

HARNESSING ART EDUCATION AND PHILOSOPHY FOR EDUCATIONAL ADVANCEMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examines art education and philosophy: Panaceas for educational development in Nigeria. Art education simply means improving the teaching and learning of art, appreciating artworks, using artworks to improve learning. These two disciplines are interwoven accordingly for the betterment of educational development in Nigeria. Many scholars/educationists misplaced or misinterpreted the relevance of art education and philosophy in the impartation of knowledge in Nigeria. It is within this context that this paper projects art education and philosophy as reliable panaceas for educational development in Nigeria. The paper adopts primary and secondary methods complimented with qualitative approach. It further investigates the implications of philosophy for the study of art education. Having traced the historical connection between philosophy and art education, the paper asserts that the two concepts are not mutually exclusive. Thus, it recommends that, among other things, concerned education authorities should encourage the promotion of art education and philosophy for the good of educational sector in Nigeria.

Keywords: Philosophy, Art Education, Panaceas, Educational Development, Theory and Practice.

Introduction

Zibili (2010) posited that the mission of philosophy is practical and it includes. enlightenment, open mindedness, broadening of sensibilities, sensitivity to human principles and ideals. The philosophical mansion is not simply a house of words, which guarantees its occupants an opportunity for a permanent possibility of conversation; rather, it is theoretical, observatory, which provides a vantage position from which to have a clearer, even deeper, view of the human condition.

Philosophy of art, on the whole, centres on what art education ought to be and what it is, actually, in theory and practice irrespective of whether it was before and after the European colonization and the introduction of formal art education in Nigeria. Üzoagba and Ogboji (2005) emphasized that one of the prime objectives of creative art teaching is to use creative activities to make children more creative regardless of the field in which the creativity will be applied. The relatively recent introduction of the Doctorate degree program (Ph.D.) in studio areas of art is an added impetus for art education in Nigeria.

This is because it has brought a fresh focus on the theory and practice of art education at a higher level. It is believed that as more doctorate graduates are turned out, there will be an overwhelming positive impact on the general theory and practice of art education.

Surprisingly, some scholars and art educationist are found of asking questions like: what is philosophy? What is art education? What is art all about? It is to these Contexts that this paper addresses itself in order to serve as a critical mirror for art students, art educationists and other related disciplines towards improving and enhancing a holistic understanding of the art education and philosophy as panaceas for educational development in Nigeria and beyond.

Philosophy Conceptualized

Philosophy of art education is an offshoot of philosophy and cannot be adequately discussed without looking at it from its origin. Consequently, literature review on this paper is reviewed using the concept of philosophy; history of

philosophy; concept of philosophy of art; concept of philosophy of education; concept of philosophy of art education; understanding art education and implications of art education and philosophy for educational development in Nigeria. According to Omoregbe (2007), says that if you ask ten different philosophers what philosophy is, you are likely to get ten different answers. It implies that the simple question what is philosophy will elicit as varied answers as there are respondents. Indeed, Ogundowole (2004) maintains that it is often heard among students that there is no single universally accepted definition of philosophy. Such a view is not infrequently stated even by some academic philosophers. The immediate impression you are likely to derive from this is perhaps that everyone to his own kind of definition. Therefore, whatever definition you have is inadequate.

Momoh (1991) adds that the difference in the definitions or characterization of philosophy goes back to differences in the perception of experiences and cultures. The nature of philosophical problems is such that philosophers cannot but disagree. Ogbinaka (2010) furthers this position thus; attempting to define philosophy may be uncomfortable and embarrassing to both the beginner and his teacher. In Omoregbe (2007) philosophy arose as a result of man's wonder about the meaning of reality and the problems of existence. Philosophy was derived from two Greek words Philos and Sophia. Philos stands for love and Sophia stands for Wisdom. Putting the two words together philosophy therefore means love of wisdom Love about what constitutes reality and wisdom about the nature of problems of existence includes the issue of the purpose of human life.

Ordinarily, philosophy means the capacity of contributing to the human well-being. Oladipo (2008) posits that philosophy would be better understood and appreciated if one considers what philosophers do. Based on this, Izibili (2009) looks at philosophy technically as a process in which the individual is consciously engaged in the activities of a vigorous thinking process or deep reflective method with a view to establishing orderliness. Philosophy is seen in some quarters as the study of dialectics. It proceeds from the known to the unknown through a process of criticism and cross-examination (Aluede and Okoza, 2009).

Philosophy Historized

According to Okafor (1988), the beginning of civilization, as philosophers indicates, there was the African "Egyptian Mystery System" which existed as far back as about 4000 B.C and was about the most ancient university system. However, the system did not produce any systematic, documented philosophy, even though it became the spring-board for philosophy and science in later centuries, both for Africa and for the Egyptian colonies, which included Greece. Ukagba (2005) concludes that there is yet no record that indicates the point at which men started to philosophize. It is however fairly safe to assume that the evolution of man to the stage of Homosapiens was a slow and progressive one. He further said that it is a fact that at some stage man did ask himself questions about his origin, his nature and his destiny and that man attempted to answer these questions. Solomon and Higgins (1996) amplifies that the first set of people who provided answers to questions that others would have taken for granted in a manner akin to that attributed to philosophers were said to be the Greeks. Going by its etymology as "love of wisdom", makes sense to posit that philosophy started around the sixth century B.C. when ingenious thinkers in places around the world began to challenge and go beyond the established religious beliefs, mythologies and folklores of their societies.

The most productive period in the history of western philosophy was ushered in by Socrates. With Socrates, philosophy changed from speculation about the universe to reflection about the nature of man. Ukagba (2005) advanced that the most widely known expressions or maxims about Socrates is that he was the man whose image and thinking we associate with the words of "man know thyself and "the unexamined life is not worth living." Unfortunately, Socrates was killed based on false accusation of impiety (lack of respect for religion or God) and corruption of the youths. He left no written works, but Plato, his pupil, immortalized him in the Platonic Dialogues. Plato's role in philosophy can be seen in his Dialogues-Republic, Menno, Pythagoras, Apology. He tried to develop a philosophical theory on how an ideal state (which means civil society) ought to be organized. This according to him is only possible through justice and fairness. There is no branch of philosophy (Metaphysics, Epistemology and Axiology, Education, Arts etc.) that he did not theorized.

Aristotle, who was Plato's pupil, was a giant among philosophers. He made a great contribution to Western philosophy and to Western education that anyone else has not surpassed. Aristotle is the father of realism as he sees things as they are in themselves just as Plato is the father of idealism as for him; things are of the mind or ideas. Aristotle's works include Metaphysics, Nicoma chain, Ethics, Logics and Rhetoric. All these combine to improve art education. At about 300 B.C. the Stoics and the Epicureans divided philosophy into logic, physics and ethics. Logic included epistemology: physics included science, while ethics included philosophy of mind and psychology. Philosophy relies heavily on reflection and on an a priori approach to knowledge. An a priori concept means what is known from

experience. It does not rely on experimentation or pure empirical investigation to attain its conclusions. When knowledge is gained through pure empirical investigation, it is called posteriori.

According to Aluede and Okoza (2009) the empiricist tradition also came up. The proponents were John Locke (1632-1704), Bishop George Berkley (1685-1753). These philosophers relied sense experience as the key source of knowledge. Locke introduced the concept of *tabula rasa*.

This concept was originally used by Aristotle but John Locke popularized its usage. Immanuel Kant (1711-1766) heralded the coming of German philosopher of idealism. He changed from his position of "continental rationalism and metaphysics" in favour of empirical approach to reality. To conclude the modern era of philosophy, mention must be made of Karl Marx (1818-1883). He is generally known as the father of socialism. Karl Marx was determined to pave way for socialist revolution to address socio-economic exploitation and man's inhumanity to man. For Marx, philosophers have only interpreted the world differently, the point however is to change it (Marx, 1872).

Contemporary period of philosophy is known as pragmatism. Among pragmatists, John Dewey (1859-1952) stands to be the most popular. The basis of pragmatic argument is that what is true is what works in practice. Pragmatism is also called experimentalism or instrumentalism.

The pragmatist believed that man should concern himself only with the things or events that can be perceived by the sense and not with the abstracts and the speculative as perceived by Platonic philosophy. At this juncture, the knowledge of history or evolution of philosophy is necessary in that it will assist scholars to know that philosophy is not just a subject or discipline of accident, but a discipline that has origin, connection and continuity, action and reaction, thesis and antithesis (Aluede and Okoza, 2009).

Philosophy of Art Conceptualized

According to Akhogba (2018), philosophy of art is one of the aspects of philosophy dealing with the nature of art, beauty and taste, with the creation and appreciation of beauty. Scientifically, philosophy of art is the study of sensory or sensory-emotional values, sometimes called judgments of sentiment and taste. More broadly, scholars in the art industry defined philosophy of art as aesthetics a critical reflection on art, culture and nature. Art is of three modules. They are visuals (painting, sculpture, architecture, photography, graphics, textile, printmaking and ceramics), performing (music, drama, poetry and dance) and liberal (metal physical aspect of learning). These modules put together helps to facilitates educational development.

Philosophy of Education Conceptualized

Philosophy of education is a higher-order activity which has for its host the theory and practice of education. By higher-order activity means the process of formulating theories for education. Philosophy of education enables those involved in the business of education to examine ideas, arguments, problems and possible innovations connected with and behind the classroom practice (Aluede and Okoza 2009). Aluède and Okoza (2009) further posited on this paper, that philosophy of education is perceived as a guiding post in the educational enterprise. Its essence in educational advancement and achievement cannot be overemphasized.

Philosophy of Art Education Conceptualized

From art education perspective, Akhogba (2018) claims that philosophy of art education means the application of the creative visuals, methods and techniques aimed at improving the overall educational development, Nigeria inclusive. We have noticed above that philosophy is a reflective activity. Its methods and techniques consist of analysis, criticism and clarification of what may not be clear of an exploration of the assumptions and implications to practice as well as of design and formulation of systems of ideas alternative to the existing ones.

Akhogba (2018) further buttressed that the role of art education encompasses all the visuals, performing and liberal arts in delivery a standard-based, sequential approach by qualified artists or art educationists as part of the core curriculum. The essence of philosophy of art education functions are research, teaching, speculative, prescriptive, analytic, building intellectual capacity of art educationists, development of the child towards effective learning.

Understanding Art Education

Uzoagba in Akhogba (2018) believes that art education is the foundation of art teachers, art educationists and administrators in the field, as well as research and theory bearing in mind the developmental psychology of the child, aims and methods of educational development. He maintains that in order to appreciate art education more, it is important to find out how this branch of education influences humanity and improves personalities. Ofoye (2010)

posits that while the functions of visual arts are prominently meant to appeal to man's senses of beauty, the applied arts on the other hand perform a particular function which is perhaps commercial and utilitarian in scope.

On this premise, Akhogba (2018) pontificates that art education is the teaching and learning, creating art awareness, making a class more conducive for teaching and learning, creating improvisations that are based on visuals, empirical and pragmatic for educational development in Nigeria and beyond. Historically, art education began in Europe via the Atelier Method System where artists took apprentices to learn their trades in much better ways. For instance the blacksmiths, goldsmiths, sculptors and other related talented skill work. The first recorded art education schools were established in about 400 BC in Greece as mentioned by Plato.

Implications of Art Education and Philosophy in Educational Development in Nigeria

The foregoing views of philosophy and art education have many implications for the art educationists and the beginners. It is apparent that art education and philosophy has great implications for teaching and learning. Since the main task of the teacher is to impart knowledge, skills and morals which elements are grounded in art education and philosophy, the use of the mind as an effective instrument in thinking one's way out of problems is very important. The teacher, who acts before he has the opportunity to reflect, can certainly not be effective when imparting knowledge. Art education and philosophy, therefore, makes art educationists inclusive of other teachers in schools to be able to think clearly and encourage this in their students.

Art educationists and philosophers are seen as nation builders of manpower needed to man different areas of responsibilities. Therefore, art educationists and philosophers help the other disciplines to understand their works better. They also help the art educationists and teachers in other fields to understand national and educational goals and so use their knowledge to produce reasonable and competent skilled people for educational and national development.

Through art education and philosophy, distinction is able to be made in educational development in terms of good, bad and ugly. This is why Talabi in Akhogba (2018) posits that spiritual involvement is the essence of art education, seeking the highest development of the creative spirit for every man, rather than turning the classroom into holy ground. To him, "philosophy of art education teaches satisfaction in oneself, thus eliminating greed, envy and disregard for our fellow men". On this part, he believes that aesthetic education is the only education that brings grace to the body and nobility to the mind. Until man in his physical and sensuous mode of being has been accustomed to the laws of beauty, he is not capable of spiritual liberty.

Through art education and philosophy, one finds the basis for generating the principles for developing the innate potentials of the child. One of the principle canons for judging a nation is its artistic heritage. It reflects the past, contemporary life and therefore tells the prospects for the future. When experiencing art education and philosophy, students/learners practice higher order of thinking skills such as problem solving, decision making and the investigation of new concepts, medium, techniques and materials. With the inclusion of art education and philosophy in the educational curriculum, students acquire the freedom to explore without judgment and often without rules, owing students to develop the understanding that personal success is ultimately the individual responsibility.

In the artistic kingdom, the kingdom is full of diversity. This is a situation that makes educationists through philosophy to be aware that all children learn differently and that all children can learn. Through art education and philosophy, a balanced and sequential education programme fosters the students' perception of both their real and imagined worlds. The inclusion of art education and philosophy in the curriculum as panaceas for educational development also enables each student to develop positive attitude towards self, others and the environment through creative experiences. Art education and philosophy help the students to develop interest and appreciation of the visual arts through the study of cultures and historical periods in which they are made. It becomes obvious that all the theories in art education and fields emanated from philosophy. Therefore, philosophy set principles that guide professional action through the events and issues other disciplines and art education face daily and makes effort to address.

Conclusion

This paper has traced art education and philosophy as reliable Panaceas for educational development. It has also posited that art education is not an isolated phenomenon. It is basically art philosophy phenomenon, which is not out of place, as other observers have submitted. The remedies or the gaps filled by art education and philosophy and its implications for educational development cannot be overemphasized. Art educationists and Philosophers have pushed national and educational development beyond conventional boundaries and their panaceas have strengthened the field for decades and centuries. Consequently, this paper submits that both national policy on educational planners and art educationists/philosophers should encourage the promotion of education Nigeria. When this is done, art education and

philosophy will then gain a general acceptability in the society and it will thus be able to contribute to the overall development of mankind.

On the basis of the identified panaceas by art education and philosophy for educational development in Nigeria, the following recommendations are made:

1. More emphasis should be laid on the teaching and learning of art education and philosophy in Nigeria and the world at large;
2. Artists in Nigeria should acquire appropriate knowledge or in-depth knowledge of philosophical logic;
3. Artists should identify with other philosophers in other department in professional association;
4. The library should be well stocked with art education and philosophical books, because library is a repository of knowledge and that no meaningful teaching, learning and research in the educational development in Nigeria can take place without the library. As Ogunsola (2004) notes, digitalization is gradually taking over and most libraries are being connected to the internet;
5. The issues of importance like the review of existing art education and philosophy curriculum should be taken with caution and treated properly and
6. Art educationists, philosophers and other fields of learning should promote competency-based education and related philosophies.

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