important for their growth and development. While supporting Lowenfeld's position, Coles (1992) adds that it is through the Visual Arts that children are able to investigate their world, explore their relationship to it, and demonstrate visually what they know, what they understand, and what is of particular importance to them. It is therefore necessary to consider the drawings of children as a gift, one that provides the child with insight and understanding. Coles (1977) argues that "... a youngster thinking is a youngster telling you a hell of a lot... Let them flower as artist, so they can display all their beauty." The essential role of art is to facilitate the development of both visual and verbal literacy; help children to communicate, to express themselves, to describe their experiences.

An Overview of Children's Developmental Stages in Art

Roland (1996) Opines that the goal of providing art activities to children is not to train them as artists but mainly for self-discovery and self-discipline so that children may relate to their environment as healthy and integrated individuals. Therefore, Martin (2001) contends that what is essential to sensitive guidance in planning and executing the art programme is knowledge of what to expect and what not to expect of children. By understanding normal development in child art, a basis of comparison is provided by which we are able to evaluate deviations in children who are deprived certain life experiences: emotionally or mentally.

According to Richards (1988), development is indeed an active, dynamic process; to be more precise it is the interaction of many processes because development occurs simultaneously in a number of domains; the physical, the intellectual, the emotional, and the social. This rule applies to psychological as well as biological development, yet with differences in the patterns of growth. Although sometimes, development takes a quantum jump, it is a continuum' with advances upward and forward. Children are not miniature adults. The qualitative and quantitative changes that occur in the developmental continuum transform the child into an adult.

Several documented studies of child art in previous and present cultures show that children grow through a series of predictable developmental stages in their drawings and paintings. Kitson and Merry, (1997) notes that children all pass through the same stages of their development, but the pace of their development varies. They further stated that the stages, which vary from child to child, could be clearly seen with daily drawings of children and studies, furthermore they observed that movements towards complexity take the form of small changes rather than giant leaps.

While these stages may vary from one researcher to other, they generally reflect the overall growth and development of the child between about two years to fourteen or more. The Child begins to draw as a

normal part of his effort to explore, to manipulate, to seek order, and to control himself in his/her environment. According to Steele (1997), children who are appropriately encouraged along development patterns tend to achieve higher level of skill. Most adults today have not attained a level of competence beyond the schematic stage due to lack of sympathetic stimuli. The adult who has not achieved the skill to draw representational or realistic forms often feels he cannot draw a straight line. Children's knowledge of visual elements will improve their drawing skills where they are encouraged to be perceptive, imaginative and creative by an art teacher. This will however, a knowledgeable, sympathetic teacher, who allows for freedom to express ideas, feelings where children are provided with a tune, place, suitable materials, and ideas motivated from the child's own world which cooperative learning method provides.

The Role of the Art Teacher

Teaching is inculcating skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values in the one being taught. It is facilitating changes in the learners there by bringing about attitude change. Teaching can be brought about through interactions and persuasive discussions in a teaching learning situation. Teaching can be achieved via demonstrations, telling, guiding and directing learners, one or all of these methods can be used. The teaching process may be facilitated by relevant materials or teacher's knowledge.

Researchers suggest that it is useful to view teaching as an exercise in problem-solving. Teaching involves the ongoing solving of a series of problems. These have to do with managing the classroom environment, monitoring ongoing activities, evaluating and assessing the interest and understanding of individual students, and so on.

Teaching is a skilled profession, which has methods and techniques that must be learnt. There are various teaching methods which teachers should be familiar with. Indeed, teaching involves the way the teacher communicates with the children, which will make them participate effectively in the teaching-learning enterprise like in other subject areas. Many teaching strategies have been used and are still being used in teaching art.

The history of art education includes shifts between teaching that can be characterized as either dominative or integrative. Neither the traditional teacher-dominant approach of the late 19th century nor the student-centered integrative approaches in the progressive era has proved to be most effective (Jacobs 1989).

Conclusion

Childhood orientation directs through life and this statement by Sigmund Freud and Annie Wallin should be taken seriously in the drive for accelerated national development. Innovative children with development creative capacity cannot become juvenile, street children; bus touts (area boys) criminals of the cyber world or rubbers. National development rests squarely on the shoulders of Nigerians, because a nation cannot rise above the level of its education and numbers of its educated citizen. Also, the nation cannot remain an import –driven economy but must export and advance scientifically and technologically. To

successfully do them, the direction this should take among other things should be at the rate of individual development which is the early childhood. The tool for this is Visual Arts.

The government and educational planners must revisit the school's curriculum, execute policies, and guidelines, timely disbursement of funds, to visual Arts training at the nursery and primary school level of education.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are listed to help re-engineer the foundation of national development and turn the country to a producer nation.

- Visual Arts must be made compulsory at the nursery and primary school levels, this should re-instituted into a policy statement;
- Schools Inspectors and Supervisors should ensure conformity with this by sanctioning public and private schools that do not display compliance;
- Primary school teachers who are not trained in Visual Arts should undertake certificate courses in Visual Arts, sponsored by the stakeholders such as Ministries, Agencies, departments, Non-Governmental organizations and wealthy individuals.

References

- Lowenfeld, V., Brittain W. L. (1957) Creative and Mental Growth
National Policy on Education (2004).Printed by NERDC Yaba Lagos
Neil K. and Roger M. (1997) *Teaching in the Primary School: A Learning Relationship*
Published London; New York: Routledge, 1997. Retrieved on 4th August 2017 from
<http://trove.nla.gov.au/version/45619393>
Richards. A.G. (1988). Perceptual Training in Drawing among Students from Two Countries, *Studies in Art Education*, 29(3), 302-308. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/>
Steele, B. (1997), *Draw Me a Story: An Illustrated Exploration of Drawing-as-Language* Published by Peguis Retrieved on 1st June 2017 from <https://www.amazon.com/Draw-Story->
Wallin, A. (2017) More Time Spent Engaged in Nature Play during Early Childhood May Lead to Life-Long Pro-Environmental Orientation and Behavior <http://www.informalscience.org/news>