

ART APPRECIATION IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS: AN EXPLORATORY INNOVATION TOWARDS NATION BUILDING

By

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Abstract

This paper “Art Appreciation in Nigerian Schools: An Exploratory Innovation Towards Nation Building” expresses that there is continued use of obsolete course contents of art appreciation in teaching the Fine and Applied Art students of the seventh (7th) decades of the Post Nigeria Independence. This situation has been a confined content of research study, and seems to have bridged the needed information concerning nation building that Nigerian art students ought to have known from their art appreciation studies. The problem becomes despicable when the art history students cannot suggest an upgraded course contents of art appreciation that will promote nation building in Contemporary African Society, particularly in Nigeria. The aim of the study is to explore the current state of art appreciation, with the view of showing the innovative strategies for promoting nation building. The objective of the study is to analyze the innovative strategies for the students. Consequently, the study can bring forth various uses of the course contents of art appreciation for further art historical information. The study utilized the secondary source of art historical survey research technique as the basis of findings. Related literatures were reviewed. The scope of the study was delimited to the use of the innovations of art appreciation for the analysis of the strategies that would promote nation-building. The study

ascertained that art appreciation contributes immensely to the students' understanding of their national identity, creating expressions, and cultural awareness. It proffered a recommendation among others that the Nigerian educational system needs to make deliberate efforts at providing upgraded and harmonized course contents of art appreciation for Nigerian art schools. The paper concludes that studying art appreciation with innovations towards nation building is useful to the field of art history, as it will enable the students, teachers, and other researchers to understand the relevance of art appreciation to nation building and confront the challenge of art appreciation for improved productivity and sustainable development.

Keywords: Art Appreciation, Nigeria, Art Schools, Exploratory, Innovation, Nation Building.

Introduction

In the recent times in West African art schools, particularly in Nigeria, the clamour to improve on the education of the Fine and Applied Arts students through innovations of art appreciation is on the increase. Art appreciation is one of the core courses of Fine and Applied Arts programme that exposes students to cultural awareness, creative expressions, and national identity of nation building, yet, not recognized as an important subject of nation building, due to lack of documentation. This lacuna and dearth of literature on the subject matter swayed the research interest, as they constitute some set back in the supply of the needed information about innovations of art appreciation in nation building. Exposing the art history students and other readers to this information, would have spurred them into further research of upgrading the course contents of art appreciation for Nigerian art schools and others. This explains the necessity for revealing the research findings that; art appreciation contributes immensely to the students understanding of their national identity, creative expressions, and cultural awareness, and would spur the spirit of innovation in the students and other researchers to improve productivity in the discipline. The researcher was also stimulated by the indifferent attitude of the art history students in solving the issues of art history to address the topic "Art Appreciation in Nigerian Art Schools: An Exploratory Innovation Towards Nation

Building". This topic consists of the merging of words to convey the meaning of a concept. These words are discussed separately in conceptual clarification, and as a leading concept, it is described as the investigation into new ideas or strategies of judging art works in Nigerian art schools to promote national development. Discussing the innovative strategies towards nation building seems to mean that an implicit message could be found from the study. Therefore, the need to analyze the enumerated factors above as means of educating the students, and the wananchi on how to judge art works in Nigerian art schools or elsewhere to promote nation building becomes a great deal of truth.

Conceptual clarification

Art appreciation in this study refers to; the act of examining a work of art to ascertain the pleasurable and non-pleasurable elements of the work, using the principles and methods that guide the production as parameter of judgement, for further academic work. Nigeria is the nation in which the study is focused. Art schools refer to the places where Fine and Applied Arts are taught. Exploratory is the act of investigating something, while innovation is the discovery of new ways or strategies of solving a problem. So also, does Nation Building refers to the development of the economy of any country.

Theoretical Framework

This paper "Art Appreciation in Nigerian Art Schools: An Exploratory Innovation Towards Nation Building" is guided by Pan-Africanist theoretical framework, and the theory of deconstruction. Pan-Africanist theory holds that; cultural exchange and understanding should be encouraged among the diverse nations of the Africans, recognizing the rich cultural heritage and contributions of each country. It emphasizes the importance of African cultural heritage, and the role of art in promoting African identity and nation building. It is also useful in the analysis of how art appreciation in Nigerian art schools would promote Pan-Africanist ideals and contribute to nation building. In this study therefore, the theory informs the readers that African cultural awareness including creative expressions, and national identity that contribute to the development of the continent through her nations is embedded in art appreciation. So also, does the theory of deconstruction that argues that; examining a document or situation may regenerate new documents based on the analysis of those

documents. The theory holds that; meaning is an unstable phenomenon, and assumes that questioning the ideas of the past may generate new opinions. Meaning involves discovering, recognizing, and understanding the underlying, unspoken, and implicit assumption, ideas and frameworks of works of art. The theory seeks to open up new meanings through questioning and assumption of the deep-seated contradictions in a work of art. Wikipedia describes the theory as a turn away from Platonism's idea of true forms and essences which are valued above appearances. The research was carried out to update the course contents of art appreciation. These two theories above allowed the researcher to investigate the old and current documents on art appreciation in a Nigerian tertiary art school. The findings proved that art appreciation contributes to nation building in varied ways including; cultural awareness, creative expressions, and national identity. Hence, the analysis of the factors.

Art Appreciation as a School Subject

In Nigeria, art appreciation is an important school subject among others in the study of Fine and Applied Arts. Hornby (2010) describes a school subject as an area of knowledge studied in a school, college, etc. Gustlin (2016) describes art appreciation as the exploration and analysis of the art forms that we are exposed to. Stressing further that; it can be highly subjective, depending on an individual's personal tastes and preferences, or can be done on the basis of several grounds such as elements of design, and mastery displayed in the piece. Uzoagba (2002) describes art appreciation as a process of observing, recognizing and valuing products of art expressions based on a clear grasp of its purpose, form, meaning, structure and its general characteristics for personal satisfaction or enjoyment. The ideas above show that art appreciation requires training the eyes and mind to see and enjoy specific forms and qualities in art, and develop standard to distinguish good from bad. Mangiri (2013) refers to art appreciation as "art criticism" and describes it as the field of study in which hidden ideas, thoughts, and events of the past, present, and future are discovered or revealed. It is also referred to as the ability of viewing art throughout history, focusing on the cultures and the people, and how art developed in the specific periods. (human.libretexts.org 2021).

Egonwa (2012) views art appreciation as aesthetics and describes it as the appreciation of the pleasurable and non-pleasurable aspects of work of art.

It also means the branch of philosophy that deals with such notions as the beautiful, the ugly, the sublime, the comic etc. as applicable to fine art with a view of establishing the meaning and validity of critical judgments concerning works of art, and the principle underlying art. Aesthetics addresses both natural and artificial sources of experiences and how we form a judgment about those sources. It covers what happens in our mind when we engage with objects or environments such as viewing visual art, listening to music, reading poetry, experiencing a play, watching a fashion show, movie, sports or even exploring various aspects of nature. (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>). The author defines aesthetics as the study of beauty with the consideration of its nature of pleasurable and non-pleasurable qualities. Whatever pleasure one derives from a work of art and nature depends on a number of variables. This implies that judging a work of art and nature is subjective but guided by aesthetic principles and theories.

Exploring the definitions above, the author describes art appreciation as the act of examining a work of art to ascertain the pleasurable and non-pleasurable elements of the work, using the principles and methods that guide their production as parameter of judgment, for further academic work. Art appreciation as a school subject is planned by the Curriculum experts to be useful to individuals and the government. It develops the visual literacy of the artists, which implies that, every artist is supposed to improve on his or her creative ability including reading and writing. It is an enablement for the artists and students to make progress or become successful in life through the art of designing and expressing literary skills in creative works. Art appreciation has the potentials of equipping its students with saleable skills that would enable them to work in both private and government sectors to earn a living. It relies on creative ideas, skill, and study methods to function. Balzac (2006) describes creativity as the ability to bring something new or into existence, be it an artistic object or form, a solution to a problem, a method, or a device. Franken (2001) also holds that creativity is the tendency to generate or recognize ideas, alternatives, or possibilities that may be useful in solving problems, communicating with others and entertaining ourselves and others. So also, does Ward (2003) writes that; creative ideas are often generated when one discards preconceived assumptions and attempts a new approach or method that might seem unthinkable to others. Shaibu, and Mbaegbu

(2012) notes that skill is a well-established habitat of doing something through acquisition of performance capabilities. This definition shows that the knowledge of art appreciation makes the art professionals, art students, and others to consider the practical and theoretical work, common sense, observations, and courage as components of judging a piece of art. Art appreciation is a research-oriented subject like other subjects that educate students on how to discover hidden facts about a subject.

The Relevance of Art Appreciation to Nation Building

Nation building as described overleaf refers to the development of the economy of any country. Art Appreciation is closely connected with whatever effort made towards developing the economy of any country such as Nigeria. It enables a country to preserve her cultural heritage, traditions and values, in order to encourage the understanding of what the country is known for. It projects a country's different cultural activities including artistic expressions and historical achievements. Art appreciation is also relevant to the development of a country's economy, as its study enable students and the general public to come together particularly in an art exhibition, where comments are made about artworks thereby, fostering social unity among citizens from different cultural environment. The discipline contributes to nation building as its study encourages tourism, cultural events, as well as projecting and promoting the artists and artisans in their areas of specialization. It makes for international understanding and unity as its study promotes cultural exchange and mutual relationship among nations. So also, does the study creates room for the recognition of national identity by showcasing the country's history, values, and aspirations to students and other readers of the information. Art appreciation which makes for the development of the essential qualities such as emotional intelligence, empathy and tolerance, for building a harmonious and prosperous society is in this way relevant to nation building. The discipline is indeed useful to nation building as it preserves the essential components of national identity such as the intangible heritage like; traditional music, dance, and folklore for entertainment. So also, does the essential attributes of personal and national development such as critical thinking, creativity and analytical skills are components of art appreciation.

Art Appreciation as a Source of National Identity

Art appreciation functions as a source of national identity. National identity according to “Personal Communication (AI)” is the shared sense of belonging and loyalty to a nation, its people, and its institutions. It is characterized by distinctive traits, values, and traditions that define a nation and differentiate it from others. History, Culture, Geography, Institutions and Symbols that involve shared experiences, events and memories that shape a nation’s identity, Language, Customs, traditions and values that are unique to a nation, landscape, climate, and natural resources that constitute the physical characteristics of a nation, government, laws, and institutions that shape a nation’s governance and society, and national symbols such as flags, anthems and emblems are the components of national identity. Art appreciation provides a unique expression of national identity as the art that is appreciated reflects a nation’s culture, values, and history. It provides specific meaning of art works based on the symbols and icons that reflects national identity and cultural heritage in the work.

It provides the historical representation of the visual forms that showcase the major events, figures, and cultural practices that shape national identity. It also makes for an in-depth understanding of national identity through the art works that evoke emotions of a nation’s cultural heritage. As a source of national identity, art appreciation instills and promotes national pride in the learners, as they develop the idea of shared ownership and responsibility for a nation’s cultural heritage. It preserves cultural heritage that makes for the maintenance of traditional practices, customs, and values that reflect national identity. Since art provides a unique and distinctive expression of national identity, promotes shared values and beliefs, and represents national narratives, exploring and appreciating it would enable an individual to gain a deeper understanding of his or her national identity, cultural heritage, and shared values.

Art Appreciation as a means of Cultural Awareness

Cultural awareness in this study refers to the understanding of the existence of the customs, beliefs, art, way of life, and social organization of a particular country or group. Art appreciation has been described as the act of examining a work of art to ascertain the pleasurable and non-pleasurable elements of the work, using the principles and methods that

guide the production as parameter of judgment, for further academic work. It serves as a means of cultural awareness as it provides insight into the history, traditions, and values of the cultural life of a nation. It exposes students to the different cultural life of a people, and promotes the idea of sharing feelings (empathy), tolerance, and cross-cultural understanding. It encourages cultural empathy by enabling learners to connect with the experiences, emotions, and perspectives of other cultures. It ensures the continuation of cultural traditions, customs, and practices through preservations for posterity. Art appreciation promotes inter-cultural negotiation which encourages exchange and alliance between individuals from different cultural background. It makes for global citizenship thereby encouraging a sense of accountability and responsibility in achieving cultural differences. So also, does it ensure cultural expertise to enable the students to explore different cultural contexts with sensitivity and understanding (empathy). Therefore, art appreciation reserves the opportunity of enhancing cultural awareness, empathy, and global citizenship.

Art Appreciation as a Guide to Creative Expressions

Art appreciation as described earlier; is the act of examining a work of art to ascertain the pleasurable and non-pleasurable elements of the work, using the principles and methods that guide the production as parameter of judgment, for further academic work. Guide as described in Webster's English Dictionary is to show the way to. Creative is having the power to create. While expression is the act or mode of uttering or representing, as by language or gesture. Art appreciation as a guide to creative expressions refers to the application of the judgment of an artwork to the making of other works. It does this by inspiring and spurring the students through studies to explore their creative ideas in both Fine, Applied and performing arts. It provides insight into various artistic techniques, mediums, and styles, that enable the learners to develop individual creative skills. It encourages critical thinking, imagination, creativity, analysis, and evaluation of artistic works in order to enhance individual's creative decision-making processes. It also enables the students to investigate and understand various emotions, ideas, and perspectives, that would be broadening their abilities in creative expressions. The subject promotes originality and diversity in art productions, thereby inspiring the learners to experiment with innovative ideas and styles in order to achieve new

approaches and techniques in art productions. It is also pertinent in this study to note that; art appreciation provides for the contestation and understanding of the various artistic movements and styles, that enable the artists to establish their creative work within a broader cultural framework. So also, does it enable the learners to develop individual aesthetic language that would make their works to stand tall in the midst of others. It is also worthy to note that; art appreciation encourages creative confidence in the learners and professionals through it studies as it enables individuals to believe in the quality of their works. It therefore serves as a guide to creative expressions as it enables its learners to explore the creative potentials in them, and encourage them to develop an in-depth understanding of artistic techniques, styles, and movements in creative expressions.

Challenges of Art Appreciation in Nation Building

Art Appreciation that plays significant role in the development of a country's economy, also have some obstacles or hinderances in the exercise of such role. Those obstacles are referred in this study to as challenges and include:

1. **Funding constraints:** The government has not properly and adequately given financial support to the programmes and initiative of art appreciation. This situation limits the scope and impact of the subject on the growth of a nation.
2. **Poor Accessibility:** The programmes and resources of art appreciation is seemingly not accessible to those that need information about the subject. Individuals that live in the underprivileged areas find it difficult to contribute ideas that may improve a nation's economy.
3. **Poor Preservation of Cultural Heritage:** A good number of nations' cultural heritage sites, artifacts, and traditions are neglected or underfunded due to people's ignorant of the importance of art appreciation to humanity, and threatens the nation's cultural identity.
4. **Lack of Information on the Relevant of Art Appreciation to the Nation:** There is a little or no public enlightenment through seminars, symposium, or conferences on the relevant of art appreciation to the nation. Even some art appreciation teachers find it difficult to embrace

the major contents of the subject that would inculcate the skills and knowledge to the learners.

5. **Lack of Students' Interest in the Study of Art Appreciation:** no doubt, a good number of art students are not aware of the relevant of art appreciation to their scholarship and the nation in general. They are not willing to attend the course classes, talk less of making it a school career. This situation hinders the progressive contribution of the subject to the development of a nation's economy.
6. **Addressing Social and Political Issues:** Art appreciation may need to address such social and political issues as inequality, justice, and freedom, that is usually difficult to achieve in the effort of building a nation.

In the light of the challenges above, the proper and adequate strategies that would include team work, and creativity ought to be made to ensure that art appreciation contributes meaningfully to the growth of a nation's economy.

Conclusion

This paper has scrutinized "Art Appreciation in Nigeria Art Schools: An Exploratory Innovation Towards Nation Building". It is apparent that a good number of art students in Nigeria and perhaps other nations are ignorant of the continued use of obsolete course contents of art appreciation for studies, judging from the assessment of the course contents of art appreciation in one Nigerian tertiary art institutions, which affects the supply of the information that the students would have gained from the subject. The research also shows that art appreciation contributes immensely to all facets of the growth of every nation mostly in cultural, economic, religious, and political issues, round the world. The paper concludes that this aspect of study in art appreciation has not been reached in research discoveries, and provides an avenue of investigation into new ideas for students, teachers, and the wananchi. It has provided an authentic back-up to the student's understanding of cultural awareness, creative expressions, cultural, and national identities, in art appreciation. It has enlarged the scope and contents of art appreciation for Nigeria and other art schools in West Africa, and has also educated the masses on the need

for art appreciation in art schools. So also, it has strategically created an avenue of inspiring the students into making art appreciation a school career. Therefore, the paper submits that the study is not only imperative to the art schools, but the world at large.

Recommendations

1. This paper if considered publishable and is published, should be preserved for use in the present times and posterity.
2. It should be accessible to the public to enable the intellectuals take advantage of it for further academic work.
3. It should serve as source of persuading students into choosing art appreciation as a school career.
4. It should serve as a guideline to students in their research studies, particularly on the issues of nation building
5. By this paper, art students, and other researchers are advised to be committed to solving problems in their respective disciplines, to promote the growth of nations economy
6. The paper should serve as a comprehensive framework for understanding and encouraging innovations in different field of study
7. There should be regular public enlightenment programme on the need for art appreciation with innovations in art schools.
8. The government should support the programmes and initiatives of art appreciation, in order to promote nation's cultural identity
9. Educational system should make deliberate effort at upgrading the course contents of art appreciation to embrace the major aspects of the study that would impact on nation building

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