The History of Fine and Applied Arts Department Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Port Harcourt, Nigerian

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Abstract

This paper is a critical appraisal of the past and constructively engages the present realities of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts in the Faculty of Humanities, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education in Port Harcourt. It was the intention of the authors to bring to update historical facts, re-interpret the findings and conclusions of early writers. To achieve this goal, some unique elements to enhance our understanding of the Department's odyssey has been introduced. The authors in re-stating the circumstances surrounding the establishment, the nurture and the growth of the Department overtime also emphasized the vital contributions of the Department to the University as well as the larger society. It was also proper to highlight some of the challenges and prospects before the department as we navigate into the unpredictable future. The study used both primary and secondary sources in its research methodology and concluded that the history of the department is crucial and educative to staff and students and serves as a legacy, a road map which leads to a better destination. It recommended that both staff and students have a firm grasp of the knowledge of the history of the department in order to advance the course of study in the modern times.

Keywords: Art History, Department of Fine & Applied Arts, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Development, Roadmap, Legacy

Introduction

Identifying the need to rehabilitate primary education at the end of the civil war in 1970, the Military Administration in Rivers State headed by Commander Alfred Dapapereye Diete-Spiff, established an Advanced Teacher's Training College (ATTC) in 1971 along the lines of Tasie Blueprint of 1970 which conformed to the view of the Commissioner of Education, Hon. Wenike Briggs (Wikipedia, 1970). With the cooperation of United States' Aid USAID (www.usaid.gov/1970), the College opened in 1972 with a few students and teachers at the Catholic Mission's Stella Marris College, Agrey road, Port Harcourt, under the superintendent of Dr. William Maxwell Jnr., a representative of USAID in the State Ministry of Education (www.iaue.edu.ng). In 1974, Edict 10 of the Military Administration enabled the College to operate as a corporate body under a Governing Committee (www.editmedia.org). The Edict seem not to allow for flexibility in academic growth in the light of the State's educational goals, Edict 11 of 1975 was promulgated to enhance academic growth hence, the birth of Rivers State College of Education, Port Harcourt, with provisions for a Governing Council, a Provost, and its affiliation to University of Ibadan (www.ijilpm.com.ng).

History and Development of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts

In 1978, Rivers State College of Education established the Department of Fine and Applied Arts to teach Art and award Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) to its students at graduation. The department offered two visual arts programmes. One in the Fine and Applied Arts Department at Rumuolumeni, the main campus, and the other in the Creative Arts Unit of the Faculty of Primary Education at Orominieke Dline, Port Harcourt. The department started with three staff and six students including Mr. Anthony U. Okpara, who piloted the affairs of the Department, as the first Head of Department (HOD). The major objectives of the programme at Rumuolumeni was to provide students with appropriate intellectual and professional awareness in the light of their future roles in the school system as well as in professional visual arts practice; to encourage attitude of informed inquiry in approaching visual arts education problems, the solution of which calls for the scholarly discretion; and to stimulate students sufficiently to become maximally flexible and easily adaptable to inevitable social change (David-West, 1984). Initially, students studied courses and specialized in their choice of any of the under-listed subject combinations:

FAA/English Language
FAA/Christian Religious Studies
FAA/French
FAA/Geography
FAA/History

FAA/Political Science and
FAA/Music in 1990 – 1992

In the light of the growing awareness of the significance of specialized teacher education in the Visual Arts to Nigerian's social growth, the College made Fine and Applied Arts a double major course for the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) as it is the case in Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) programme in 1992.

The programme at Orominieke was designed to encourage students to inquire into the various aspects of the creative arts as a necessary factor in human growth, and relate inquiry to methods of teaching the creative arts in primary schools with a view to developing more relevant creative arts curriculum to the overall educational objectives, and to develop visual sensitivity with a view to acquiring visual literacy. Mrs. Elizabeth David-West was the head of the unit and taught students Advanced Drawing and Painting, Style and Composition, and supervised FAA Studio Projects in Painting. Students opted for Creative Arts as a minor for NCE graduation with specialization in Primary Education. The two programmes were later merged and domiciled in the Department of Fine and Applied Arts in Rumuolumeni campus.

An important landmark in the history of the College was its upgrading to Degree Programme Institution (DPI) by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1980. The implications of this upgrading were outlined by the Provost, Professor G. O. M. Tasie, in a welcome address at the first International Conference of Graphic Designers' Association (ICOGRADA), an Africa Regional Conference convened in 1982 at the College under the auspices of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, when the Provost stated inter alia: "… it also marked the beginning of some more serious awareness within and about the College. In addition to a new strength, some internationally known and respected scholars whose presence now adorns the college…" (David-West, 1984). This spectacular event brought art and artists to lime light in the institution. Fine and Applied Arts Department of this great institution has since gained regional and global visibility. By the year 1981, the first set of Bachelor of Education degree student in the Department of Fine and Applied Arts was admitted and graduated in 1984. Throughout the period, the department at the B.Ed level served the General Studies (GS) course titled "Basis of Arts" the course was deigned to introduce general concepts of arts, its elements, principles and some basic forms of Nigerian Art History and Art Appreciation to none art students (Omuaru, 2013). The course was stopped in 2014 and yet to continue as a result of bureaucratic bottle necks (academic politics) in the system. Since that time, the department operated two distinct programmes, NCE and B.Ed and graduated students accordingly. Between then and now,

there has been several changes in the programme and leadership of the department as reflected below. Over the years, there has been accelerated increase in students' enrolment. As at 1984, the number of academic staff were twelve (12) saddled with academic responsibilities. In 1998, the population of students rose up to two hundred (200) and on staff record were thirteen (13) lecturers and four (4) non-teaching staff.

The First-Generation Lecturers 1984



Dr. Haig David-West
HOD, FAA
Taught Visual Communication, Design, Ekistics, Art Education.



Dr. Wojciech Sztaba
Served as FAA Academic Adviser for Bed students; taught courses in History of Art, Art Criticism, and Aesthetics.



Anthony Okpara
Served as FAA Academic Adviser for NCE students; taught: Drawing, Visual Communication Design and Language of Colour.



Joseph Awani
Served as FAA Examination Coordinator, FAA Exhibitions Coordinator;



Elizabeth David West
Head of Creative Arts Unit; Taught Advanced Drawing and Painting, Styles and Composition and supervised FAA Studio Project in Painting.



Danate Tariah
Taught Crafts; Introduction to Printmaking and supervised FAA Studio Project in Fabric and Textile Design.



Taribo Briggs
Taught Introduction to Creative Arts, Advanced Drawing and Painting.



Pius Waritimi
Taught Drawing, Painting, Careers in the Visual Arts, Visual Communication Design and Print.



Sylvester Ganagana
Served as Supervisor FAA Professional Services Unit; taught remedial art courses in the Faculty of Remedial and Extra-Mural Studies

In 1991/1992 academic session, a Statement of Academic Policy was released in the school, committing programmes of study to run under schools instead of faculties. The policy that committed tertiary institutions in the country to run their programmes under school system and no longer faculty also permitted expansion of programmes. Based on this development, Vocational Education was created and Fine and Applied Arts department, Home Economics and Business Education departments joined Agricultural Science with Technical Education to form School of Vocational and Technical Education (VOTECH). Before this time, Agricultural Science and Technical Education which occupy a vast land at Ndele were the only two departments at Ndele campus known as Vocational and Technical Education of the institution. The Department of Fine and Applied Arts moved from Rumuolumeni in 1992 to Ndele campus where accommodation was not an issue to anyone.

In the year 2010, the Rivers State College of Education was by law upgraded to the status of a full-fledge University with the name Rivers State University of Education, Port Harcourt and was later renamed after the immediate past Council Chairman, Ambassador Ignatius Ajuru of blessed memory to immortalize him after his brutal murder by unknown gun men. Meanwhile, the Department of Fine and Applied Arts has expanded its degree course contents. The department has in addition to its specialization in studio disciplines of Painting, Graphic Design, Ceramics, Sculpture and Textile Design with their studios, machineries, tools and materials, extended its scope to drawing, art education, art history with study spaces as well as art gallery, e-library and conference hall fully functioning. Bachelor of Arts Education degree certificate is being issued to persons who successfully complete the four years intensive course studies, internships: Teaching Practice (TP) and Industrial Training (IT) of six (6) months. When the policy of school system reversed to the former faculty system, the Faculty of Arts was renamed Humanities. The restructure of the faculties and programmes gave Fine and Applied Arts Department the opportunity to pull out from Vocational and Technical Education at Ndele back to Faculty of Humanities at Rumuolumeni in Port Harcourt. This latter development caused the department to relocate from Ndele back to Rumuolumeni to join the faculty in 2015/2016 academic session and has fully been integrated into Humanities with its own edifice.



Edifice of Fine and Applied Arts Department.

At present, the expansion of the programme ushered in courses for Bachelor of Arts (B.A) degree and Post Graduate studies in various units of Fine and Applied Arts, as in Painting, Sculpture, Graphics, Ceramics, Textile and Fashion Design, Art History and Art Education

respectively. The department has graduated students who have made her proud as they become worthy ambassadors in their places of work. The academic staff strength has improved in status and in number up to seventeen (17) and the department now boosts of a Professor, Readers, Senior lecturers, and others with Ph.D. Few of the lecturers are engaged in Post Graduate Studies at either the Masters or Ph.D level as at the time of this writing. There are also four (4) non-academic staff in the department. The academic staff have been involved in a number of academic exercises, such as teaching and research, art exhibitions, publishing articles in reputable journals, taking part in workshops and art seminar, and attending conferences. All question papers and examination results are committed to internal and external moderation for standardization; so far the results are impressive. In the past few years, the department has actively contributed and is still contributing to the development of the university. Structurally, the department was instrumental in the design and production of the university logo and the sign writing of the university gate. The department has projected the image of the university to the admiration of friends and visitors, and the school community by mounting sculptural pieces, graphic design and paintings of interesting concepts in strategic areas and donated three giant sculptural pieces in collaboration with her former student/lecturer, Prof. S.W. Ganagana, who created the works during his sabbatical in the department to the university, his Alma matter.



Ganagana, 2016. Educational Icon

The beautification of the school fence in front of the main gate with pieces of relief sculpture as community service. The department is grateful to the university management for this opportunity. The department is ready to synergize with any 'body' or group of people to continually uplift the statues of the university campuses aesthetically.

Structure and Course Content

The effective organization of the experiences, skills, powers and tendencies of the candidate is the first condition for the development and growth of the course of study not only as an intellectual discipline worthy of study, but also as an artisanal subject worthy of study for the practical skills of the do-it-yourself candidate. The purposes of the curriculum of the subject, therefore, are two folds:

1. The development of the individual candidate's experiences, skills, tendencies and powers for the fulfillment of their creative powers and will.
2. To develop the skills, tendencies and powers of the candidates so that they may achieve developments of their powers for use as effective creative skills that would contribute to the development and growth of their immediate constituency, Rivers State and Nigeria as a country. The development and growth would be channeled for state and national development through the paradigm of technological development. Visual art is at the heart of that discourse

It is the creative and skilled artist that is the subject matter, Fine and Applied Arts, which is at the center of the building block of the nation's economy through training for full time practice. For all intents and purposes in a "candidate centered" school system, the highly skilled Artist is indispensable partners for the creative needs of the society. This caliber of artist and workforce is also indispensable for the acquisition of the practical skills that may offer opportunities for the child's growth and development in a post goals of the curriculum of study that is summarized as follows; provide the candidate with:

i. appropriate skills and technological proficiency that are needed for self-development and national growth;
ii. effective translation of creative design to finished products;
iii. the need to upgrade the level of aesthetics and cultural awareness in the candidates; and
iv. to guide the eventual development and growth of the candidates' effective use of their creative skills, tendencies and powers to, not only, enhance the quality of his art work, but in the long term add a fresh breath to quality of living.

The outlook expressed by the foregoing view of the long term goal of higher institution art training draws attention to the priority alluded to the place of the practicing artist and

others (as principal partners) in the paradigm shift in the curricula of higher institutions for visual arts. The need for Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) to choose the caliber of academic staff in the department of Fine and Applied Arts (FAA) is informed by that regime (Chukueggu, 2021). Hence, the curriculum reflects the on-going change in the art world, and the demands of the new knowledge transfer. Long held aesthetic principles and deliberate euro-centralisms in the curricula are reviewed to Africa based and internationally needed curricula. As the candidate grows in the study of art in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, he/she is made to look beyond the mere purpose of making art for palsy money making, instead they are made by dint of the curriculum of study to engage art in the pursuit of knowledge through study, practice and research. It is, therefore, significant to note that the often fascinating ways of talking and critiquing finished art works is important to research; and the growth and development to the studio products. That "talking and critiquing" of art works opens up new vistas for the candidate. One such vista is the creative development of art materials through the use of simple common place and local materials. This is the creative turn that the curriculum now reflects. It should be noted that Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt since 2019/2020 session offer professional and academic programmes simultaneously. The details of the wide range of courses and contents offered in these two progammes are located in the Department of Fine and Applied Arts Handbook, (www.iaue.edu.ng).

List of Academic Staff from Inception to Date

(1.) Mr. Anthony U. Okpara - - HOD (1978 – 1980)
(2.) Dr. Pryde Haig David-West - HOD (1980 – 1985)
(3.) Dr. Wojciech Sztaba
(4) Mr. Joseph G. O. C. Awani HOD (1985-1992; 1999-2002; 2007 - 2008)
(5) Mrs. Elizabeth David-West
(6) Mr. Danate Tariah
(7) Mr. Taribo Briggs
(8) Mr. Benibo Whyte - - HOD (1995 – 1996)
(9) Mr. Eugene Cookson Briggs - HOD (1992 - 1995; 2005 – 2007)
(10) Mr. John Ogene
(11) Mr. Nics Ugbogu
(12) Mrs. Edwina Pepple
(13) Prof. Sylvester Winikado Ganagana HOD (1996–1999; 2015-2016 Sabbatical)
(14) Mr. Pious Waritimi
(15) Dr. Charles G. T. Umuaru HOD (2008 – 2014; 2018 - 2021)
(16) Mr. Augustus Nato Emiemekumo
(17) Ms. Rorba Benibo (Deseased)

(18) Mr. Johnson Ekpeton (Deseased)
(19) Mr. Samuel Ndu Osita (Deseased)
(20) Dr. Ugochukwu Kingsley Nwombu
(21) Dr. Nelson Graves - - HOD (2014 – 2015; 2016 – 2018)
(22) Dr. Sotonye Allen Orubu - HOD (2021 – till date)
(23) Dr. Morrison Elenwo
(24) Mrs. Charity Chinnah
(25) Dr. Nkem Onyeche
(26) Mr. Godspower Ike Jonah
(27) Dr. Urekwere Amadi Joe-Mgbakiri
(28) Mr. Nkemakolam Alikor
(29) Dr. Charlotte Tam-George
(30) Mr. Tito Gbeneakor
(31) Mr. Johnson Dada



Academic Lecturers 2015/2016 Session

Challenges of the Department

1. Shortage of staff in the department: lack of replacement of staff who disengaged from service either by retirement or death.
2. Obsolete equipment and tools which hamper the practice of arts.

3. Lack of fund; the department of fine and applied arts is not well funded, as such, modern study facilities and art materials are not adequately supplied for use.
4. Lack of grant/sponsorship for research: staff are not sponsored for conferences, workshops, symposia, art exhibitions and book publications.
5. Students' nonchalant attitudes towards art learning; many of the art students do not take lectures seriously which adversely affect their academic performances.

Prospects

1. The department wishes to collaborate with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Corporate Bodies, and Private Individuals to position the department in the proper place of an enviable and attractive discipline of study.
2. A good number of persons particularly art students do not know about the relevance of departmental history to their scholarship. Fine and Applied Arts is indeed a lucrative field of study which could assist students to be self-employed at graduation. We therefore, call on the Government and relevant agencies, to consider these identified challenges of the department for her growth.

Conclusion

This paper concluded that the history of Fine and Applied Arts Department in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt is crucial and informative to staff and students in the department. It stands as a legacy, a road map that leads to better destination. It is the knowledge of the past that prepares one for the future. The history of the department stands to serve as a legacy for present and future generations of the department. The study indeed ascertained that Fine and Applied Arts is a lucrative field of study which could assist Government in combating the serious challenges of unemployment in the country.

Recommendations

This paper recommended that:

1. Staff and students should take advantage of this paper and be familiar with the history of the department.
2. Government should fund the art department to enhance productivity.

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