

INNOVATIVE ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES FOR EVALUATING VISUAL ARTS CREATIONS: A STUDY OF ART PROFESSIONALS' PERCEPTIONS IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS.

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Abstract

The creative essence in man proves individualistic conceptions of ideas which results in intuited perfections in his visual representations. Evaluating creative perceptions are seemingly impossible, due to innate feelings, however, creative abilities have been traditionally adjudged with the tools that may not be meeting the time following global best practices. This study therefore aim at investigating the perceptions of art professionals in Nigerian schools on innovative assessment strategies for evaluating visual arts creations. The study aim further to identify the current assessment practices, challenges and benefits of innovative assessment strategies in visual arts education. The study findings provide insights in the development of effective assessment strategies that will promote creativity, critical thinking, and artistic growth among students. It further contributes to the improvement of visual arts education in Nigerian schools and inform policy decisions on assessment practices. Finally, the study recommends clearer assessment criteria, assessment methods, and provide constructive feedback that can guide artistic improvement and growth among students.

Keywords: Innovation, Assessment, Evaluation, Strategies, Visual Arts, Professionals, Education, Feedback.

Introduction

The assessment of visual arts in Nigerian schools has traditionally emphasized technical skills and reproduction of art works resulting in learning in theory and less creativity, however the need for more innovative and holistic assessment strategies that can evaluate creativity, creative thinking and artistic expressions becomes imperative especially as the world is advancing

in education and technology.

Understanding research, assessment and evaluation as fundamental phenomena in human operations is sacrosanct for creating avenues for discoveries, explorations and constructing new paradigms within an existing issue. Research creates the space for which assessment and evaluation principles operate and yield results to

which an improvement is made and solutions to problems are proffered. Research according to Nwana (1990) says that it is a process of finding out the solutions to problems which beset a system. The educational sector over time has sustained its status in Nigeria for the tremendous efforts put in place to seek solutions to educational challenges through research, evaluation and assessment processes. Education stakeholders have also always put in view those tremendous efforts to savour situations that may bring about societal problems through stances of empirical and other forms of research efforts, and today one can form an opinion that possible verifiable environmental and academic challenges such as flood, erosion, disease conditions, examination malpractice, academic poor performances, auto crash, gangsterism, terrorism, banditry and among various other challenges have been sought out through innovative research, innovative assessment and innovative evaluation processes. Typically, developmental research has led to the preparation of new educational materials with the introduction and use of procedures and programmes which forms systemic tryouts in which feedbacks are gathered for perceptible improvement in the education of learners (Ali, 1990).

Visual arts professionals have traditionally derived those traditional assessment approaches which guided artistic learning fundamentals and performances in the various categories of Nigerian schools. The traditional assessment approach seems to have caged creativity and freedom in explorations. It is also good to note that some traditional assessment approaches have however yielded doubts in content and face validity criteria. Seemingly, have other assessment and evaluation standards in other fields of study must have grossly failed in the face of time. This study which sought to identify those innovative research, assessment and evaluation standards to match the various modern creative production processes shall foster a paradigm shift to professionally place artistic critiques to balance with global practice.

The pinning point of this study towards causing

change must reflect to the base meaning of education which is a great enterprise through which nations depend on for advancement and to rid of ignorance, illiteracy and poverty from the society. Education by its significance and relevance to life and society is an essential instrument for change, innovation and development. Graham, (2019) sees education as an all-round means for individual and societal build up, it gives the understanding of the immediate environment, interactions among peers and policy status for reformations. The art education space is part-avenue for peer relationships from formative to the summative stage.

Statement of the Problem

The traditional art assessment approach in Nigerian schools has created a gap between theory and practice, reflecting minimally in the students' artistic abilities and potentials. There is need to investigate teachers' perception and practices of assessment strategies in visual arts education to identify areas for improvement and inform the development of innovative assessment methods that can promote creativity, critical thinking, cultural heritage and artistic expression.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To investigate the current assessment practices used in visual arts education
- ii. To explore art professionals' perceptions of innovative assessment strategies for evaluating visual arts creation
- iii. To identify the challenges and limitations of implementing innovative assessment strategies in visual arts education in Nigerian schools.

Significance

The study shall inform holistic assessment approaches and the development of more effective assessment strategies that can promote creativity, sustain cultural heritage among others. It shall contribute to the improvement of visual arts education in Nigerian schools. The study finally shall give insight into the cultural and

contextual factors that influence assessment practices in Nigerian schools.

Scope of the Study

Some secondary schools in Nigeria were selected with their art teachers based on their perceptions and practices of assessment in visual arts education.

Conceptual Discussions

Assessment strategies become a thing of concern as creativity and self-expression has been a problem among students over time. Teachers must navigate all that were taken for granted school culture and management and teaching by objectives (Graham, 2019), assessment is linked to student behaviour or how students work aligns with learning objectives. To evaluate teachers' performance either, stresses on establishing assessment criteria that correspond to clearly defined learning goals. Problem projection lies on the discrete aspects of learning which measures the desirable outcome rather than the process and the holistic aspects of learning associates with the arts (Gude in Berglin, 2017). Consequently the desire to leash out quick learning experiences engender good ideas, breach learners personalities, playing around, developing hunches, and explorations. The problem of assessment in art education is overly over bearing, the large scale assessments influences adversely what is to be learnt and what is learnt. Teachers become sceptical in art assessment by the pervasive testing and measuring culture in our school systems. However, since assessment is a means of fathoming progressive development, teachers must imbibe the new culture of artistic assessment which puts the process into considerations.

Methods of Assessment in Art

- Pre-assessment method reflects identifying prior-knowledge before instruction
- Formative assessment for providing feedback during instruction through observation, class work and homework.
- Summative assessment evaluates learning after instruction through exams

and projects.

These assessment methods go to put in check the teaching methodologies or strategies which aim at developing a strong artistic foundation, teaching art history to develop context, encourage learning through projects, integrate art with complementary subjects and involve discussion and feedback into lessons.

Art curriculum becomes the pivot of assessment in art as the learning contents and processes are imperative in achieving learning outcomes. Curriculum is therefore, the blueprint of all the learning contents and objectives desirable to cause change in behaviour.

Innovative assessment strategies for visual arts as brewed under the assessment methods take the following forms

- Digital Portfolios
- Project Based Learning
- Observation of artistic progress
- Peer assessment
- Self-assessment
- Art collections and Critiques
- Process evaluation

Challenges of Innovative Assessment Strategy

Graham (2019) brought to bear the concern of art teachers toward making our students understand art and art as a way to construct meaning and as a sustained investigation of issues of personal and social importance, he also asked how these concerns are reflected in our assessment of students work. He further stressed on the need to ascertain value divergent, idiosyncratic, and imaginative outcomes. Graham (2019) also queried if experiment is more important than efficiencies, if we value rebellion, wide awakes and critical thinking, than how can assessment support these values? To what extent would we ignore or embrace the rational of evaluation models designed to measure art education with a pervasive testing culture. Could there be alternative ways of evaluation that might inform curriculum, teaching, and art education policy? What do large-scale summative assessments such as Advanced Placement Portfolio afford or how might they limit learning

and arts advocacy policy? Graham said that parents, school communities and legislators should understand art learning as an embodied and integrated meaning, critical thinking and sustained investigation of issues of consequence, therefore assessments are needed to provide evidence of these outcomes. Some advocacy arguments that justify art education by how it can support other academic or economic outcomes via development of creativity as a skill needed to compete in a 21st century designer economy (Gude, 2013, Jaffee, Barniskis, & Hacket-Cox 2013, Jagodzinski, 2010, 2015). The conclusion of these assertions is that many art teachers and parents accepted the different values for the arts that provide aesthetic experiences within a diverse range of art, ideas and art making as a way to develop personal confidence, insight, imagination, depth of character, and social awareness (Graham, 2013).

Graham and Hamlin, (2015) expressed that art students may not learn following the strains of teachers' instruction rather they think in their diverse approaches and efforts in the art classroom. Their proposition about art making is likened to research experiments where abstract expressionistic paintings were discussed as to how to reflect and apply the painting skills in the 21st century by the contemporary artists. Experimentation leads to invention and innovation which comes up by the outside of instruction forming a brainchild effort of the students. Maxine Greene, (1978) might say, let's look a little in deeper at the aesthetics, challenge the taken for granted and see if we cannot be more wide-awake. An art classroom should include diverse range of available parts such as objects, mediums, or concepts accompanied by an encouragement to put them together in divergent ways. It is an environment that fosters possibilities for exploring what Johnson (2010, 41) calls the "adjacent possible". A reflection of a yielding art classroom, Mckerman, 2008, Noddings, 2013, Palmer, (1983 & 1998) says in his classroom students are encouraged to work, talk, and wonder around; it is a noisy and welcoming place. He said further that art classrooms should not be a place that punishes experimentations, hides possibilities or is

satisfied with the current state of art making, school culture or society. We should see art classroom as part of the school but it can be a fuge from school and a place for ideas, and hunches to incubate. Davis et- al, (2008) say that my classroom is a place bounded by the texts of art works, visual languages, and visual culture, these boundaries are balanced by openness toward new spaces of possibility.

The complex nature of assessing art performance and to brew uniform judgement among art teachers in various schools have resulted to the introduction of Portfolio Assessment as a strategy to measure student engagement in meaningful tasks, that are challenging, complex and reflect personally meaningful contexts. The portfolio has the potential for examiners or teachers to see student development overtime and to see the process of sustained investigation, Inquiry or experimentation. It is a flexible way to provide opportunities for students to take risks and reflect on their progress (Boughton, 1997).

Project based learning, peer assessment and other forms of innovative assessment strategies has been put to test in this research to ascertain the acceptability level among art professionals and in turn to inform curriculum, policy makers and education planners.

Research Methodology

This study adopted some methodologies such as design, area of study, population, sample and sampling techniques and frequency.

Design

The study adopted opinion- survey design

Area of Study

The study was carried out in some selected schools in south-east Nigeria.

Population of Study

The study population from 176 initial persons interviewed both physically and online, comprised the art teachers, studio artists, museum and gallery curators in south-east Nigeria, all of whom were semi-structured interview respondents either as individuals as

focus group discussion members (55 art teachers, 47studio artists, and 9 curators, 65 Parents).

Sample Sampling Techniques

The Stratified Random Sampling Technique was used which provided 4 categories of

interviewees. Consequently a sample size of 95 was cut from the initial 176 gathered severally,

Strata Table

Art Professionals' Perception Semi-Structured Interview Questions (APP-SSIC)

	Categories of Participants	Initial Population	Stratum 1Conversation with Threats of Acceptance of Strategies	Stratum 2 Indistinct Conversation	Stratum3 Assessment Opposition	Stratum 4, Conversation with Critical Thinking
1	Art Teachers	55	4	-	3	48
2	Studio Artists	47	12	8	5	22
3	Parents	65	3	-	15	47
4	Curators- (Museum/Galleries)	9	1	-	-	8

Key: Inclusion criteria –Stratum 4; Exclusion criteria Stratum 1-3

(Source Inyang Victor E.E.)

Instrument for Data Collection

The major instrument for data collection in this study was a semi-structured interview questions (Art Professionals' Perception Semi-Structured Interview Questions, APP-SSIQ). Data was collected through individuals, and focus groups interview. Some interviews were physically conducted, while some were conducted online.

The data collected were interpreted using frequencies, which was based on nature of the subjects of the study being humans and embedded in artistic practices. However, qualitative research relies on extensive interaction with the people being studied, and often allows researchers to uncover unexpected or unanticipated information, which ordinarily cannot be possible in quantitative methods (Mays & Pope, 2000).

The analysis focused on the objectives of the study, i. the methods of artistic assessment in recent time have out-way the most previous traditional assessment methods whose criteria

were on the final products of artistic endeavours. Art teachers innovatively assess the students from ideation to end products, meaning that the process of production, material and techniques are all put into consideration in artistic development. Series of evaluation takes place before final summation of cumulative artistic experiences. These are not always put in discrete forms but in subjective principles of evaluation of the individual learner or group of learners. Some focus group responses view the traditional assessment methods being used by the teachers as strategies that are no more meeting the global parameters for artistic development rather would subject learners to minimal artistic experiences. Traditional assessment methods does not allow innovative creative processes and experimentations especially as modern technology has craved space for trials and tests of materials, techniques and needs. Traditional assessment impede explosive creative thinking means thereby short-sighting the opportunities to develop innate talents. Albert 2025 (oral interview) opposed to the didactic artistic

approaches dominant in so many artist, as such limited the exploration of their ingenuities. This is as a result of art teachers; non encouraging assessment strategies which aim at finished products.

The objective ii, stressed the professionals' perception to the innovative assessment strategies. The curator of the national gallery of art Abakaliki through oral interview likened the innovative assessment strategies to modern processes of achieving creative excellence. A focus group online discussion with some art lecturers, studio Artists free lancers responded in affirmative that the innovative approaches are viable in building an individual since it allows for process development. A College of Education lecturer and studio artist, Chima (2025) by oral interview responded also in affirmative with the opinion that students need be assessed from concept development stage, production process stage, and finished product. This will subject the student to multi-ferrous trials and attempts to achieve a certain creative end. The evaluation of the stages becomes imperative to dissuade academic laziness, skill extinction and monotonous skill processes. Other persons interviewed have it that all the innovative approaches become implementable much as conducive teaching and learning environment is provided in our schools. Engaging in the artistic processes of learning, an evaluation of student art work can provide evidence from which to draw inference about students' learning in art (Gruber, 2008).

Objective iii, herpes on the challenges and limitations of implementing the innovative assessment approach in our schools. They found some limitations through focus group interview that,

- Lack of standard and functional art studios poses great challenge in eliciting and encouraging artistic development and creativity.
- Adequate funding of schools has discouraged art teachers from engaging in their duties to primarily discover the

individual learners through process assessment.

- Learners lack of endurance in process development, they are too quick to arrive at the end product.
- There is often overriding concern for efficiency, compliance, management and planning using objectives devoid of explorations, inquiry, and experience.

The deviation from the process development of the learners has formed a gap in solving assessment issues in art creations. Putting into consideration the learners' developmental stages shall inform teachers and professionals in having a feedback after every process for progression.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The artistic development of the student is the sole responsibility of the teacher; he must possess knowledge of learning and possess good mastery of the art subject to enable transfer of knowledge appropriately. His potent artistic knowledge is a latent tool for transformation which is informed by the application of those innovative assessment strategies which leads to gradual build of the learner. This study has justified the acceptance of the innovative assessment strategies as viable in setting a better paradigm in art teaching in Nigerian schools'

The study recommends as follows;

- That the art classroom shall be built and equipped with the materials and equipment for effective learning process.
- Art classrooms shall be such that would encourage experimentations, innovative art products
- The art classrooms shall encourage process development of the learner.
- The assessment strategies shall inform policy reformations and curriculum reviews among others.
- Clear emphasis shall be made on the use of the assessment variants amidst their consequences.
- There shall be uniform assessment framework used in our schools.

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