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## Artistic Skills Acquisition and Teaching Competencies in Classroom Instructional Delivery

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### Abstract

*It is becoming increasingly clear to policymakers that artistic skills acquisition plays a vital role in the development of individuals and in overall national progress. While the education of citizens is essential, societies must also address the socio-economic challenge of gainful employment. Education is most relevant when it provides not only knowledge but also the capacity for individuals to become self-reliant and to create employment opportunities for others when such opportunities are scarce. This is achievable only if educational curricula are designed to empower learners with practical and sustainable skills. This study, therefore, examines the importance of artistic skills acquisition and teaching competencies in effective instructional delivery. It explores the conceptual frameworks for effective instruction, the seven broad purposes of fine arts education, and the challenges facing artistic skills acquisition in teacher education. The paper concludes that education programmes should prioritise artistic skills acquisition as a basis for teaching competence, rather than relying solely on academic qualifications and experience.*

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## Introduction

Fine arts education refers to the process of learning about different forms of artistic expression, including diverse media, formats, movements, and styles throughout art history (Boal & Jackson, 2016). It is commonly taught across different age groups and is often a focus in secondary and higher education. Typically delivered by fine arts teachers, this type of education combines practical skills, such as the use of artistic tools and techniques, with theoretical knowledge, including the appreciation and interpretation of artwork. Basic artistic practices such as drawing, painting, and sculpture are usually emphasised, while specialised areas such as pottery, digital art, and mixed media are also taught (Bodily & Augustine, 2018).

According to Carey, Kleiner, Porch, and Farris (2002), art education often balances practical knowledge with theoretical understanding, enabling learners both to create artworks and to appreciate the creations of others. A fine arts teacher is therefore expected to be an experienced artist with expertise in various forms of artistic creation as well as pedagogical knowledge. While specialised courses such as art history may focus largely on lectures and reading, most fine arts classes allow students to create their own works and engage critically with those of their peers and established masters.

The integration of culture and the arts enriches and revitalises education by providing diverse learners, including those in vulnerable contexts, opportunities to express their humanity. Exposure to cultural diversity enhances ways of thinking, knowing, and being, while also building confidence, motivation, and intercultural understanding (Bamford, 2006). Through such engagement, learners not only develop cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioural skills but also cultivate sensitivity to the environment and the ability to collaborate across cultures—competencies essential for addressing global challenges.

Research further underscores the neurological and developmental benefits of fine arts education. Udi and Nwosu (2023), drawing on the findings of Burton et al. (2019), note that incorporating the arts into teaching enhances the neural system responsible for motor skills, creativity, and psychological balance, which are foundational to effective learning.

Beyond the classroom, the artistic process offers valuable insights for coping with complexity and uncertainty. Anikweze (2004) observes that in contexts such as Nigeria, where project-based work is increasingly common, the artistic mindset provides a useful model for project management. Artists embrace uncertainty as a

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precondition for creation, employing intuition, play, and hands-on experimentation to generate novel solutions. This parallels the evolving role of managers, who must move beyond technical skills to embrace leadership rooted in creativity and adaptability.

Art-based learning extends these benefits into non-artistic domains. As Gurr and Cahill (2007) explain, it involves learners actively engaging in artistic practices to explore subjects outside the arts, often through multimedia activities designed to trigger reflective and sensory experiences. Such approaches enhance soft skills, encourage holistic thinking, and address gaps common in conventional leadership training. Although research on the mechanisms of art-based learning remains limited, scholars argue that it offers promising opportunities for developing competencies that traditional methods often fail to cultivate (Hamlin et al., 2007).

Against this background, this paper discusses artistic skills acquisition and teaching competencies in instructional delivery within the classroom.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Effective Instruction**

School districts throughout Nigeria focus on providing educational opportunities that enable all students to achieve their fullest potential. The success level that each student experiences in Nigerian schools is contingent upon the skills and professional capabilities of the teachers they encounter through their schooling years. Effective teachers make teaching and learning visible in the classroom. Students in effective teachers' classrooms are actively involved in the learning process when the teacher allows the students to be actively involved in the learning process. That is, when the outcome of the learning experience becomes strongest, thereby enabling the teacher to achieve his/her goals, rather than when the teacher does everything alone (Kimbell & Stables, 2007). Research consistently highlights that one critical school improvement factor is effective instruction (Serig, 2018). Additionally, no single school-related variable has more impact on student achievement than teaching. The complexity of teaching has influenced the development of effective instructional frameworks. Frameworks communicate school districts' beliefs on effective teaching. A framework offers teachers a structure to organise their practices and improve their efforts. These structures provide a commitment to the growth and professional development of their teachers and administrators. Instructional frameworks are a synthesis of teaching behaviours that promote student learning at high levels, support teachers and

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administrators, and are developed based on extensive research and learning theories. The framework offers a road map for novice teachers, guidance for the experienced educator, and structure to improve instruction.

The act of teaching and what a teacher does in the classroom are pivotal in the development of an instructional framework. Effective instructional frameworks offer all teachers an explicit instructional roadmap of inquiry-based instructional practices, strategies, and models, resulting in academic achievement. These frameworks are research-based planning tools that promote and sustain a common professional language among educators with clearly defined goals and expectations and common outcomes for students. Instructional frameworks are coherent belief systems that foster commitment and accountability to student learning. Among the most commonly used frameworks in schools that focus on improving the quality of education are Danielson's Framework for Teaching, Marzano's "The Art and Science of Teaching" framework, and Stronge's Framework for Effective Teaching: Qualities of Effective Teachers (Serig, 2018).

## **Artistic Skills Acquisition in the Classroom**

The question of what constitutes artistic skills acquisition is deeply linked to the question of why we should make fine arts part of our teaching skills. It is not surprising that when arts educators talk about excellence, they also express ideas about the fundamental purposes of arts education – ideas about what students ought to learn through fine arts and why these outcomes are important. King & Houston (2007) mentioned many purposes, and most of them cluster into a handful of broad areas. For example, many arts educators believe that one of the important purposes of arts education is to foster broad dispositions and habits of mind, especially the capacity to think creatively and the capacity to make connections. Many also believe that fine arts education should help students develop aesthetic awareness and visual observation skills and provide venues for self-expression and self-exploration (Boughton, 2004).

It is notable that most of the people believe that good arts programmes tend to serve several purposes simultaneously. Though arts programmes differ widely in their contexts, goals, art forms, and constituencies, a hallmark sign of artistic skills acquisition in any programme is that the learning experiences are rich and complex for all learners, engaging them on many levels and helping them learn and grow in a variety of ways (Cleveland, 2000). Quality arts education reveals itself "in the room" through

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four different lenses. When you ask arts educators what they take to be the signs of high-quality arts education, they are as likely to point to features of the experience in the setting itself as they are to broad purposes and outcomes. These experiential elements are what you would expect to observe or infer if you opened the door onto a classroom, studio, or rehearsal hall and looked for markers of quality. There are multiple kinds of markers, and one way to look for them is to examine the experience through four different but overlapping lenses: learning, pedagogy, community dynamics, and environment (Jacobsson & Jałocha, 2019). These lenses all focus on the same experience, but each one brings a different dimension into view. The learning lens focuses on what students are actually doing in the classroom – the kinds of projects and tasks in which they are involved and the character of their engagement. The pedagogy lens focuses on how teachers conceive of and practise their craft – how they conceptualise the teacher-student relationship and how they design and implement instruction.

The community dynamics lens reveals the nature of the social relationships in the classroom, including relationships among the students themselves, between students and teachers, and among the teachers and other adults who are present. The environment lens focuses on concrete elements such as the physical space of the classroom, the materials and physical resources available, and the kind of time students are given – hours as well as years – to engage in arts learning. Foundational decisions matter. Foundational, programme-defining decisions that give a programme its identity and provide the parameters within which quality is pursued (Schoper & Ingason, 2019). These decisions include:

- i. Who teaches the arts?
- ii. Where are the arts taught?
- iii. What is taught and how? and
- iv. How is arts learning assessed?

Scholars have written extensively about these decisions, and they often take sharply opposing positions. In practice, however, the ways in which high-quality programmes answer these questions tend to be nuanced and contextualised, often embodying high principles and pragmatic concerns at the same time. Decisions and decision-makers at all levels affect quality. Many decision-makers play a critical role in the quality of arts learning experiences. These include people quite distant from the

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classroom (e.g., administrators, funders, policy makers), those just outside the room – notably programme staff and parents – and those who are “in the room” (students, teachers, artists). Decisions made by those “in the room” have tremendous power to support as well as undermine the quality of the learning experience. This is especially true of students, and it is important for students to be as aware as possible of the potential impact of their choices on their own and others' learning experiences. This may seem obvious, but the role of student choice is often overlooked in discussions of quality, and it invites greater attention (Magano et al., 2020).

Reflection and dialogue are important at all levels. An overarching theme across many of the findings of this study is that continuous reflection and discussion about what constitutes quality and how to achieve it is not only a catalyst for quality but also a sign of quality. In other words, thinking deeply about quality – talking about it, worrying about it, continually revisiting ideas about its characteristics and its indicators – is essential both to the pursuit of excellence in fine arts education and to its achievement. This discussion has led us to view deeply some broad purposes of fine arts education as follows:

## **Seven Broad Purposes of Fine Arts Education**

- I. Fine Arts Education should foster broad dispositions and skills, especially the capacity to think creatively and the capacity to make connections. When speaking about the important purposes of arts education, one of the outcomes people mentioned most often is the development of key habits of mind: the capacity to think creatively and the capacity to make unusual connections. When people speak of these capacities, they often call them “dispositions” or general “habits of mind”, consistent with a growing movement in the literature to refer to the habits of mind taught by the arts (Magano et al. 2020).
- ii. Fine Arts Education should teach artistic skills and techniques without making these primary. The learning of artistic methods and techniques is often cited as a central purpose of quality in traditional arts education, and this is borne out in what is assessed by the College Board's Advanced Placement program (Budano & Williamson, 2020). Though most people we talked with acknowledge the legitimacy of this purpose, we heard no arguments for the extreme ends of the continuum. No one claimed that the teaching of technique should dominate arts

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learning experiences. However, there are varying views about the importance of technique, both within and across art forms, including strong views – and often concerns – about the relationship between students' technical development and their artistic development and about the balance between technique and expression.

- iii. Fine arts education should develop aesthetic awareness. Many believe that an important purpose of arts education is to develop students' capacity to see things from an aesthetic perspective. This includes learning to recognise the aesthetic dimensions of the world around them, learning to make qualitative discernments and judgements, and learning to actively shape their own aesthetic environments. This theme is consistent with those of prominent arts education theorists.
- iv. Fine Arts Education practices should provide ways of pursuing understanding of the world. Many of our interviewees told us that an important purpose of arts education is to help students understand that the arts are themselves a mode of understanding. Art is a means by which human beings understand things holistically. It enables one to investigate, explore new ideas and critically think and innovate in ways other disciplines do not. It allows one to express their deep imaginations and share one's world in potent and productive ways. Arts education should provide a way for students to engage with community, civic, and social issues. Many people we spoke with told us that one important purpose of arts education is to empower students to understand and affect their role in community and society (Seidel et al., 2023). This theme is also well-represented in recent literature on arts education. Examples of such are cited in Adams & Goldard, 2002; Boal & Jackson, 2016.
- v. Fine Arts Education should help students develop as individuals. Our interviewees frequently placed special emphasis on the role that arts play in students' developing sense of themselves as individuals and the role the arts play in students' relation to others. Several of the outcomes we've discussed thus far could be considered forms of personal development. The significant role the arts can play in helping students see that they have something to offer – that they have a voice and the ability and credibility to contribute to society – has already been

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discussed in the purpose of artistic expression. In many sites that emphasise youth development, a space is provided for students to find and exercise their voice and effect change.

## **Teaching Competencies in Instructional Delivery in the Classroom**

Competence can be defined as the ability to do something which is acquired by training, while acquisition is the gaining of something for oneself (Webster 1995). Skill acquisition, therefore, is the ability of an individual acquired through training which enables the individual to effectively carry out a function for the benefit of self and mankind. The teaching effectiveness of any teacher is predicated on the acquisition of core skills or competences by the teacher. For quality teaching aimed at sound and balanced education of learners for useful living within the society, such skills or competences should spread through the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. According to Asiyai (2008), teaching skills are the specific teacher behaviours systematically designed to help the classroom instruction become effective and meaningful in the teaching and learning process. The teaching skills include:

- i. **Effective Classroom Teaching:** The Federal Ministry of Education in Ingwu & Ekefre (2006) defined effectiveness as the extent to which the goals or objectives of a school programme are accomplished. Thus, effectiveness can be seen in relation to the quality or equality of educational instruction given to learners. It is a measure of the degree to which, in a school setting, the inputs produce desired outputs. In the view of Anikweze (2004), effectiveness is the extent to which the teacher's behaviour, indicated by his teaching style, produces expected outcomes in the learner. The teacher should be competent in teaching even in terms of pedagogy. He must exhibit good knowledge of the subject matter and utilise such knowledge in the manipulation of teaching skills. This knowledge of subject matter is reflected in the teacher's ability to write clear and meaningful lesson notes daily.
- ii. **Classroom Management and Control Skills:** The teacher must be competent in classroom management and control during instruction. The ability of the teacher to manage and control the classroom effectively from the beginning to the end of a lesson is of utmost importance in assessing teacher effectiveness (Adzongo & Olaitan, 2019). The teacher must be skilled in controlling external factors that influence attention and his ability to teach and convey competence in subject

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matter. Meaningful teaching and learning directed at the achievement of objectives cannot be realised in an uncondusive classroom characterised by different behaviour problems of students. He should be competent in the utilisation of various classroom management techniques to maintain decorum during instruction.

- iii. **Enhanced Reasoning Skills:** The teacher should possess an enhanced reasoning ability which leads to better understanding of situations. This reasoning ability fosters in the teachers' analytical and systematic problem-solving and thus develops a constructive critical mind. The teacher must be skilled in fast reasoning and decision-making.
- iv. **Creative Imagination Skills:** Igborgbor in IPMA (2015) defined creativity as the art of devising and implementing new and better ways of doing things and thus, contributing to the development of the society. Effective teaching requires the acquisition of imaginative and creative skills by the teacher. Imagination and creativity are the dual qualities on which hinge the functional efficiency of the professionally qualified. The teachers' ability to bring new ideas into the new lesson, visualise, foresee and generate ideas are measures of creativity. The degree to which a teacher invests his imaginative talents into his teaching depends on his creative thinking skills. When a teacher exercises creative imagination, it will lead to creative efficiency in the teaching, making the learning process exciting, interesting and meaningful.
- v. **Variety and Resourcefulness Skills:** Variety and resourcefulness are important teaching skills. For effective teaching, the teacher should use a variety of teaching techniques to manage the classroom interaction (Adzongo & Olaitan, 2019). He should be able to vary the teaching methods and strategies to meet the needs of the individual student. The teacher's resourcefulness is reflected by his ability to employ various strategies while delivering the lesson to make the lesson interesting to the students and thus enhance their understanding of the topic taught. The teacher is the most important catalyst in any educational venture. The teacher, acting like a catalyst, speeds up any reaction leading to better understanding of concepts by students. He does this by the introduction of appropriate teaching aids and variety needed to make students eager or

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enthusiastic to learn. The use of appropriate examples, planned repetition, relevant stories and teaching aids accelerates learning by students.

- vi. **Knowledge of Subject Matter:** Lassa (2000) believes that the knowledge of subject matter is a major skill to be assessed of an effective teacher. An effective teacher should exhibit sufficient knowledge of subject matter in his area of specialisation. This is reflected by his ability to make the lesson meaningful to students, teach the topics effectively following systematic procedures, provide enough and relevant teaching aids, utilise good questioning techniques, make appropriate chalkboard summaries and evaluate instruction.
- vii. **Use of instructional material enhances the learners' motivation and interest:** The teacher should develop artistic skills that can enable him/her to attract the learners' attention all the time during the teaching-learning process in order to achieve the learning outcomes at the end of the class instruction. It should be understood that artistic skills are essential skills that must be acquired by every teacher in the classroom no matter the field of study, whether it be science, arts or social sciences. It enables the teacher some level of confidence and flexibility as far as the provision of instructional resources is concerned. The teacher with artistic skills can readily improvise instructional resources whenever the need arises, whether with or without the use of a computer or technologies.

## **Problems Facing Artistic Skills Acquisition in Teacher Education**

Teacher education in Nigeria is being hived by a lot of problems which seem to militate against the acquisition of teaching skills and competences among teachers. These problems include the following:

- i. **Inadequate Funds:** The inadequate mobilisation of funds from diversified sources vis-à-vis the failure to prioritise the use of available funds for areas of urgent need like infrastructural and instructional facilities, equipment, teacher education and wasteful spending were problems confronting teacher education in Nigeria. The issue of poor financing has been a biting one in Nigeria. Funds are not readily available. The lack of funds makes it difficult for school administrators to organise workshops for training and retraining of teachers to enhance the acquisition of teaching skills and update knowledge.

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- ii. **Inadequate Infrastructural and Instructional Facilities:** Inadequate infrastructural and instructional facilities have been a problem plaguing the education industry in Nigeria at all levels. Teacher preparation institutions are dotted with dilapidated infrastructures and instructional facilities, like well-equipped laboratories, libraries, textbooks and furniture needed for quality teacher preparation. The inadequacy of educational facilities amidst overcrowding in schools hinders meaningful teaching and learning.
- iii. **Poor Conditions of Service:** Poor conditions of service are a constraint against teacher education in Nigeria. Oftentimes, the academic calendar is disrupted as a result of strike actions by the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT). The incessant strike actions are linked with poor conditions of service of teachers due to irregular payment of salaries and allowances, stagnation, lack of infrastructure, over-stressed facilities, delayed implementation of payment of Teachers Salary Scale (TSS) and a generally unconducive school environment, e.g., an unwholesome office, a poor common room and lack of Information Communication Technology (ICT). It is not an overstatement to say that the Nigerian teacher is the least motivated. An earlier study by Asiyai (2008) revealed that the good school environment, good condition of service and employment status of teachers influence the effectiveness of teachers.
- iv. **Lack of Teacher Commitment:** The lack of commitment on the part of teachers is a problem of the teacher education programmes in Nigeria. Most of the teachers are not committed to the teaching job. This situation appears to hinder the acquisition and exhibition of teaching skills amongst teachers. However, Ingwu (2004), cited in IPMA (2015), posited that the efforts a teacher puts into teaching is governed by the level of training he possesses. Besides, commitment by an individual to organisational effectiveness is associated with the rewards attached to his performance. Teacher commitment to the teaching profession is very critical for quality teaching and learning. Nwachukwu (1997), cited in IPMA (2015), lamented that a profession that offers no job security when he is either retrenched or recruited without much preparation is bound to produce disorganised work orientation and poor work attitude. The low nature of entry, certification and exit in and out of the teaching profession is a major instigator of divided attention and non-committed attitude.

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- v. **Lack of Awareness on the Role of Fine Arts in Teacher Education:** Unfortunately, there is either poor or a total lack of awareness of the vital role artistic skills acquisition plays on the part of the professional teacher, or rather the regular teacher, for a holistic delivery of the teaching and learning process. The concentration has always been placed on knowledge of subject matter, which of course is very important for the teacher's impartation on the students. Be it as it may, even though the mastery of the subject matter to be taught is very important, the teacher should also have a wholesome development in terms of acquisition of these artistic skills in order to be fully prepared for the classroom work he is expecting to face without having challenges, especially in the developing world like Nigeria, where some of these technological facilities may not be adequately put into place. The acquisition of artistic skills enables the teacher to take charge of the development of instructional resources for his task in the classroom ahead.
- vi. **Lack of Awareness of Fine Arts as the Foundation of all Learning:** Aside from the acquisition of skills, there is also the factor that deals with the connection of artistic learning as the foundation of all learning, in science, mathematics, technology, and so on and so forth. Udi & Nwosu (2023) assert that research evidence as reported by Jensen (2001) conducted at Columbia University shows that subjects such as mathematics, science, and linguistics need complicated intellectual activities and innovative abilities typical of arts learning. Engagement in arts improves the processes of education, cultural awareness, creativity, emotional expression and holistic well-being of a learner.

## Conclusion

Aside from primary and secondary education, artistic skills acquisition has been discussed and empirically underpinned for various professional disciplines such as medical education, nursing education, pedagogics, and management education. The research subject being situated in school and university education, as well as an assumed methodological pragmatism, has led to a body of empirical research that relies on students as research participants, be it within a qualitative or a quantitative approach. Studies involving professionals are rare, although they provide a better base for the transferability of findings to the workplace. Hereafter, research on artistic skills acquisition in teaching competences was carried out with professionally experienced people. The findings cover interventions related to visual arts, theatre, dance, choir

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singing, expressive writing, or poetry. With only two exceptions, all studies pursued a qualitative approach, which affects the generalisability of the research results so far.

## Recommendations

Hence, the following recommendations are made:

- I. The political leadership should invest lavishly in artistic skills competencies in teacher preparation institutions.
- ii. The conditions of service of Nigerian teachers should be improved and made competitive with those of other professions.
- iii. Diversification of funding of education through active involvement of non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, wealthy individuals and religious organisations will help ensure adequate funding of education.
- iv. The education programme should be competency-based, not experience-based.

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