

THE LIMITATIONS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING FINE AND APPLIED ARTS AT THE TERTIARY LEVEL IN CROSS RIVER STATE: CALABAR METROPOLIS

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ABSTRACT

This article traces the limitations of teaching and learning fine arts at the tertiary level in Calabar metropolis, in Cross River state. The survey found out that such limitations are carried over from the secondary school system, where there are inadequate teachers and facilities for teaching, leading to the disenchantment of students with the study of fine arts. Data shows that 219 students graduated and took fine arts in their final year in six selected secondary schools in Calabar metropolis between the years 1998 and 2002. Of this number of students, only 16 (or 7.3%) proceeded to study fine arts at the tertiary level. Aside from highlighting the research findings, this article concludes with viable solutions to the present situation

KEYWORDS: Fine Arts, Study, Limitations, Tertiary Education

INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the limitations of teaching fine/applied arts at the tertiary level of education in the metropolis of Calabar, the capital city of Cross River state, Nigeria. The phrase, 'fine and applied arts,' refers to a broad category of creative skills "concerned primarily with the creation" of beauty (Merriam Webster 2004). The category includes film studies, music and performative skills, painting, sculpture, drawing, including the 'industrial' aspects like textile, metal, graphics, photography, ceramics etc. Applied is used in this context of social or cultural functionality of the object so created with these skills. In the specific context of this paper, music and performative skills are precluded in the definition of fine and applied arts.

This study has the following limitations. It does not attempt to quantify and problematise Cross River students in educational institutions in Nigeria. The study is limited to the geographic area of Calabar metropolis, including the secondary and tertiary educational institutions within it where fine and applied arts are taught. By this limitation, other secondary and tertiary institutions in other parts of Cross River state and Nigeria are not studied. Therefore the results and inferences accruing from this study apply to the larger Cross River state only in the context of Calabar as the state's representative cultural space.

Calabar is a typical interior Nigerian city where the social and economic problems of the nation are critically felt at every imaginable level. There is evident lack of development in both economic productivity and educational advancement. Situated in the East and far from Western Nigeria where decades of development have seen upward improvements in the educational sector, Calabar is dually affected by both the general downward trend of Nigeria's economy and the meagre financial base of Cross River state. Additionally, despite the

Calabar Free Trade Zone (CFTZ) there is very little industrial development in the state and this has closed the avenue for private-sector participation in the development of the educational sector generally or fine arts in particular. This is unlike South-western Nigeria where companies like Academy Press Plc and a host of arts galleries actually participate in the development of fine/applied arts in Universities and Polytechnics. The result of the foregoing is that there are very few secondary schools and one tertiary institution, Cross River University of Technology (Crutech), where fine/applied arts are taught in Calabar metropolis. The University of Calabar, a federal institution situated in the metropolis, offers theatre arts and not fine/applied arts per se. The foregoing is against the fact of stiffer competition for Cross River fine/applied arts students in other educational institutions in other parts of Nigeria. This is true to the extent that chances may be higher for the state's youths to learn fine/applied arts when they are trained within the Cross River state educational institutions. It is therefore the quest of this paper to find out the limitations that the peculiar social economy of Cross River state has placed on the teaching and learning of fine/applied arts at both secondary and tertiary education levels in Calabar metropolis.

The Importance of Fine/Applied Arts to Society

Arts have a function to combine the craft of creativity with the search for regenerative values in society (Armah 1984). Functions of fine/applied arts are geared towards creating social cohesion, to combine the welfare state and liberalism, with the sole aim of achieving literacy in all people; and to establish a more humane world (Deutschland 1995). Fine/applied arts have the specific roles in national development in terms of social mobilization, agenda setting, information, education, socialization, discussions, persuasion, surveillance as well as transmission of culture and continuity of current understandings (Omini and Ajibade 1999, McQuail

1993). The study of arts is the study of culture. And according to Mair (1968) culture is:

the common possession of a body of people who share the same tradition in social terms and such a body is a society. So culture comprises all kinds of learned behaviour and in practice the distinguishing feature of the study of culture is often said to be that it is concerned with "Art", customs and ways (7).

Since the beginning of man's existence, there has been a struggling for survival with his natural environments, including forces and disasters that he faces in his daily business of living. Over the passing of time, man leaves several physical evidences of his civilisation(s). These historical evidences of man's progressive civilisation are called artefacts. They are the surviving remnants of the art works that man has made. The accruing body of such artefacts or artworks are indelible aspects of man's material culture and history. To develop arts is to develop the culture and preserve the history of society. Therefore, arts should be promoted and developed in the institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. For if we are to enhance our society and culture by arts, the philosophy is to promote the development of Nigerian arts and artists (Cultural Policy 10). Art is a universal language that addresses our very lives and innermost selves. Art and culture are tools of self-definition for any group of people. The aim of all art is not just to reflect society but also to change it (Brecht 1964, Armah 1984). Art has no other mission but to bring before sensuous contemplation the truth as it is in the spirit, reconciled in its totality with objectivity and the sphere of sense (Lawson 2003). Having no absolute meaning, art can and does express the spiritual absolutes of life partially (Gombrich, 78). Richer declares that art objectivises the idea of beauty in man and society "by making its content emerge into a determined existence in the real world" (93). The artist with his art is therefore able to at once record history, present history, beautify society, and preserve culture and cultural continuities. The artist is able, by his work, to narrate his own subjective stories concerning culture - beliefs, knowledge, laws, arts, and customs - among other things. He mirrors society and promotes his culture's heritage. The arts of Benin, Nok, Ife, Esie, Igbo Ukwu etc are available today to tell us about how the ancient peoples lived even without written records. It is therefore inevitable that the study of fine arts be taken seriously at all levels of education particularly at the tertiary level where students are positioning for empowerment for a future in the labour market. Training artists will go a long way to safeguard our culture and maintain cultural continuities especially in this age of globalisation, where foreign cultures invade our society. In order for the global western culture not to attrite our own culture, there is the need to foster the study of culture through the study of fine and applied arts, including the removal of the critical limitations of the teaching and learning process of the subject at both secondary and tertiary education levels.

Teaching and Learning Fine/Applied Arts at the Tertiary Level in Calabar

Formally known as The Polytechnic Calabar, the Cross River University of Technology (CRUTECH) Calabar is the only tertiary institution in Calabar metropolis where fine/applied arts are taught. This fact alone presents a limitation for the study and development of fine arts in the Calabar metropolis and the state in general. For, it means that there is restriction on the number of secondary school students in Calabar metropolis that may proceed to tertiary education to read fine/applied arts. This point hold so long as there is stiffer competition in other Nigerian universities for admission to read fine arts - where the state's own tertiary institution(s) present easier access for indigenous secondary school students to study fine arts. These facts compound the problems for a domiciled or native student of Cross River state who intends to study the subject at post-secondary level. It has been determined that very few secondary schools in the metropolis study fine arts as a subject. Among other problems that have caused this development, lack of teachers to teach fine arts is paramount (Lawson 2003). This has led to an abysmal number of students being able to proceed to tertiary education to study fine arts, as they have not had the opportunity of studying the subject at secondary school level. On-the-spot observations in my 13-year teaching of fine/applied arts at Polycal/Crutech show that we have a perennial problem of getting students to enrol for the programme. Many of those that finally enrol did not have a prior experience of fine arts at the secondary school level. At yearly Departmental Board meetings to consider admissions into the visual arts programme in Crutech, I have always stood in opposition to the usual trend in art schools to mount proficiency-tests as precondition for admitted student to enrol. My reason is always the moral question of constructing a hegemony against these students, when it is clear that they mostly did not offer fine arts at secondary school level.

METHODOLOGY

Data concerning how many final year students in secondary schools in Calabar metropolis offered fine arts as part of their subjects between the Years 1998 to 2002 was obtained to determine the number of secondary school students that could proceed to the tertiary level of education to study fine arts. Also, data on the conditions bothering on the teaching and learning of fine/applied arts in the tertiary education level was obtained by using questionnaires filled-out by students and lecturers of the visual arts department in Cross River University of Technology (Crutech) Calabar.

In order to look at the relationship between the quality of education that fine arts students are getting from Crutech and the general economic and educational conditions prevailing in Cross River state, students' history in fine arts and their experiences at the university were found and collated.

The specific factors used in the questionnaires were studio facilities, the number of lecturers and the quality of education students are getting from Crutech. This enabled the

researcher to find out the specific problems faced by students in learning fine arts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The problems limiting the teaching and learning of fine arts at the secondary school level in Calabar metropolis are numerous. For instance, table 1 shows that 40% of secondary school students in Calabar metropolis do not study fine arts at school because their schools do not offer the

subject; 20% have parents/guardians that do not approve of fine arts; 16% believe that they do not have the potential for studying fine arts; and 24% simply have no interest in studying fine arts as a subject.

On the question of tertiary education, students had critical social reasons for not wanting to study fine arts at that level. In table 2, we find that 17.4% of the respondents say that there are no job prospects for fine artists; 13% say that the social status of fine artists is low, while 69% simply have no interest in studying fine arts at the tertiary education level.

Table 1: Reasons Why Students do not offer fine arts as a subject in Secondary Schools in Calabar

S/N	Barriers	Frequency	%
1	Financial Reason	-	-
2	My school does not offer fine arts	10	40
3	My parents do not approve of fine arts	5	20
4	I Don't have the potential for fine arts	4	16
5	I Don't have the interest in fine arts	6	24
		25	100%

Source: Lawson (2002)

Table 2: Reasons Why Secondary School Students do not wish to offer Fine Arts at the Tertiary Level in Calabar

S/No	Reasons	Frequency	%
1	No job prospects	4	17.4
2	Social status of artists is low	3	13
3	I have no interest in fine arts	16	69.6
		23	100%

Source: Lawson (2002)

Of the six secondary schools in Calabar metropolis randomly selected for the study, only four graduated students that offered fine arts as an option between the years 1998 and 2002 (see table 3). Table 3 clearly shows that only 219 or 7.6% of a total of 2866 graduating secondary school students offered fine arts in the years under review.

Table 4 shows that a total of 44 students were admitted into The Polytechnic Calabar (now Cross River University of Technology) for the National Diploma programme in fine arts between the years 1998 and 2002. Of these 32 or 72% attended secondary school in Cross River state, 16 or 36.4% offered fine arts as a subject, and 28 or 63.6% did not offer fine arts as a subject at the secondary school level.

Table 3: Summary of Graduating Students in Secondary Schools in Calabar Metropolis that offered Fine Arts in the Years 1998 - 2002

NAME OF SCHOOL	1998		1999		2000		2001		2002		TOTAL		
	G	OF	G	OF	G	OF	G	OF	G	OF	G	OF	%
Access High School	16	4	12	2	13	4	38	4	37	4	116	18	20.9
De-Wis College	*70	-	*70	-	*70	-	*70	-	*70	1	350	1	0.3
Federal Govt. Girls College	*250	*40	*250	*40	*250	*40	*250	*40	*250	*40	1250	200	16
Govt. Sec. School, Henshaw Town	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Holy Child Sec. School	*230	-	*230	-	*230	-	*230	-	*230	-	1150	-	0.0
Hope Waddell Training Institution	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL											2866	219	7.6%

*The figures are estimates of the school principals. Source: Lawson (2002)

G = Total Graduating Students

OF = Those Offering Fine Arts

Table 4: Number of Student in-Takes into the Dept. 2000-2003, Showing the Number of Students that Attended Secondary Schools in Calabar.

Admission Year	Number of Students Admitted	Number that Attended Sec. School in CRS	Number that Offered fine Arts	Number that Did not Offer Fine Arts
ND 1998/99	11	7	5	6
ND 1999/2000	11	10	4	7
ND 2000/2001	6	4	3	3
ND 2001/2002	16	11	4	12
TOTAL	44	32	16	28
	100%	72.7%	36.4%	63.6%

NB: 1 student is deceased and 7 of the 44 admitted students dropped-out for various reasons. Source: Survey by the author 2003

Table 5: Students' Perception of Factors Militating Against the Study of Fine Arts in CRUTECH

S/no	Factor	Respondents	%
1	Inadequate studio facilities	36	100
2	Inadequate number of lecturers	36	100
3	Not learning much from the teaching process in the department	36	100

Source: Survey by the author 2003

Table 6: Lecturers' Perception about Factors Militating Against the Study of Fine Arts in CRUTECH

S/no	Factor	Respondents	%
1	Inadequate studio facilities	9	100
2	Inadequate number of lecturers	9	100
3	Not learning much from the teaching process in the department	9	100

Source: Survey by the author 2003

Tables 5 and 6 provide very similar inferences from the data. The tables show clearly that all the student and lecturer respondents believe that there are inadequate studio facilities, inadequate lecturers and that the students are not learning much from the teaching process in the Department of Visual Arts and Technology, Cross River University of Technology (Crutech), Calabar.

CONCLUSION

Data has shown that the study of fine arts generally in secondary schools in Calabar metropolis is faced with inherent problems. Among those problems are lack of fine arts teachers, lack of facilities and lack of will power among proprietors for the sourcing and employment of fine arts teachers and the funding of fine arts studio facilities. Additionally parents are often antagonistic to their wards studying fine arts. This has led not only to the poor perception of fine arts in the society, but also to the ultimate apathy shown by secondary school students towards the subject. The result is that these same problems are transferred to the tertiary education system, which makes it difficult for students to want to study fine/applied arts at that level. For instance, although 219 secondary school students that offered fine arts were graduated in Calabar between 1998 and 2002, only 16 (or 7.3%) went ahead to study fine arts at the Cross River University of Technology, Calabar (tables 3 & 4). Then, again, the general levity with which the state government and policy structures deal with education places serious limitations

against the teaching and learning of fine arts at the tertiary education level in Calabar, Cross River state. What evidence shows is that there are inadequate lecturers employed to teach and inadequate studio facilities. This casts serious clouds on the quality of education the students of visual arts and technology department, Crutech, are receiving.

Further, if one were to project the abysmal situation prevailing for the study of fine/applied arts in Calabar metropolis to the rest of Cross River state, the result might be very unsettling. For, if the situation is this critical in Calabar's urban centre, it is then likely to be worse in the rural hinterlands. In light of this paper's empirical findings – regarding the lack of opportunity for most Cross River students to study fine arts at the secondary school level – it is evidently counter-productive to make the subject a requisite for admission into the visual arts programme of Crutech. Since making fine arts a requisite for admission will exclude most Cross River state students from Crutech, the more prudent and viable thing to do is provide admission for students that apply and fulfil all other requirements, and then design adequate introductory courses for them in the first few years of study. Furthermore, what needs be done is for government and its policy makers to measure their flamboyant public statements concerning education with actual funding and planning of academic programmes like fine/applied arts at all levels of the education system. Proper funding at federal and state government levels will surely make it possible for secondary schools to employ adequate fine arts teachers, provide adequate teaching facilities and adequate materials. This will enable the school system to better provide necessary introductory backgrounds at the secondary level that can generate ample vocational interest for the study of fine/applied arts at the tertiary educational level in Cross River state. Adequate funding and planning will also make it possible not just for Crutech management but also for other tertiary institutions within the state like Federal College of Education, Obudu, to employ more lecturers to teach fine arts, as well as provide adequate studio facilities for teaching and learning fine arts. It is at this time that parents and guardians will find it comfortable to encourage their wards to study fine arts, since proper funding has the implication for raising the social status of fine arts and fine artists.

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