

Theories of Art: A Veritable Tool for Teaching and Learning of Fine and Applied Arts in Schools

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Abstract

Theories are inevitable and cannot be undermined in the teaching and learning process of fine and applied arts in schools the world over. Laid-down ideas and principles strictly guide the teaching and learning of fine and applied arts. Every human has one lifestyle or another peculiar to them as a result of individual differences according to the study of developmental psychology and human learning. This lifestyle is sometimes called philosophy of life and is not limited to humans alone but all other activities of man, hence fine and applied arts are not left out. In bookkeeping and accounting, there is a principle of double entry system, which says "In every debit entry there must be a corresponding credit entry." This is the rule and regulation. In fact, it is the basis of teaching and learning of bookkeeping and accounting. Therefore, this study also expresses theories of art in the same manner—basis of teaching and learning fine and applied arts (art education) in schools. To this end, every teacher and student of fine and applied arts that must excel in this field must follow strictly the imitation theory of art, expression theory of art, communication theory of art, and play theory of art. All these theories are fully explained and how they operate because they are the operant conditioning in fine and applied arts. The prospects and challenges of these theories, the way forward in form of recommendation forms the concluding part of the study.

Keywords: arts, operant conditioning, schools, teaching and learning, theories, tool

Introduction

The teaching and learning of fine and applied arts in the global school system is alarming and need to receive serious attention. Art as self-expression based on the concept and thought of the artist is guided by some ideas and principles known as theories. These theories make teaching and learning of art easy, palatable, smooth and interesting if seriously followed by the teachers and learners.

In every subject area the teacher and learner are both expected to explore all kinds of ideas and principles for the improvement of classroom instruction (teaching and learning process). The synergy of BODMAS (bracket of division, multiplication addition, subtraction) to teaching and learning of mathematics, theories are in the same manner to fine and applied arts. Every poor and brilliant performance recorded annually by teachers and learners is justified based on effective and appropriate use of these theories. Reasons for this will be explained better in the body of this study.

Statement of the Study

Most teachers adopt the traditional approach of disseminating fine and applied arts knowledge and skills, where they usually stand in front of the class and deliver the note of the day as they apply to the topic at hand with a virtual absence of interaction, freedom of artistic expression and creativity in the classroom among learners and teacher, and between learners and materials. However, innovation in this basic triangular approach (teacher = learning materials = learners) has really justified changes in educational systems around the globe. It continually informing changes in the teaching methods adopted, which are determined by the theories of such subject. Educational systems and curricula (fine and applied arts) around the world now demand more of learners' interaction, discovery, freedom of artistic expression, and creativity in the classroom through harnessing theories of art to practical demonstration of skills and instructional materials, especially the concrete ones, to improve learners' intelligence quotient (IQ).

This study focuses on how theories of art can be strictly and freely used during and after classroom interaction in fine and applied arts to create classroom–studio interactive learning (CLASIL) which is meant to facilitate the easy participation and learning of fine and applied arts with good feedback (learning behavior).

Objectives of the Study

This study is designed to appraise the roles theories of art play in teaching and learning of fine and applied arts in schools from primary to secondary schools, and to tertiary institutions (polytechnics, colleges of educations, and universities). Therefore, the study reveals the improvements in laid-down ideas, methods, principles and practices guiding the teaching and learning of fine and applied arts on the part both teacher and learner. It further justifies the meaning of these theories in their different forms and how they nurture creative skills for the production of artefacts in their aesthetic manner from childhood to adulthood. Finally, the study determines the intricacy of communication through visual literacy (VL) and visual perception (VP) in schools and society at large.

Concept of Theory

Theory is a statement of a principle in which a subject is based. According to (Summers, 2005) theory is an idea or set of ideas that intend to explain something about life or the world, especially an idea that has not yet been proved to be true. Okoli (2007) sees theory as a reasoned idea or supposition that has been tested and trusted to be true which can be used to explain facts and events. In other words, theory is an idea, formula, principles or assured set of facts acceptable to govern the origin of a particular discipline or phenomenon. A

theory is a contemplative and rational type of abstract or generalized thinking or the result of such thinking (Wikipedia, 2019). Depending on the context the result might for example include generalized explanations of how nature works. Theories guide the enterprise of finding facts rather than reaching goals, and are neutral forms concerning alternatives among values. It also affirms that a theory can be a body of knowledge, which may or may not be associated with particular explanation models. Theories are used to develop this body of knowledge. Theory is a set of assumptions, propositions, or accepted facts that attempt to provide a plausible or rational explanation of cause-and-effect (causal) relationships among observed phenomena. The word's origin (from the Greek *thoros a spectator*) stresses the fact that all theories are mental model or the perceived reality (Dictionary, 2019).

Meaning of Art

Art over the years have been defined severally by different authors/scholar according to their perception. This means art does not have a specific definition. Generally, art can be seen as self-expression of our sense of creativity, the bringing into existence of what was not in existence before, through the ordering or arranging of certain (classic) elements, materials, ideas, points, lines, shapes, forms, notes, motifs, colors, rhythms, etc., to effect a new creation which is beautiful, cultural and a (universal) language for communication inasmuch the disseminated message can be understood by the society (Majemite, 1996).

Oloidi (2011) defines art as the deliberate or conscious employment of skill and creativity to produce visually aesthetic and other functional art images. He affirms further that creativity is very sensitive here because it is what has made art an uncommon professional phenomenon; that is, ability to bring into physical reality what has not been seen around before. Likewise, Oyedun (2013) says

art is the study and creation of new things in forms, texture, line and colour which eventually gives pleasure to the mind, soothes the souls and satisfies our sense of beauty.

It is obviously noted that skill/creativity, visual and sense of beauty are paramount to art practices in the above definition.

Art is divided into visual, performing, and literary arts. Visual art is the practice of fine and applied arts. Fine art is the aspect of visual art concerned with aesthetics and expressions of feelings, ideas and emotion. Technically, Fine art consists of drawing, painting, sculpture, and architecture, (Uzuagba, 1982, in Ajayi, 2017). Applied art deal with arts related to industry. Emphasis is usually placed on commercial aspect of such art. This includes ceramics, textile design, graphic design and photography. Performing arts are works which are appreciated through the minds, eye, imagination and other senses rather than only the sense of sight. It is the sequential and rhythmical movement of the

legs, body and vocal cord (stress) to communicate ideas, feeling and emotion to the audience. This includes dance, drama and music; it is also called theatre arts. Liberal arts involves works of art which denote imagination of the beauty of creative writing such as literature, poetry, history, philosophy, journalism, etc., through novel reading one can imagine the beauty of such write up with the scenery described.

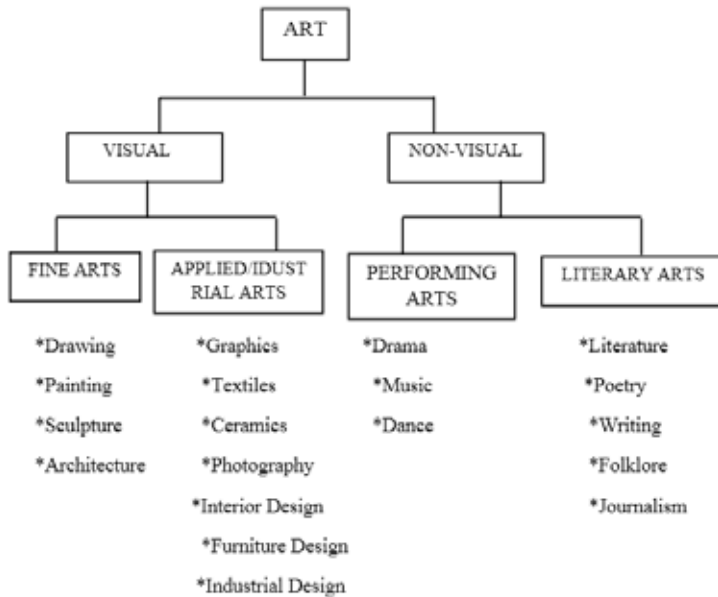


Fig. 1: *Branches of art which theories are based on (Ibrahim-Banjoko) 2000 in (Ajayi) 2017.*

Veritable tool on its own simply means emphasis of a comparison that you think is a correct instrument that can be used for a particular thing or phenomenon at a specific time. It is an important instrument, principle or fact about life or the world that is true in all situations (Summers, 2005).

Teaching is the process of imparting skill, knowledge and understanding by experience personnel (teacher) to less-experienced persons (learner) in a classroom setting, for him/her to be useful to him/herself and the society he/she belongs to (Ajayi, 2017). Summers (2005) defines teaching as giving lesson in a school, college or university to help someone learn about something by

given him or her information. Teaching is conscious and deliberate effort by a matured or experienced person to impart knowledge, information, skills, attitudes and belief to an immature or less experienced person to believe what he is taught on a rational basis. It is also seen as the process whereby those involved or teacher guide the learner in acquisition of knowledge, skill, and attitude (Akinpelu, 1981 in Adewoyin & Okuntade, 2017).

Candidly, teaching is a process of communication and involves critical analysis of the purpose for which a teacher intends to teach (subject matter), to whom he intends to communicate his ideas (Learner), the channel (process or procedure) and finally an analysis of the effect of his teaching on the audience (learner), otherwise called evaluation, be it formative or summative.

From the above meaning of teaching, we can see clearly that teaching cannot exist in isolation without learning. As knowledge and skill is being imparted, learners acquire it. Therefore teaching and learning go together. A good example to illustrate the concept of learning is simply evinced in an athlete, in the process of developing the appropriate skill of playing soccer; he goes through series of stages like dribbling, trapping, heading, passing, chesting, and a host of others. Secondly, is the acquisition of knowledge and techniques of the game's strategies, rules of the game, features of the soccer field/pitch, and the officials involved, among others. To further consolidate the acquired skill, there is need for consistent and constant practice and play, which will eventually culminate in acquired experience. However, in achieving the above, the athlete is not expected to be involved in the use of stimulants, drugs or intoxicants. Eventually, when the athlete finds a means of expressing himself (like an artist) on the field, he does so effectively based on his experience and this will bring a permanent change in his behavior. This type of change is called learning and is equally applicable to art learning and education in general.

Meaning of Theories of Art

Many theories help describe aspects of various subjects, but the one we are concerned most in this paper are theories of art. Therefore, theories of art are simply general principles, idea or set of ideas, formulas and facts acceptable to govern or guide the origin, teaching and learning of self-expression (art). Theories of art—

- i. Describe the nature of works of art precisely which distinguishes them from objects that are not works of art.
- ii. Explain the nature of beauty (aesthetics) or the sublime.
- iii. Help in the clarification of different concepts in art such as perspective, foreshortening, proportion, mien, landscape, foreground, background, contraposture, balance, tone, drawing, sketching, cartoon, caricature, silhouette and host of others.

- iv. Contain categories or provide criteria for defining, describing, analyzing, and evaluating works of art.
- v. Describe aspects of reality that represent works of art and explain what they are all about.
- vi. Describe the nature of artistic process and justifies the medium/media involved in such process.
- vii. Explain the nature of response to works of art.

Theories as Tools for Teaching and Learning Art

Theories of art include:

1. Imitation theory;
2. Expression theory ;
3. Communication theory;
4. Play theory;

5. Representation theory;
6. Nature theory;
7. Imagination and fantasy theory; and
8. Aesthetic theory of art.

For the purpose of this study, we will limit our discussions and analysis to the first four theories listed above as veritable tools for teaching and learning of art in schools.




Imitation theory of art




Pye (1962 in Majemite, 1996) says when you look about you, the whole man-made world is full of art, though it may not all be beautiful. On this note, imitation theory of art deals basically with nature, copying things the way they are (in their real state). It is the basis for representing nature the way it is without addition or subtraction. This theory is associated with realism style of executing art works, it involves drawing, sculpting, or painting of any natural object in its real state, including (figure) human being. However, a person who really wants to learn art must start with copy method so as to acquire the desirable and appropriate skill and knowledge needed to excel in the profession as a professional artist.

Imitation theory of art is also the representation of nature through via media in a beautiful manner. It connotes strict copy and composition of natural objects such trees, animals, landscape, seascape among others. Every artist learns and trains through theory. Even the father of modern art, Aina Onabolu, started his training through copying of pictures and drawings from foreign magazines before he travelled to London to acquire formal art training at St. John Wood College (Oyedun, 2013). This theory of art is applicable to all spheres

of education, from primary school to tertiary; in most cases fine and applied arts are taught through copy method.

Above all, no impressionism, abstractism, expressionism, cubism, or stylized method of executing natural concepts is required under imitation theory of art because it is a total representation of concrete natural objects in their natural state.

		
<i>Faces of lecturers</i>	<i>Nature painting</i>	<i>Former Chair of Governing Council</i>
<i>Fig. 2: Imitation theory connotes artists copying nature.</i>		

		
<i>Fruits in ceramics</i>	<i>Functional legs; back view</i>	<i>Front view</i>
<i>Fig. 3: Imitation theory; copying nature in terra cotta.</i>		

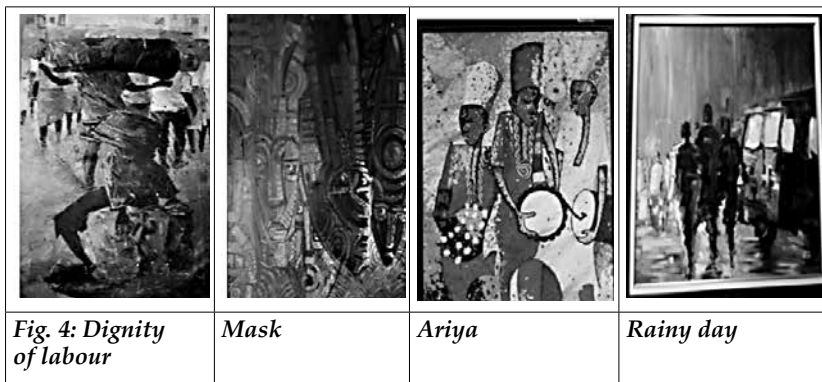
Source: Students of Fine & Applied Arts Dept., AOCOED (2015, 2018).

Expression theory

Expression means something you say, write or do that shows what and how you think or feel. Art is always the expression of the artist. By expression, it means the artist's unique view of art and of the world around him; an outward manifestation of the artist's emotion, thoughts, feelings, fears, dreams and observations. Expression means that the artist is always present in the work of art (artistic approach), no matter how straightforward an art work may seem to be, it is influenced tremendously by the artist's own perspective and by his or her culture.

This theory of art is all about the individual (artist) at any period that distorts forms and intensifies colors (impasto) to appeal to his emotion as a result of emotional exploration and passion. Great artists like Vincent Van Gogh remains the forerunner and founder of expressionism (Oyedun 2013, Okoli 2007). He attempted to paint his feeling about the natural world—not only what he could see of it, but what he knew of it which is indicated in his self-portrait. He sought to reveal the mystery and moving of forces of nature. Van Gogh used heavy oil paint in pure colors (impasto), which he applied in bold strokes. He was not bothered with detailed drawings but preferred to portray the element character of nature with strong contrasting curves of colors.

This may be a difficult idea to grasp at first. We can look at a beautifully-painted landscape, for example, and think “But that’s just the way it looks. The artist isn’t expressing anything.” Is this time? An artist’s expression will be equally evident in a portrait, even though the portrait may “look like” the person depicted. There are two paintings done in the same year, both portraits of van Gogh. Without the titles and the background information, almost no one would identify these works as portraits of the same man at the same time. Each expresses what the artist (Gauguin and van Gogh) felt about the subject in one case, about the self in other case. Meanwhile all these questions come up in our mind: Why paint the figure that way? Why paint sunflower into the background? Why strip away all background details? The answer to all these questions is: That is what the artist wanted to express, period. That was his artistic approach to the painting (expressions/expressionist). Every student of fine and applied arts indulges in this freedom of expression to express their innermost feeling while executing their assignments.



(Gadonu) 2018, 2019, Fine & Applied Arts Department, AOCOED, 2011

Communication theory

Communication is always verbal and nonverbal. Art is most concerned with the nonverbal aspect of communication despite the fact that, art is a language on its own. The symbols, rewards, visual signs, and images form the basic foundation. This theory is more of graphic design than any other branch of art. At this juncture an artist (student) learns to be a good visualizer and poor verbalizer, he should always think and speak with images than being talkative. The indication of this is that human thought and perception are generated not only in words and symbols, but also through the means of visual images (concept) which may now be designated art sign. Now if visual images are taken as signs, what makes them art signs? They are art signs in the sense that, first they are assumed to be the products of human skill. Secondly, they are the expression of human intension to represent a thought or feeling in relation to an object, event, or condition. Thirdly, the components (elements and principles of art) of the images are arranged to provide a pleasant spectacle for view, by which is to evoke an aesthetic response. Consequently, these images function as an artistic sign by virtue of meeting these conditions (Okoli, 2007).

The importance of communication for humankind is underscored by its necessity for interpersonal understanding, cooperation and survival. The example of the animal kingdom may be instructive. A hen brooding a group of young chicks perceives a hawk above them and becomes aware of the danger, she then raises a signal and in response to the signal all the chicks scatter into hiding. A few moments later, when the mother hen sense it is safe again for the chicks, she signals then back from their hiding places. For these birds, the signal-and-response is a typical communication situation which recurs frequently. It is essential for their survival. Similarly, for human beings, communication is the bedrock of the community. We are constantly monitoring the environment to discern what is good or bad for us and what to avoid in order to survive.

However, when a message or a piece of information or an idea is conveyed from a given source be it drawing, painting, sculpture, textiles, ceramics or graphics to a receiver, it is said that communication has taken place. A message may be conveyed through the spoken word, the written word or through gestures drums or songs, or even the presentation of an object such as flower, a sword or a palm leaf with a cutlass. This study examines the species of communication characterized as visual; that is the conveyance of ideas and messages through visual images. Of course, the visual image is perceived through the sense of vision. Any extensions of meaning into her sense modes are metaphorical e.g. the sound of a painting—onomatopoeia.

Visual images are signs because they signify objects or events of experience. In other words, they mediate between the material world and consciousness. They are the translation of concepts into form. Pierce (1960, in Okoli, 2007)

identifies three kinds of signs: icon, symbol and index. This classification is made in accordance with the way in which the meanings of the signs are generated. That is, icon signifies by resemblance or by imitation of the appearance of what they stand for.

An index derives its meaning by indicating a direct connection with what it signifies. For instance, fingerprints on a door is a sign that someone has actually touched the door. According to this classification, all words and letters of alphabet come under symbols. Pictures, drawing painting rendered in the style of realism such that they imitate the appearance of things in nature. These come under icons. However, drawings, paintings and sculptures rendered in so-called abstract style fall under symbols. They derive their meaning from the consensus of members of the world. By the same token, documentary photography may be taken as icons by virtue of resembling the object they signify, but as indexical by being indicators of the direct evidence of what has been.

By and large, for effective communication, various form of images are brought to interaction by the communicator (artist) so as to clarify the message or to concretize what would otherwise be abstract through mixed media approach (verbal description and image). That is why a graphic illustration of the scene. Finally, this thinking with images involve the composition of visual form syntax such the point, the line, shapes, spaces, texture, contrast, balance, proportion, variation, dominance, repetition and rhythm – elements and principle of design which every artist learn from, therefore more effort should be added to its teaching and learning in global schools .



Fig. 5: Samples of communication theory of art.

(Azeez, 1999, 2000, AOCOED)

Play theory of art

Playing is a unique and inevitable attitude/habit of humans. Play simply means doing things you enjoy to keep you lively and bright. Play cuts across every category of humanity, able or disabled, young or old, male or female. Once upon a time, every grownup practiced art while they were young. That is why everybody is regarded as an artist but not professional since they did not major in art. Children all over the world have their distinctive style of play and characteristics. It is important for teachers to possess the knowledge of children, their behavior and attitude towards creative artistic experiences and characteristics of their visual expression so as to understand their needs and problems. That way we are able to provide relevant and appropriate creative artist experiences for them irrespective of their age.

Children behave differently towards artistic experience at different age level. As they grow, their drawings also grow following a predictable order. All their artistic activities are being implemented through playing. Therefore, between the ages of 2-4 years, they scribble on the ground, paper, wall, board, etc., with charcoal or bare finger due to their restless activity because they are not mature enough to coordinate their muscles. By age 4-7 years, they use geometrical shapes to represent object since their ability to draw had started springing up as pre-schematic/symbolic stage. At 7-9 years, he is a bit matured mentally and physically. He can now plan or arrange his drawing; e.g., house, cup, plate, trees, etc. These are objects found around him, this stage is called schematic while gang/realism stage of 9 and above years, the child is fully matured as object are drawn in more detail according to their appearances (Kosoko, 1993; Lowenfield 1949).

In a nutshell, all these artistic expressions and experiences of the child are acquired while playing, this is the reason the play method of teaching art is unique and recommended for teaching children. Remember, all work without play makes Jack a dull boy; but in this situation, the play they observe and involve is the work they embark on.

Conclusion

Evidences of the analysis indicates that there is no way art could be learned without these theories as all learning activities and processes are centered in and enveloped by theory of art. Theories of art serve as regulations, guidelines, pillars, methods and mirrors used in the teaching and learning of fine and applied arts in schools all the world over. From these explanations and functions

of theories, it is obvious that acquisition of artistic skills, knowledge, and understanding in fine and applied arts can facilitates learners' effectiveness and efficiency in other subject areas such as agricultural science, biology, chemistry, physics, geography, history, economics, home economics, music, introductory (basic) technology and a host of others.

To this end, fine and applied arts as a discipline should be given more attention in global schools by parents, teachers, learners, and government.

Recommendations

A stitch in time saves nine. To really take cognizance of theories and their functions for the purpose of boosting the teaching and learning of fine and applied arts, the following steps and activities should be put into practice urgently and cogently without hesitation.

1. Parents should encourage and support their children to like and study fine and applied arts like other subjects.
2. Fine and applied arts should be made compulsory in schools. This will greatly help learners excel easily in any discipline of their choice.
3. Training workshops and seminars for teachers of fine and applied arts for the teacher of fine and applied arts makes them more effective and efficient in the discharge of their duties.
4. Sanction and penalty should be imposed in schools that does not recognize the teaching of fine and applied arts by the government to curb their excesses.
5. Printed and practice materials on the teaching and learning of fine and applied arts should be provided by the government at affordable rate, to encourage teachers and learners greatly.

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