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INVESTIGATION OF THE IMPACT OF ART TRAINING ON INDIVIDUALS AND AESTHETIC ENVIRONMENT IN JALINGO TOWN, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This research work is meant to investigate the impact of art training on individuals and aesthetic environment. The study used Jalingo urban environment as the study area. To do this, the researcher had to sample an environment that is representative enough for the sake of generalization. From the study, it is discovered that art education can be a very viable tool for the improvement, protection and sustainability of the environment. One of the findings of the research actually reveals that artists manifest a higher level of aesthetic awareness of the environment. Another finding indicates that many non-artists do not see the difference between art and aesthetics; and do not think that art as a discipline contributes more than any other disciplines to visual literacy. Based on the findings of this study, one may therefore conclude that artistic experience enables people to make better aesthetic judgment of their environment and thereby contributing to the improvement of its quality. One may also generalize that, because artists exhibit a higher sense of aesthetic and environmental consciousness, art/aesthetic and environmental education be made compulsory in both public and private schools; and, finally, that tree planting and general landscaping, environmental standards and any other strategies that will help improve the aesthetic and healthy quality of the environment should be legislated and enforced in Nigeria.

KEY WORDS: *Art education, Aesthetic environment, Urban environment, Environmental standard and Art training.*

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

We are living in a period where hardly any day passes without disturbing news about danger signals of a deteriorating environment. Often times, we hear of global warming as a result of the depletion and leaking of ozone layer, which obviously is attributed to human activities. The depletion of the ozone layer exposes the earth surface to direct radiation of the sun. Scientists have implicated man as the principal cause of this depletion of the ozone layer through his activities; especially those that contribute to air pollution.

Not too far in the past, we have witnessed several terrible natural and man-influenced disasters which not only devastated the environment but caused the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives. For example, on the 26th December, 2004, a terrible tsunami popularly called Boxing Day Tsunami or Asian Tsunami swept across Indonesia and many other far-East countries, leaving on its trail, destruction and death hardly heard of in man's history (Knabb, Rhome and Brown, 2005). Out of the 11 countries affected by this tsunami, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and Thailand were hardest hit. Similarly, in the following year, from 23rd- 30th August, 2005, the United States of

America witnessed yet another terrible hurricane named "Hurricane Katrina", that carved a wide swath of catastrophic damages and inflicted large loss of life, beginning from South Florida on category 1 on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane scale through Louisiana, Mississippi to the States of Georgia and Alabama on different scales. Considering the scope of its impact, Katrina was one of the most devastating natural disasters in the United States' history (Knabb, et al, 2005). Katrina was only one of the several hurricanes and tropical storms that had devastated America in recent years.

There were further cases of less significance, reported in other parts of the world such as volcanic eruptions and deadly gas emissions; which equally resulted in the loss of lives and pollution of the environment. Others include oil spillage, fire disasters, collapsed buildings and bridges, which have had their toll on the environment of recent. The list is endless; and the apprehension of further occurrences daily threatens the very existence of man and his neighbours –other living things.

Also, man's activities such as warfare, mining, farming, bush burning, deforestation, creation of urban slums, suburban sprawl, spewing sewage pipes, refuse dumps, flaring gas and gases from factories and automobiles have greatly contributed to the pollution and defacing of the environment. Hettinger (2005:57) lists these activities and more, referring to them as "symbols of environmental degradation and paradigms of aesthetic disvalue".

Yet, there are other forms of degradation caused by man's utter disregard and insensitivity to aesthetic value of the everyday environment, which attracted the attention of this researcher. Ityoban (2009:15) refers to this type of environment as "man's social environment" which includes the home, schools, churches or mosques, offices and hotels among other fora where man interacts in. According to her, the beauty of our towns and cities are being distorted through indiscriminate posting of bills, poor refuse and waste management system, improper urban and town planning and a host of other negative attitudes towards the environment. Also, of great concern is urban degradation at individual level which includes poor hygienic attitudes, such as indiscriminate defecating, urinating and spitting in public places, wall graffiti, posters, dirt, street littering and Bahamas grass-crossing.

Area of Study

This study was conducted in Jalingo metropolis. Jalingo town is the headquarters of Taraba State in the North East region of Nigeria. Being a headquarters, it has a heterogeneous population. This comprises civil servants as well as business men representing almost all ethnic groups in Nigeria through their engagement as Federal, State and Local

Government employees and/or as private businessmen or non-governmental organization agents.

Jalingo urban environment is chosen because the researcher resides there in. Also, it is chosen because of its beautiful landscape, streetscape and other features of environmental interest, which all put together satisfy the requirements of this research work.

Jalingo population is not certain, as the researcher could not lay his hands on any statistical document that spells out a precise figure. The only information that was available is the population of the entire Jalingo Local Government Area which is 139,845 inhabitants (NPC, 2007). This is of no use for this study since the focus is on Jalingo metropolis; and even within Jalingo metropolis; the researcher is only interested in a section of the population. The focus of the study is on senior civil servants, businessmen and others who are learned.

Jalingo population is predominantly civil servants and business people who both double into agricultural activities such as small scale farming, even though there are also professional farmers. Trade in foodstuff and automobile spare-parts boom in Jalingo just to mention but a few. Jalingo also boasts of four tertiary institutions such as Colleges of Education and Agriculture, a State Polytechnic and a State University. With the heterogeneous nature of this environment, the views of its sample population on this research topic should be valid.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

The design of this study is a sample survey type. According to Sambo (2005), a sample survey is a study in which a random sample is taken from a well defined population, data is collected from the sample, a statistic is calculated from the data, and the statistic is used to estimate the true value in the population.

A sample survey is one of the wide variety of survey designs usually used in social science and educational studies, particularly those which seek to measure and establish opinions on major burning social, political and educational issues (Ali, 2006). The sample survey type used in this study is called a Sample Survey of Intangible Subject Matter.

According to Ali (2006), in a sample survey of intangibles, an attempt is made to reach a psychological or sociological construct by deriving from the data obtained, some information about the particular psychological or sociological subject matter that is of interest to the researcher.

Psychological or sociological constructs such as political preference, buying tendencies, sex education preferences and so on are difficult constructs to attempt to survey and establish but researchers undertake them because of their immense usefulness to society.

Since this study attempts to investigate possible strategies for improving the aesthetic quality of the environment using knowledge and skills acquired through art education, the choice of this research design is not only appropriate but imperative. This design enables the researcher to use sample data collected through a well articulated Likert-type 5-point scale questionnaire to address a psychological problem of the environment. Mean, Standard Deviation and ANOVA statistical tools were used to answer research questions and test hypotheses.

It is the assumption of this researcher that opinion poll on issues such as the aesthetic quality of the environment, the role of visual art and artists toward aesthetic improvement of the environment and so on, can be useful in predicting the attitude of Nigerians towards their environment, using a sample population from any city in Nigeria. In this case, a sample population of Jalingo residents was used.

Method of Data Collection

The data of this study are responses of 300 sampled respondents from Jalingo metropolis and suburb, based on 5-point Likert Attitude Scale. They were drawn from 8 Ministries, 13 Boards and Parastatals and 12 private outfits using both purposive sampling technique and simple random sampling. The researcher, having understood well the characteristics of the population, believes that the views of this sample are representative of the general views of the entire population of Jalingo town.

Mean and Standard deviation statistical tools were used to answer the four research questions while One-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) was used to test the four null hypotheses of the study.

The researcher worked with 3 assistants who were all art teachers and well conversant with the population. They helped in the distribution and collection of the questionnaire from the respondents. One took care of all the State's Secondary Schools; the second was in charge of all the Primary Schools/ Primary Education Board and the third took care of the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing and all Federal Post-primary Schools selected within the study area. The researcher himself took care of all the selected State Ministries and Parastatals.

All in all, about 330 copies of the questionnaire were administered as follows: Artists - 57 copies; stakeholders of environment - 93 copies; and the general public -180 copies. It took 3 weeks altogether for the administration and retrieval of the questionnaire. Some of the respondents had to be visited at an average of 3 to 4 times before finally retrieving their completed copies. Out of the 330 copies distributed, 30 copies were either lost and/or invalidated.

To forestall the problem that may arise as a result of non-response, the implication of the non-

response was worked out using the following formula (Sambo, 2005):

$$R = 1 - \frac{n-r}{n}; \text{ and } NR = 1 - R$$

Where R = Response Rate
n = Sample Size, and
r = Number of Responses

To find the Response Rate (R)

$$R = 1 - \frac{330 - 300}{330}$$

$$R = 1 - \frac{30}{330}$$

$$R = 0.91$$

$$\text{While } NR = 1 - 0.91 \\ = 0.09$$

This implies that the Response Rate is 91% while the Non - Response Rate is 9%. This is negligible, and the researcher had taken care of this non-response problem by increasing the number of copies of the questionnaire that were issued out above the sample size.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected, collated and analyzed in this research are responses from 300 sampled respondents; after administering a total of 330 copies of questionnaire. These were sorted out into the three groups under study, namely the artists (56 in number), stakeholders of environment (85) and the general public (159). Their ratings were entered into the SPSS 15 software application programme, item by item, and their mean and standard deviation scores were automatically computed, that is, from items 1- 68 of the questionnaire.

Mean and standard deviation statistical tools were used to answer the four research questions. In interpreting the mean scores, the Upper Limit of "undecided" which is 3.50 was used as cut-off point. Consequently, any mean of 3.50 and above is considered as agreeing with the statement while any mean below 3.50 is regarded as disagreeing with the statement.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the four hypotheses of the study at 0.05 level of significance using SPSS version 15. ANOVA was preferred for this research work to other statistical tools such as t-tests and ANCOVA in view of the fact that it suitable for determining significant difference between views of three or more groups concurrently in a selected probability level. Secondly, it reduces the probability of a type 1 error, in that making multiple comparisons increases the likelihood of finding something by chance - that is making a type 1 error (Patten,2002) (Refer, Appendix C).

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The results of this study are presented in accordance with the research question as shown below.

Research Question: What is the impact of art training on individuals and the environment?

Mean and standard deviation were used to compute the responses to the research question as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Impact of Art Training on Individuals and the Environment

S/Nº	ITEM	5	4	3	2	1	\bar{X}	SD	DECISION
		SA	A	UD	DA	SD			
1	Artistic experience refers to activities in the making and responding to work of art and artistic value	89	171	33	4	3	4.13	0.731	Agree
	Aesthetic education enables you to create and perceive beautiful things	151	131	7	7	4	4.39	0.766	Agree
2	Aesthetic experience means responses not only to man-made objects but also to natural objects in the environment	146	134	17	0	3	4.40	0.689	Agree
3	Artistic experience refers to the attitude of individuals and groups to the arts and impact which the arts have on the lifestyles of the people	80	157	48	11	4	3.99	0.834	Agree
4	Through art education we can recognize and understand aesthetics better	107	167	20	4	2	4.24	0.692	Agree
5	People who have formal training in art education express themselves better in aesthetic matters	141	108	28	19	4	4.21	0.946	Agree
6	The more art education is emphasized in and outside schools, the more aesthetic and environmental consciousness is broadened	126	142	21	9	2	4.27	0.774	Agree
7	Art training equips one with the ability to make sound aesthetic judgment of what constitutes a good environment	132	149	14	5	0	4.36	0.652	Agree
8	Art education develops aesthetic sensibility	121	160	12	6	1	4.31	0.676	Agree
9	Art education sharpens one's sensitivity to the environment	115	160	16	8	1	4.27	0.710	Agree
10	Effective training of perceptual thinking takes place in art training	66	118	65	44	7	3.64	1.052	Agree
11	Art training promotes critical thinking	102	154	25	15	4	4.12	0.856	Agree
12	Critical thinking is required in aesthetic judgment	106	150	25	14	5	4.13	0.872	Agree
13	Art education focuses on developing the emotional dimension of our being to appreciate beauty	100	153	35	10	2	4.13	0.793	Agree
14	Feeling (emotional) dimension enables us to always keep and maintain clean, decent and progressive environment	97	138	37	22	6	3.99	0.961	Agree
15	No other subject contributes more to visual literacy than art education	65	88	69	60	18	3.41	1.200	Disagree
16	People who are deficient in visual literacy demonstrate a high sense of insensitivity to aesthetic objects and the environment	61	133	48	51	7	3.63	1.060	Agree
17	Most people are aesthetically illiterate because they cannot look at objects and environment aesthetically	72	115	48	47	18	3.59	1.183	Agree

18	If visual literacy is inculcated in education, we will have aesthetically conscious people in our society and a better aesthetic environment	112	147	29	6	6	4.18	0.837	Agree
19	The craze for the good things of life from foreign countries among Nigerian youth is a good index of their love for aesthetics	73	116	52	40	19	3.61	1.173	Agree
20	In Nigeria, the passion of our youths for aesthetic things is often impeded by poor economic background/orientation and lack of aesthetic goods made in Nigeria	76	138	42	37	7	3.80	1.029	Agree
21	The order and beauty attained by western cities are related to knowledge and skills in art education	100	121	50	23	6	3.95	0.994	Agree
22	Abuja FCT is fast becoming a modern city whose aesthetic quality can favourably compare with the most beautiful cities of the world because of the aesthetic consciousness of its planners	191	91	11	7	0	4.55	0.680	Agree
23	A few Nigerian cities today are becoming a place to behold because of the sacrifices of both governments and residents to attain a beautiful, clean and safe environment	123	152	18	6	1	4.30	0.701	Agree
24	Port Harcourt city which used to be known and called the "Garden city of Nigeria," today, is called "Garbage city" due to negligence towards its aesthetic quality	101	139	43	15	2	4.07	0.859	Agree
25	Installation of artistic monuments at major roundabouts by government has given a face lift to the aesthetic quality of many state capitals in Nigeria	105	162	25	4	4	4.20	0.754	Agree
26	Planting of trees, flowers and general landscaping of the homes of some elites in Nigeria today are as a result of their aesthetic awareness	137	130	17	14	2	4.29	0.825	Agree
	Total Mean	107.22	137.92	31.66	18.07	5.11	4.08	0.428	Agree

The results in Table 1 recorded a total mean score of 4.08. This indicates that the respondents agree that art training has an impact upon individuals that are exposed to it and to the quality of the environment. The high point of the mean scores is recorded in items 35, 36, 41 and 56 respectively. These convey the idea that, aesthetic education enables one to create and/or perceive aesthetic things; that art education equips one with the ability to make sound aesthetic judgments about the environment; and that Abuja FCT is what it is today, because of the aesthetic consciousness of her planners. However, the only item in the whole 68 item-questionnaire that the respondents disagree is recorded in Table 1. Item 49, which suggested that no other subject contributes more to visual literacy than art education was disagreed with a mean score of 3.41, slightly lower than 3.50 cut-off point and a standard deviation of 1.200. This therefore indicates that majority of the respondents do not believe that art

contributes more than any other subject to visual literacy.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study made use of questionnaire which was responded to by three groups of persons namely, the artists, environment-related professionals such as the architects, building engineers, civil engineers, town planners among others; and finally a sample of the general public within the study area.

Table 1, which contains 27 items, tries to outline the impact of art training on individuals and the environment. In other words, what are the physical or visible indices of aesthetics that art training can bring to bear upon the environment through recipients of such training? The first part of the table comprising 20 items (from 1-20) is concerned with what art education teaches or the experiences that can be acquired through art education. This part seeks to find out whether or not the respondents understand these experiences and whether they can identify these experiences in others

or in themselves as recipients of art education. The remaining 6 items form the second part of Table and seek to establish the impact of art/aesthetic objects in Nigerian society such as those seen in the streets, public squares, public institutions and recreational

centres of some Nigerian towns and cities as seen in Plates 1 and 2 below



a. The Music Makers, A.B.U. Zaria



b. Works Roundabout, Jalingo

To all these items the respondents agreed (with a total mean and standard deviation scores of 4.08 and 0.438 respectively) that they understood what constitutes an artistic or aesthetic experience and the impact of art on the aesthetics of the environment. The only item (49), which the respondents generally disagreed with and scored the lowest mean of 3.41 and the highest standard deviation of 1.200, is concerned with the notion that no other subject contributes more

to visual literacy than art education. From this response, it implies that art education does not contribute more than other subjects or disciplines to visual literacy. It appears that the reason for this contrary opinion is as a result of the fact that non-artists who responded to this item are either truly not aware of this fact or are biased professionally. Most artists responded in the affirmative while non-artists and the general public disagreed. The artists are 56 in

number, constituting only 18.66% while the stakeholders of the environment and the general public are 244 in number constituting about 81.33%. This explains why the result is skewed to the left. Another reason may be that the framing of the item might have generated an emotional response depending on whatever discipline one belongs to.

This implies that, even though on the overall, the respondents agree that art training has impact on individuals that are exposed to it and to the quality of the environment in which this people live, quite a number disagreed or showed a degree of neutrality either due to ignorance or other personal factors. Many of the respondents have no formal training in art education or in aesthetics and so cannot make sound aesthetic judgement of the impact of art/aesthetic objects on the environment. This is in line with Carlson, as cited in Neil & Ridley(1995) and Mbahi (2008) when they emphasize on possessing certain degree of knowledge, skills and experience to be able to appreciate art works and nature (or the environment) aesthetically. Without these, they argue, the impact and import of aesthetics in both art works and in the environment are lost on the viewers. Mbahi (2008) says that perception is influenced by experience, and for one to appreciate beauty of his environment, he needs to understand what he already knows about what he sees; what he experienced in the past that is related to what he sees; and how he feels about what stimulates his vision.

Reacting to knowledge or experience as pre-requisite to appreciation, Carroll, as cited in Neil & Ridley(1995:126) disagrees, saying that knowledge is not very necessary as a stimulus to responses to aesthetics, even though he believes that it is important only for interpreting one's responses. He instead emphasizes on nature-responses of a less intellectual and more visceral sort referred to as "being moved by nature" which need no prior knowledge or experience.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study the following conclusions can be made concerning art education, aesthetics, environment and strategies for quality improvement.

It may be concluded that there exist an important cause-effect relationship between art education and aesthetic environment. This is based on the findings of this study and the assumption that art education broadens aesthetic experience. As one goes through art training, his aesthetic consciousness is sharpened through drills in careful observation and perception. This aesthetic awareness, according to Ityoban (2009), if properly harnessed, can affect one's taste and style of living and the environment in which he lives. This may be seen in his attitude toward the improvement and protection of the environment by

demonstrating the right attitude toward refuse disposal, posting of bills, quality of house one wants to live in, and a host of other positive attitudes.

One may also conclude that even though majority of the respondents claim to have understood the meaning of art education and aesthetics, many of them are still confused as to what really differentiates art from aesthetics. Left to many people, all art works are aesthetics; and all aesthetic objects are art. With such confusion, it is no surprise that people manifest ignorance towards appreciation of their environment. For without understanding, they cannot judge a good environment from a bad one; and even if they do, many care less.

Finally, this study concludes that even though artists, stakeholders of the environment and the general public share similar opinions regarding the relevance of art/aesthetic education to the improvement of the environment and the most effective strategies for same purpose; there is a significant difference in the level of awareness of the artists and that of the other two groups under study concerning the relationship between art education and aesthetic environment; and the impact of art training upon individuals and the environment. Artists exhibited a higher level of awareness than the other two under study over the impact of art/aesthetics towards the environment.

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