

Students' Perceptions of Ceramic Education in Public Universities in Rivers State, Nigeria: Challenges and Opportunities

Abstract

The article highlights the difficulties and possible advantages of the area while talking about how students at Nigerian institutions view ceramic education. It highlights a poor opinion among students, expressing worries about employment opportunities and the challenge of the subject. The paper highlights the value of ceramics education in fostering the development of aesthetics, technical proficiency, and conceptual approaches, notwithstanding obstacles. It promotes ceramics as a worthwhile field of study and calls for more awareness. The paper delineates the university curriculum structure and examines the historical progression of ceramics education in Nigeria. Parental hostility towards art programmes and limited facilities are among the issues facing ceramics education that are discussed. The paper also examines Nigeria's ceramic industry's potential, taking into account the country's plenty of raw materials and growing market. In its conclusion, suggestions are made for enhancing the quality of ceramics education, including government programmes to spark student enthusiasm and financial aid for graduates to launch their enterprises.

Keywords: Ceramics Education, Employment, Development, University Curriculum

Introduction

Public university ceramic education is a very significant field of study, even though it is often overlooked. The future path of this field is greatly influenced by the perspectives of its pupils. It's helpful to learn how students view ceramic education to better appreciate the challenges and

opportunities this field presents. Students in Nigeria have a variety of perspectives about ceramics, ranging from thinking it's hard and boring to doubt its financial potential and employment possibilities. This demonstrates the mismatch between what is offered academically and what students anticipate would happen in the real world if they pursue a career in ceramics. One of the main courses provided in Nigeria's postsecondary institutions is ceramics education, which aims to foster the development of intellectual approaches, technical proficiency, and aesthetics. The programme employs several strategies, including one-on-one tutorials, seminars in groups, and critiques, to offer a range of environments for development and idea sharing pertinent to the study of the arts in general and ceramics in particular (Okonkwo, 2014).

Perception is the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses. It is a manner of being or a method of coming to that realization. Hence, colleges must promote ceramic education to students and highlight the advantages the subject can offer. Many students overlook the university courses on entrepreneurship because they place a great value on subjects like medicine, engineering, law, and pharmacy. The goal of the undergraduate ceramics education curriculum is to provide students with a broad yet focused foundation of knowledge about the ceramic arts (Nick, 2008).

In the era of globalization, any country that wants to remain relevant and competitive needs to do everything in its power to provide the greatest education for its people. A country can rely on ceramics education as the ultimate tool for fostering self-reliance. Art education is included at all educational levels under the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004). It acknowledged the importance of art education, which provides for studying ceramics, as one of the most effective tools for a self-sufficient economy. It is one of the courses in our curriculum that gives students the chance to build the necessary mental and physical competencies as well as skills to enable

them to live fulfilling lives and make valuable contributions to society. However, the truth is that students' mixed feelings about the subject have caused a major setback for the teaching of ceramics in Nigerian universities. Numerous pupils have disregarded their ceramics instruction; a few have even harboured animosity against the subject. As a result, fewer students are enrolling in the Department of Fine and Applied Arts these days to study ceramics. The fact that the offspring of professional ceramicists and those who teach ceramics in higher education increasingly choose to pursue jobs or courses unrelated to ceramics is one issue that has grown concerning (Arayela, 2006). Students' interest in science courses has increased due to the growing popularity of sciences in society, to the disadvantage of art-related courses, particularly those relating to ceramics. (Okon, 2010). Some students have unjustifiably grown to despise ceramics education. This can be related to the incorrect narratives they were exposed to regarding ceramics education specifically and art education in general. Additionally, a misconception held by some students is that university students majoring in the arts have little to no employment prospects and hence never become wealthy (Bello, 2003). Students conjecture that studying ceramics is an extremely challenging and laborious field. As a result, everybody who applies to take the course is putting themselves through unending pain and worry. Others theorise that education in pottery is reserved for people who, because of their lack of intelligence or inability to meet the standards for their chosen field of study, choose to manage it briefly before retaking the JAMB or O-level exam. The majority of university students in Nigeria have a negative perception of the value of ceramic education. Many students think that a degree in ceramics does not equate to employment chances. Nevertheless, despite current obstacles, ceramics has a chance to flourish in Nigeria because there are enough of raw materials available.

Furthermore, there may not be as much knowledge of ceramics as there should be, which suggests that there is a need for more promotion and information about its potential.

Benefits of Ceramics Education

Previous publications on Africa's art history demonstrate that the arts and crafts have been an essential part of the continent's traditional culture from prehistoric times (Blier, 2001). The artistic expression of early times through the use of ceramic materials could potentially function as a living benchmark of human evolution throughout a broad range of culturally based civilizations from the beginning of time. As early as 500 BCE, one of the earliest discovered terracotta statues from sub-Saharan Africa, connected to the Nok arts of northern Nigeria, reflects the artistic prowess and superior ceramic craftsmanship of the inhabitants. It is assumed that the generations-long mastery of this craft was acquired through unofficial means, like the apprenticeship programme.

Nigerian art has evolved from its traditional orientations into contemporary creative expressions that have been greatly affected by contact with Western Europe. The earliest attempt to include fine arts in the Nigerian curriculum was made in 1897 at the Hope Waddel Training Institute in Calabar, according to Wangboje (1969, cited in Kashim et al., 2010). The groundbreaking work of Aina Onabolu (1882–1963), who laid the foundation for contemporary art education in the early 20th century, is also noteworthy. Around the middle of the 20th century, the Abuja (LadiKwali) establishment contributed to the development of Nigerian ceramics.

The British potter Michael Cardew's Pottery Training Centre served as a notable forerunner to the introduction of ceramic courses into Nigerian tertiary education. Ceramics is a skill-based discipline that can be studied for technical education, career, or art. The fact that clay minerals,

the primary and most plentiful ceramic material in Nigeria, are studied in all of its forms and can be effectively and creatively used for socioeconomic gains, serves as a unifying element. Today, the goal of ceramic art education in Nigeria is to become more well-known. A psycho-cognitive and developmental process, arts education sharpens people's sense of observation and judgement through deliberate thinking and sensory experience, improving their capacity for creation and communication. The National Visual Arts Standards, published by the National Art Education Association in 1994, highlighted its extensive influence: Education in the arts serves society and students alike. It helps the student because it develops the full person, progressively constructing a variety of literacy skills while fostering the development of intuition, reasoning, dexterity, and inventiveness into distinct modes of expression and communication. This technique calls for a trained mind in addition to an active one. Additionally, it benefits pupils by exposing them to diverse perspectives and ways of thinking. Formal ceramics instruction began at Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria in 1953, but it is still a self-developmental vocation in the sphere of art and design whose potential is not yet fully realised by art education in Nigeria, one of the top universities. According to Akinbogun (2006) and the United Tertiary Matriculation Examination Brochure (JAMB, 2010), ceramics is taught as an academic programme in a minimum of 15 universities, 10 polytechnics, and 6 colleges of education.

A cognitive and competency-based learning methodology is often implemented at the majority of Nigerian colleges that provide ceramic art education, along with an impartial method of student evaluation. Further exemplified is a paradigm for ceramics instruction in Nigerian technological universities. In the introductory phase, a foundation of knowledge is established to help students improve their manipulation abilities and visual perception, as well as to help them comprehend the concepts, language, and tools of visual art and design. The study of African craft skills, the

use of computers in design, the history of art and design, two- and three-dimensional design, creative drawing, and reproductive methods are all covered in the intermediate stage. Students are encouraged to use their creative abilities in production-related fields including industrial ceramics, hand building, and throwing as they approach the advanced degree of graduation. In addition, reproduction techniques are taught in jolleying, jiggering, and slip casting. Building and firing kilns is another important topic of study that is focused on application. At the moment, emphasis is placed on the necessity of helping students become proficient computer users and entrepreneurs to increase the employment prospects of graduates. Because their qualities, such as interest, aptitude, intellectual capacity, and values, were not taken into account before making a vocational decision, a significant number of Nigerian students appear to fail in their careers after graduation (Ezenibe, 2011). A component of technical and vocational education includes ceramics instruction. The focus of technical and vocational education is on acquiring information, skills, and attitudes for self-sufficiency and production (Umunadi, 2014). Students receive the proper training for the acquisition of technical and practical skills through ceramics education activities. A thorough understanding of the attitudes of students towards ceramics as a field of study could lead to appropriate secondary school orientation, which in turn could help prospective tertiary students learn about the discipline of ceramics and its potential to advance the nation's economy and technological capabilities. In any case, it is crucial to look into how much knowledge kids have about the field of ceramics, beginning in Nigeria's second grade.

Some Challenges of Ceramics Education in Nigerian Universities

Nigerian ceramics art education has several obstacles. According to Na'Allah (2001), they hinder student enrolment rates and impede the advancement of ceramic education. The majority of universities with programmes in art and design still struggle with inadequate studio space and

inappropriate teaching equipment, forcing students to make do with whatever tools they have on hand. Deficits in teaching resources and inadequately furnished ceramic studios are significant obstacles to the provision of high-quality education. It is difficult to find processed ceramic raw materials, either through importation or local processing. Lack of access to suitable equipment makes local processing challenging, and imports cost excessive amounts of foreign exchange.

According to Ogunduyile (1999) and Mbahi (1999), the majority of parents in Nigeria are prejudiced against studying fine and applied art because they believe that children can only succeed in life by being encouraged to study engineering and medical sciences, even if they lack the mental capacity to do so.

The Potentials of Ceramics in Nigeria

Although several obstacles are obscuring the future of ceramics education in Nigeria, a wealth of potential and possibilities remain to be discovered. The great potential of ceramic art education for job prospects can be attributed to the following elements. Nigeria is the site of a rich, long-standing artistic legacy and a diversified culture. Nigeria possesses a wealth of ceramic resources that could be used for research and education that could revolutionize the country's technical and economic landscape (Adelabu and Kashim, 2010; Kashim, 2003; Na'Allah, 2001; Sullayman, 2000). Nigeria is blessed with a large stock of petroleum products in addition to an abundance of solid raw minerals. The petroleum products' byproducts may be easily transformed into fuels that can be used to generate energy in ceramic firing operations. Due to the abundance of ceramic raw materials, a sizable number of ceramic cottage businesses were founded in the post-colonial era. Therefore, engaging in artistic and fruitful ceramic practices can be profitable endeavours, and there is a significant chance that jobs will be created if appropriate policies are in place. Nigeria, home to more than 140 million people, has a thriving market for ceramic goods

appropriate for a range of industrial and domestic applications (Kashim and Adelabu, 2009). Demand is rising as a result of more homes being built as well as increased acceptance of bricks, ceramic tiles, dinnerware, and sanitary ware.

Conclusion

With the growing applications in the use of ceramic raw materials, ceramics as an area of study in Nigeria has a bright future due to the immense potential that can be reached and maximised from it both locally and internationally. Self-reliance should be seen as both a goal in and of itself and a means of achieving larger objectives. Art, science, and technology must be properly linked to ensure sustainable ceramic practices and further Nigeria's national development in the twenty-first century.

The Way Forward

The government should launch a genuine programme that will attract youth and encourage more aspirants to major in ceramics.

It's critical to pinpoint and aggressively confront the underlying causes of the majority of Nigerian youths' reluctance to enter the ceramics industry, including the belief that the discipline is unappealing, repetitive and has no job prospects.

The federal government should collaborate with commercial financing institutions to create a plan that would enable graduates of ceramics schools to obtain short and medium-term loans, enabling them to start their pottery enterprises.

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