

# **VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL APPROACHES IN ART AND DESIGN AT SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL IN ZIMABWE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*In Zimbabwe the vocational-technical approach in Art and Design at secondary school level is being implemented albeit with some challenges in Masvingo urban district. UNESCO (2003) define vocational technical approach to education as that which leads learners to the acquisition of knowledge, skills and technical knowhow necessary for employment in a particular trade, occupation or group of occupations. Vocational –technical approach seeks to create a sound basis for a subsequent career in a specific sector of the employment system. By teaching vocational skills, the hope has been that students would easily be employable when they leave school and become more productive. Another significant goal of vocational- technical is skilling the young ones for self-employment. The Nziramasanga Commission of 1999 Report recommended that practical and technical subjects should be vocationalised. This entails that the secondary school curriculum should be designed by all stakeholders including commerce and industry. This qualitative study employed questionnaires, interviews and document analysis as means to collect data. The challenges to the implementation of the vocational technical approach in teaching and learning Art and design encompasses lack of funding, lack of infrastructure and teacher incompetence. There is little time allocated to Art and design in schools, lack of virtuosity among pupils. The study found out that there is selective offering of topics rather than a wholesome syllabus approach. The curriculum is Eurocentric negating African art. There is no clear cut government policy on art education. As a result, vocational –technical education is not being fully implanted due to lack of resources and general interest of stakeholders.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Vocational-technical, Challenges, Implementation, Curriculum, Art and Design.*

## Background to the Study

In Zimbabwe, the Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training (CIET) (1999) recommended the institutionalisation of the Vocational-technical education. Art and design is one of the subjects which was recommended to be offered under the Vocational-technical approach. The learners can be skilled by art and design as a subject in preparation for them to be employed in the field of work and curb unemployment and boost economic production in Zimbabwe.

Some of the challenges in art and design education are; the current secondary art syllabus fails to fully prepare the learners with entrepreneurial skills and employment skills. Mandiudza et al (2011) observes that there was apparent lack of a national policy regarding the purpose and aims of art education in schools and the government is a crucial stakeholder in the teaching and learning of Art and Design. There were conflicting circulars underpinning the implementation of art as a vocational-technical subject resulting in some heads leaving art from their school and making the implementation of art as a technical-vocational subject a challenge. In Zimbabwe there is no coordination amongst government, commerce industry and other stakeholders. Middleton (1998) argues that most of their TVET or TVSD systems benefit from close communication and linkages with the private sector. Mamvuto (2013:44) argues that art remained marginalised, mineralised and under-valued because of the above problems.

Time tabling, little time allocation and total absence of the Art and Design subject in most Zimbabwean secondary schools due to school heads attitude towards the subject are some of the current problems facing the implementation of the vocational-technical education approach generally. Lancaster (1982); Siyakwazi (1997) and Abraham (2000) aptly contend that lack of resources has kept the subject elitist and limited to private schools. These schools can afford materials and equipment. Most government and local council schools lack the financial capabilities to fully finance the consumables and equipment required for art and design to run at full throttle.

## Conceptual Framework

### Definitions of Vocational-technical education

In this study vocational-technical education refers to the provision of practical subjects within the school curriculum in order to skill and orient pupils into vocational-technical skills which will enable them to find employment or start their businesses. Bacchus, (1988:31) defines vocational

education as "... efforts by schools to include in their curriculum, those 'practical' subjects which are likely to generate among the students, some basic knowledge, skills, and dispositions that might prepare them to think of becoming skilled workers or to enter other manual occupations. UNESCO (1984: 23) defines vocational education as that which is "...designed to prepare skilled personnel at lower levels of qualification for one or group of occupations, trades or jobs."

Nherera (1992:32) states that the term 'vocationalisation' describes attempts by schools to relate education to the world of work. It refers to the provision of vocational education at secondary school level that will lead to possible direct employment.

Lauglo (2004) Vocationalized secondary education refers to a curriculum which remains overwhelmingly general or 'academic' in nature, but which includes vocational or practical subjects as a minor portion of the students' timetable during the secondary school course. Under vocationalization, the bulk of the students' timetable consists of general education subjects, and the main purpose of their course is general education. Thus, a distinctive feature of vocationalized secondary education is that vocational subject matter takes only a minor portion of total curriculum time.

## **Perceived vocational-education challenges implementation in art education at secondary school in Zimbabwe**

Some researchers have made findings to the challenges in the implementation of Art and design as a vocational-technical subject, these include funding, stigmatisation of F2 schools, teacher incompetence, lack of clear policy and aims among others. Inadequate funding and high cost of art materials of art is part of problems bedeviling the offering of Art and Design at secondary school level. In developed capitalist countries Vocational-education was introduced as a 'lower' form of education for working class children. The notion that Vocational-education was of lower status than academic was passed on to countries which were colonised by western industrialised countries (Nherera 1994:67) Mamvuto (2013:44) posits that the position of practical subjects, among them Art and Design, in the academic hierarchy has always been a precarious and bottom most rung both in Zimbabwe and elsewhere. Teacher competency is an integral component in the implementation of the vocational-technical education in Art and Design education. Teacher competence is required in interpreting the syllabus, understanding the vision and objectives of the syllabus and lesson delivery, use of information and communication technology among others.

## **John Lancaster observations and recommendations to Zimbabwean Art and Design education**

John Lancaster in Lancaster (1982:296) made observations and recommendations when he visited Zimbabwe as an examiner and external advisor of Art and Design to Zimbabwe on. He observed that few schools were offering the subject and recommended art be made compulsory, there should be more research done and publications done in the Art and Design area. He observed that there was rather a frightening dearth of substantial resources necessary to develop aesthetic understanding and artistic appreciation of both historical and current trends in art and crafts.

He hinted that Zimbabwe should start from its local ancient and contemporary artistic culture and move forward. Zimbabwe should not assimilate to Western cultures since some Western art masters like Picasso and Modigliani reflected African styles in forms, shapes, distortions and feelings in their painting and sculpture, therefore he posits that the African or Zimbabwean art be the point of departure in the teaching of art. Lancaster (1982:305) also gave many reasons why Art and Design is important which among them includes to create a stimulating and visually exciting learning environment pursued with passion, discrimination, enjoyment and a sense of satisfaction and to develop manipulative skills and techniques in the use of tools and materials in doing creative art work.

## **Characteristics of vocational –technical approach and its influence in Europe**

Cedefop (2004:18) states that in Europe there are three VET which formed during the early stages of the Industrial revolution, systems and these are: liberal market economy model (in England), the state regulated bureaucratic model (France) and the dual-corporatist model (in Germany). All these models however do not exist in pure form but coexists and are subject change because of economic, social and political development. In England there is a primacy of economics, in France a primacy of politics and in Germany a primacy of society. Cedefop (2004:2) states that transnational histories: one on the production-school concept, which originated in France and was adapted by a number of countries; the other on the 'sequential method', a didactical tool that was created in Russia and from there spread throughout the European continent and further.

The whole of Europe utilises the vocational- technical approach and this approach started from divergence and now there is convergence to the approach. Notable countries which uses the approach includes Britain, France, Germany, Netherlands, Finland, Switzerland, Sweden just to

mention but a few. Countries which embraced the industrial revolution later like the Netherlands and Finland have a strong secondary school based vocational –technical approach (Cedefop 2004)

Countries like Germany have a dual system and France have a more concrete school based vocational technical system because the state took it upon itself to educate its people for the general development of the nation. The general political, social and economic problems were being solved. Organs like Cedefop in Europe are there to harmonise the vocational technical practices across Europe for uniformity's sake across Europe. The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Education (Cedefop) also has the mandate of documenting developments, research and institutions in vocational education and training; disseminating information; promoting initiatives to facilitate a concerted approach to vocational education and training; acting as a meeting point for the parties concerned.

## **Current practice of Vocational-technical approach in Europe**

Learner-centred approaches in education and training were advocated in the European Commission's communication on lifelong learning ,innovation in teaching and learning has now become a priority on the policy agenda (Cedefop 2015:1). This is mainly in tandem with entrepreneurship, the development of information and communication technology (ICT) in learning, and the promotion of innovative approaches to combine key competences and occupation-specific skills.

Currently in Europe research findings show that learner attentiveness, engagement, striving for success, aspirations and assertiveness are all associated with key outcomes such as achievement, satisfaction and lower risk of dropout. The ultimate aim is to make the learners skilled in the fashion of the current industrial technological advancement for them to be employable. The state supports and funds the education of its nationals in most European countries as well as the private sector complementing. The state also regulates the legal framework and policies which support the education of the public (Cedefop 2004:83). Bodies of employers and workers decide together on creating new training occupations or changing existent ones.

## **Current practices Asia**

Dyankov (1996:64) posits that Indonesia, Republic of Korea Thailand, China and others maintains international co-operation with other South East Asian, UNESCO, ILO countries through exchange of information and materials, participation in co-operative research, exchange of teachers and

students. South Korea is a notable country which has skilled its young people through the Vocational-technical approach to the extent of of a complete compete economic power house Dyankov (1996:5) states that in China, Vocational orientation is considered as an integral part of the schooling system in China. Vocational guidance services are decentralized at provincial level taking into account the socio-economic needs of local communities. Vocational-technical education, promotes linking education to the world of work, by inculcating proper work habits and attitudes in the young people of the world. The technical and vocational education system is coordinating narrowly training of skilled manpower with the economic planning which leads to fast transition from training to employment.

## **Factors Influencing Curriculum Implementation.**

Cedefop (2004) believes that the model for explaining specific national differences in employment training for the masses must be expanded to incorporate the constellations of the prevailing cultural and functional-structural relations within a society. A society's values, norms, attitudes, convictions and ideals shape education systems, work organisation and occupational relationships as well as the more or less stable interaction between specific national employment training and other social subsystems such as general education and the various employment system paradigms.

Implementation is the actual putting into practice the dictates of the blue print. In this case it is the administration of the vocational-technical approach to the teaching of art and design at secondary school level. ("Curriculum implementation is when the educational plans intentions are put into actual practice to achieve learning and knowledge or experiences for pupils / students in schools." (Ndawi and Maravanyika , 2011: 9) It is this way therefore that the curriculum is implemented or put into effect. Therefore, implementation refers to the stage of the actual use or application of the curriculum or educational proposal in schools. The Curriculum is not an independent activity. The implementation is governed and influenced by many factors to which its operation must respond with great sensitivity. (Nkomo, 1995).

## **Statement of the Problem**

In 1999 the Zimbabwean president commissioned an inquiry into education into education and training to check and inform on the democratised education which came into being due to independence. The Nziramasanga (1999) or (CIET) Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training made a raft of recommendations on embracing and walk the talk of Vocational – technical

education approach in the Zimbabwean curriculum in general. Art and Design at secondary school level was not spared, hence implementation and challenges to the implementation of the Vocational-technical approach surfaced. The merits of the Vocational-technical approach rationalised its implementation and the merits are both social and economical to the individual and the country (Lauglo 2004 and UNESCO 2002). The challenges include infrastructure, policy issues, stakeholders' attitude, financial constraints, human resources issues, timetable, syllabus content, loose connectivity between schools and industry among others.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The study sought explore the implementation and challenges faced by the vocational-technical approach in the teaching of Art and Design in Zimbabwean secondary schools. Nziramasanga Commission (1999), UNESCO (2002) and Cedefop (2004) enlightened on the merits of the vocational-technical approach in the countries. The study paid particular attention to infrastructure, policy issues, stakeholders' attitude, financial constraints, human resources issues, timetable, syllabus content, loose connectivity between schools and industry among others. This is because for any approach to teaching to be successful it should have a legal framework and its implementation should be supported by all stakeholders and the required human and capital resources must be provided as well. The research was a case study of Masvingo urban district secondary schools.

## **Research Objectives**

**The research was led by the following objectives.**

-To identify the social, economic, and political challenges to the implementation of the Vocational-technical approach in the teaching of Art and Design in Zimbabwean secondary schools.

## **Assumptions**

**The researcher made the following assumptions;**

There are social, political and economic challenges which curtails the effectiveness of Vocational – technical approach implementation in the teaching of Art and Design at secondary school level in Zimbabwe. this is against the background of the Vocational-technical approach being advocated for by the Nziramasanga (1999) Report in Zimbabwe and also the UNESCO, Cedefop, World Bank and other African countries.

## **Research Methodology**

Research design is defined as a plan of investigation conceived to obtain answers to research questions (Cooper, 2003). A qualitative paradigm was preferred. It allows the study of things in their natural setting. Leedy (1997:3) refers to research as the systematic process of collecting and analysing information in order to increase our understanding of the phenomenon with which we are concerned or interested. Research is a process which follows a certain procedure. Research requires the collection and analysis of data in an attempt to answer the question. Moully (1978), as cited in Borg and Gall (1996: 598) adds on to say that research is the most important tool for advancing the frontier of knowledge, promoting progress and enabling man to relate more effectively to his environment to accomplish his purpose and to resolve conflicts.

## **Population and Sample**

The population for this study was made up of all secondary school Art and Design teachers, all secondary school administrators and all pupils who do Art and Design at secondary school level in Masvingo urban district of Zimbabwe. White (2005) describe the population as all possible elements that can be included in the research. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011:143) posits that “population is the total number of possible units or elements that are included in the study.

## **Sample**

Leedy (2005) states that a sample is an element of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study or a subject of measurement drawn from a population which a researcher is interested in. Babbie (1997) says a sample is a limited subset of the population being studied.

## **Sampling Procedure**

Random sampling was used to come up with the following groups; Schools in the province which participated, students who filled in the questionnaires. Borg and Gall (1996) argue that randomization reduces the chances of researcher bias. Thus draws were conducted by the researcher in order to come up with schools which would participate in the province and students who would fill in the questionnaires. Purposive sampling was used to select teachers and administrators to be interviewed and fill in questionnaires. Thus in this study purposive sampling was utilized because the researcher selects particular subjects to include because they are believed to facilitate the expansion of the developing theory. That is “...sampling to ensure that characteristics in your study appear in the total population” (Bogdan and Bicklew 1992:71-72).

## Data Collection Instruments

The research employed interviews for school heads and teachers. Questionnaires were used on the pupils. Document analysis was used on the pupils work and teachers work books. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) posts that research instruments are a medium used by the researcher to elicit information from the informants. Best and Khan (2011) defines research instruments as tools needed for data collection from human objects. Borg and Gall (1993) say instruments are tools needed for collecting data from human subjects. They are used to obtain standardized information from all subjects in the sample.

The instruments used in this study were;

- Questionnaires which were filled in by one hundred and sixty students in the province.
- Interviews were used to solicit information from heads of schools and Art teachers.
- Documents were analysed. These included the national and school syllabi, school timetable, students' artwork and other policy circulars documents.

## Findings

The research found that there is a shallow implementation of the vocational-technical approach to the teaching of art and design in the secondary schools mainly run by the government. In the privately run secondary schools the vocational-technical approach is being implemented by default although there is no consciousness of the approach per se. Challenges faced by schools are quite numerous. These challenges involve the lack of proper infrastructure, tools and equipment. There is also lack of policy which reinforces the Vocational-technical approach as well as constant policies which is the legal framework of the implementation of the vocational-technical approach. Art and design is looked down upon by stakeholders and these include the learners themselves and their peers, teachers, parents and school administrators as well. There is also lack of funding at school level and government level to the implementation of the vocational-technical in art and design teaching. The curriculum offered is also Eurocentric rather than Afro-centric resulting in leaving the local art and design forms being left unattended to. The quality of some artworks produced by the learners is of low quality. Schools are just selecting certain topics leaving other topics leading to the production of half backed pupils. There is also a loose connection and linkages between the schools and the outside art enterprising world. Time allocated by school timetables has been found to be paltry and not sufficient to enable the completion of practical work. Schools also face the challenges of latest lacking ICT hardware, software as well as hardcopy literature on art and design.

## **Unavailability of vocational technical documents in the school**

One third of the schools which amounts to 25% of the schools do not have government policy documents on vocational-technical education. There is absence in some schools of government circulars which spells out the rationale of up-taking the vocational- technical approach to the teaching of art and design. The absence of the circulars at some secondary school entails that the school heads and the teachers will not have some point of reference and departure concerning the approach to the vocational technical approach.

## **Lack of art studios, infrastructure and equipment**

The research also established that infrastructure and studio equipment is another impediment to the implementation of the Vocational – technical approach in the teaching of Art and Design. Art and Design needs art rooms and studios with art equipments, enough storage space of produced artworks, storage of art consumables and space to interact in while learning. School without art studios will be limited on the studio practice techniques needed by the learners to be fully baked so that they may start their small art businesses.

## **Insufficiency of allocated time on Art and Design on school time tables**

All schools indicated that time allocated for Art and Design in the school time tables is not sufficient although some schools manage the eight periods per week as stipulated by the Art and Design syllabus. There is time short of the required for Art and Design. Some schools that are allocated five periods are the most hardly hit on the insufficiency of time allocation. Fifty percent of the learners indicated that they fail to produce their practical work in time and they have to come back to the art rooms during the lunch time and sometimes during times allocated for sports.

## **Quality of pupil's artworks.**

The research established that 100% of pupils work from affluent schools is of high quality in terms of use of media and finish. On the government schools it has been found that work of the pupils is just average. This is being exacerbated by the learning environment, conditions and depth within their schools. Below is the evidence of the works found from the two categories of the schools.

## **Figure 1, 2, 3 and 4 showing artworks from private school**



Artworks from government schools

Figure 5

figure 6

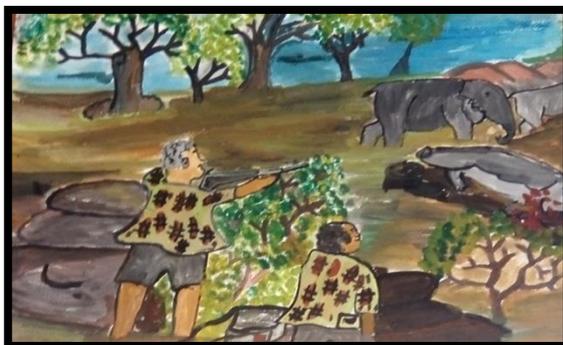


7



Figure

Figure 8



## Stakeholders attitude to Art and Design

Seventy five percent indicated that stakeholder's attitude to Art and Design is also a challenge to the Vocational-technical approach to the teaching of Art and Design. The learners indicated that their peers' appreciation of Art and Design is very negative as well as some school administrators who view Art and Design. They viewed practical manual work as inferior in comparison to white collar office work which was associated with the gentry in the rigid British class system (Middleton, 1993).

## **Connectivity of schools and art and design industry**

The research also found that 75% of the schools have a loose connection with the Art and Design industries and other institutions which are into the Art business like the museums and polytechnics. The loose connections are evidenced by the lack of participation by schools in onsite and offsite exhibitions although most of the learners' artworks are of good quality and worth to be exhibited.

## **Syllabus coverage and approach to topics**

The research also established that the 100% of the schools are not offering all the topics and skills which are spelt out in the Art and Design syllabus in line with the Vocational- technical approach. The sampled schools are offering the topics and skills but not exhausting all them stated by the Nziramasanga commission of 1999.

## **Lack of teaching skills based on indigenous cultural practices**

The research also found out there is a lack of teaching the learners the skills based on Zimbabwean indigenous cultural practices of producing artworks. Among these include basketry, weaving, sculpture, pottery, casting just to mention but a few. There is a need to decolonise the mindset of the curriculum and focus on sustainable art production methods which leaves a track and trail of an African and Zimbabwean identity.

## **Lack of exposure to art exhibitions by schools**

The research also established that the schools are not 100% holding localised Art and Design exhibitions. The pupils will be robbed of the opportunities to do constructive critiquing of works done by their peers and sharing inspirations. Art criticism will deepen their interactions at school level as well as develop their art appreciation vocabulary and Art and Design as a discipline which needs a good understanding of its theory.

## **Discussion**

The research found that there is a shallow implementation of the vocational-technical approach to the teaching of art and design in the secondary schools mainly run by the government. In the privately run secondary schools the vocational-technical approach is being implemented by default although there is no consciousness of the approach per se. Challenges faced by schools are quite numerous. These challenges involve the lack of proper infrastructure, tools and equipment. There is also lack of policy which reinforces the Vocational-technical approach as well as constant policies which is the legal framework of the implementation of the vocational-technical approach. Art and design is looked down upon by stakeholders and these include the learners themselves and their peers, teachers, parents and school administrators as well. There is also lack of funding at school

level and government level to the implementation of the vocational-technical in art and design teaching. The curriculum offered is also Eurocentric rather than Afro-centric resulting in leaving the local art and design forms being left unattended to. The quality of some artworks produced by the learners is of low quality. Schools are just selecting certain topics leaving other topics leading to the production of half backed pupils. There is also a loose connection and linkages between the schools and the outside art enterprising world. Time allocated by school timetables has been found to be paltry and not sufficient to enable the completion of practical work. Schools also face the challenges of latest lacking ICT hardware, software as well as hardcopy literature on art and design. Vocational – technical approach enhances skills that are valued in global and local economies, it is potentially one of the most important tools for developing young people’s skills and productive livelihood and economic growth of their countries (Aring, 2011).

## **Conclusions**

The researcher’s findings can lead one to conclude that the Vocational-technical approach in the teaching of Art and Design at secondary level in Zimbabwe is still marred by challenges. These challenges include the shortage of infrastructure, equipment and tools. The negative stakeholders’ attitude towards the vocational-technical approach is another impediment. Insufficient time allocated to Art and Design and shortage of adequate Art and Design teachers are the challenges to the implementation of the vocational-technical approach. There is lack of strong linkages between the art enterprising industries. Art and Design topics and skills are not being offered in totality and entirety in the schools thereby curtailing the Vocational-technical approach which advocates for the imparting of skills to the youths in line with the global trends skilling the young people in order for them to be employable in the industry and start small art businesses hence reducing unemployment. There is also a gap in the understanding of the aims of the vocational-technical approach in the art and design area, the government. The government must increase its awareness of its policies and approach to the teaching and learning of art and design. And curb the churning out of conflicting communiqués regarding the Vocational-technical approach in the implementation of Art and Design. There is also lack of financial funding of art and design learning process which must be curtailed by funding from the government and the private sector

## Recommendations

- The government should offer funds for the construction of Art and Design studios and classrooms at all the schools so that the vocational-technical approach might be successful at secondary level in the teaching of art and design.
- The schools should source enough funds from all the sectors to procure enough literature including ICT software and hardware for teaching of art and design and increase research by both the teachers and the learners in the subject.
- The Vocational-technical approach to the teaching of Art and Design should involve the local art forms which are of Zimbabwean heritage so that they can be studied as the point of departure albeit foreign art forms should also not be discarded.
- There should be close communication and linkages among the private sector, industry and the secondary education system in developing industry –wide skills standards.
- Art and design should be allocated more time which is enough on the school master timetables to enable the learners to perfect their skills and finish their practical projects.
- Art and design should be taught using the hands- on approach so that learners develop the desired competencies and skills that make them start their own Art and Design businesses, fit for employment and further education.
- The teachers need in –service training and workshops in order to appreciate and fully implement the vocational- technical approach to the teaching of Art and design at secondary level making use of the global trends and technology.
- Schools should impart all the skills which are embodied in art and design covering all the topics covered by the syllabus.
- Schools should hold exhibitions at school level as a way of developing art and design criticism and appreciation in the school heads, teachers and learners.

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