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# INNOVATIVE APPROACHES IN ADVANCING PAINTING PEDAGOGY THROUGH THEORY, PRACTICE, AND TECHNOLOGY IN 21ST CENTURY NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper discusses the processes and approaches adopted in teaching and learning visual art (painting) in the contemporary era. It explores the evolving methodologies employed in teaching both performative and visual arts through freehand techniques, and studio-based (practical) art practices. These trends have moved significantly, considering the implication of a national curriculum designed to integrate diverse teaching methods such as action-based learning, practise-based approaches, ICT tools, YouTube resources, audio-visual media and even symbolic or sign languages communication etc. The dynamic of change in the context of 21st Century Africa paradigm shift have considerably helped to transform teacher education at various academic levels in Nigeria. The procedure adopted for this study is studio-based art practice, involving exploration of images, discovery, material experimentation, intelligible visuals, style, reflection, techniques, and processes derived from the researcher's studio activities. These elements were examined through practice to produce art forms. Accordingly, this paper presents innovative strategies for teaching creative arts, discusses their objectives, and examines how these approaches are implemented to achieve desired learning outcomes in the context of Nigeria vis-a-vis globalisation.*

**Keywords:** Visual Art, Painting, Innovation, Pedagogy, Technology, Art theory, Art Practice

## Introduction

The key approach to teaching and learning visual art (painting), at the tertiary level carries important implications that educational theories have addressed to enhance the spirit and consistency in achieving quality education (Emeji, 2008). Based on trends and evidence in this century, academia and art professionals have investigated the relationship between artistic practice and teaching practice through art studies, and they found that there is a significant connection between them, which has greatly improved classroom teaching (Kazeem, 2024).

Visual arts (painting) are part of creative or vocational education, where learning is grounded in action. This discipline aims to develop students' practical skills, technical knowledge, and creative problem-solving abilities through consistent practice and hands-on work. Thus, practical (i.e., studio-based) art education in the classroom has led to a sophisticated approach, where the practice of artists is

integrated into a disciplined and effective teaching pattern. In addition, this paper argues that artists who engage in both teaching and professional practice often draw from pedagogical resources embedded in their own creative work (Onwuagboke et al, 2015). According to Berkley (1981), "creativity involves the process, product, or person and it is defined as the interpersonal and intrapersonal process by which original, high-quality, and genuinely significant products are developed." Berkley (1981) further posits that creativity is an act of newness or the basic translation of natural skills, talents, and inbuilt strength into originality.

Visual arts courses have their own peculiarities, and each area of teaching or domain in fine arts has its unique challenges. These challenges often arise from the nature of materials and strategies needed to achieve meaningful communication in teaching. In these teaching approaches, both materials and methodologies are intertwined in the learning and teaching process. The new strategies for teaching visual arts thus range from practice-based methods involving interaction, responsiveness, and innovations combing all these factors together in enhancing effective teaching and learning respectively. As noted by Nnabueze et al.( 2020), visual arts education has evolved as a multidisciplinary tool that can support technological enhancement and improve delivery mechanisms. Recently in Nigeria, the federal and state governments have sought to support the learning and development of vocational and technical education programmes by introducing reforms based on the needs of the country. Moreover, these needs extend the development of science and technology manpower. On this note, the challenges faced have led to an increased awareness that resulted in the introduction of the Universal Basic Education programme into Nigeria's educational curriculum, designed by the federal Government (Emeji, 2008).

In this vein, the government, researchers, academics, and scholars who plan or design curricula for teacher-learners should emphasize the inclusion of vocational and technical education for effective technological literacy. This will further support the nation's development and meet industry needs. In accordance, it involves both theory and practice, which will ultimately lead to effective learning and communication. Hence, the curriculum planners and designers have to incorporate new visuals templates, such as ICT tools (i.e., YouTube, interactive gadgets, and audio-visuals), into diverse areas of teaching methodologies (Onwuagboke, 2015). By engaging with these tools, it will help all stakeholders achieve the goals of 21st century pedagogy in their respective disciplines at large.

Therefore, this paper aims to unearth and highlight how educators can strengthen the teaching and learning of painting in Nigerian tertiary institutions, and the optimal goal is to explore practical ways of bringing together theory, studio practice, and technology so that students can build solid skills and gain confidence in their work, which will be valuable to them in present, and most importantly, the near future.

**Research Questions**

Based on the concerns articulated in the introduction, this paper is guided by the following research questions:

i. How can educators effectively incorporate practical (i.e., studio-based) teaching with modern technology to improve the teaching and learning of painting in Nigerian tertiary institutions?
ii. What are the challenges or opportunities that could occur, if Nigerian educators incorporate modern technologies, such as ICT tools (i.e., YouTube resources, interactive media, and audio-visual templates) into their traditional method of teaching visual arts (painting)?
iii. In what ways can curriculum planners and art educators develop innovative strategies that respond to the needs of 21st-century pedagogy while preserving the essential elements of vocational and practical art education?

**Research Method**

This paper adopts a conceptual and reflective qualitative approach, grounded in the author's professional experience and engagement with studio practice, curriculum analysis, and review of policy documents.

The methodology is practice-based and interpretive; recognizing that teaching visual art (painting) at the tertiary level is not merely theoretical or practical but relies on lived experience, observation, and critical analysis of instructional strategies. The paper is based on:

**Literature review:** These include documented studies i.e. theoretical frameworks on national curriculum guidelines, policy reforms (e.g., Universal Basic Education programme), and institutional syllabi that uniformly relates to visual art pedagogy.

**Reflective narrative:** This is based on the author's studio-based and teaching experiences, whereby highlighting specific classroom interactions, challenges, and innovative responses that yields effective pedagogy of art education particularly visual art (painting).

**Literature Review**

**Theoretical Framework**

Teaching and learning visual arts (painting) at any level of education in Nigeria require a thorough theoretical base or structures to guide practice, curriculum design, and, most importantly, pedagogical approaches. Thus, these structure draws from (3) theories, which include constructivist learning theory, experiential **l**earning theory, and discipline-based art education, are the key innovative theories that are imperative for educators while incorporating traditional studio practice with modern technological tools.

Ideally, the constructivist learning theory suggests that learners must actively construct meaningful interpretations from their experiences. This implies that they must emphasize understanding over stereotypical memorization. However, with this perspective, art education is not merely the transfer of technical skills but a dynamic process where learners engage with materials, ideas, and contexts to create personal meaning in their distinctive artistic practice. Teachers, in this sense, must act as facilitators, guiding their students through exploration and critical reflection of archived ideas in art practice. Therefore, this view aligns with the evolving practice of integrating studio-based learning with ICT, where learners will adopt the use of digital tools to extend their creative inquests and communicate ideas in novel ways (Hein, 1991).

Correspondingly, the experiential learning theory, as articulated in Kolb's (2014) study, emphasizes that knowledge must emerge from the transformation of experience via a schematic process of action, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation. In art education, studio-based works are carried out by allowing students to develop their real and distinct ideas through experience, exploration, practice, and constructive criticism (i.e., feedback) from their educators (Brookfield, 2015). However, the incorporation of modern digital media such as virtual museums, YouTube resources, and AI-assisted design also broadens the scope of experience available to students while still maintaining the core experiential structure of art teaching and learning (Kazeem, 2024).

Furthermore, another relevant framework for this paper is discipline-based art education. This theory is designed to advocate structured learning in art through its four interrelated components, which include art production, art history, art criticism, and aesthetics. However, the theory emphasizes not only skill acquisition but also understanding contexts and critical engagement or commitment to artworks. In Dobbs's (1998) study, it was stated that this approach has been modified in regular learning curricula, and it ultimately aims to balance the standard studio-based practice of visual arts (painting) with theoretical knowledge and cultural literacy. The integration of ICT tools also aligns with art education goals by providing learners in the art discipline with access to modern global art resources, encouraging critical engagement with diverse artistic backgrounds, and encouraging thoughtful analysis of ideas (Onwuagboke et al., 2015).

These theoretical foundations justify the pedagogical shift for this paper, encompassing teachers' schematic teaching methods to learners through practice-based and modern technological approaches. In these contexts, the major role of the teachers in visual art (painting) discipline is to become a facilitator who enables students to experiment, reflect, and construct knowledge through diverse media (Brookfield, 2015). These highlighted theories also support curriculum reforms that emphasize vocational and technical education, meeting national goals for technological literacy and creative contribution for

industry development as visual arts (painting) are concerned.

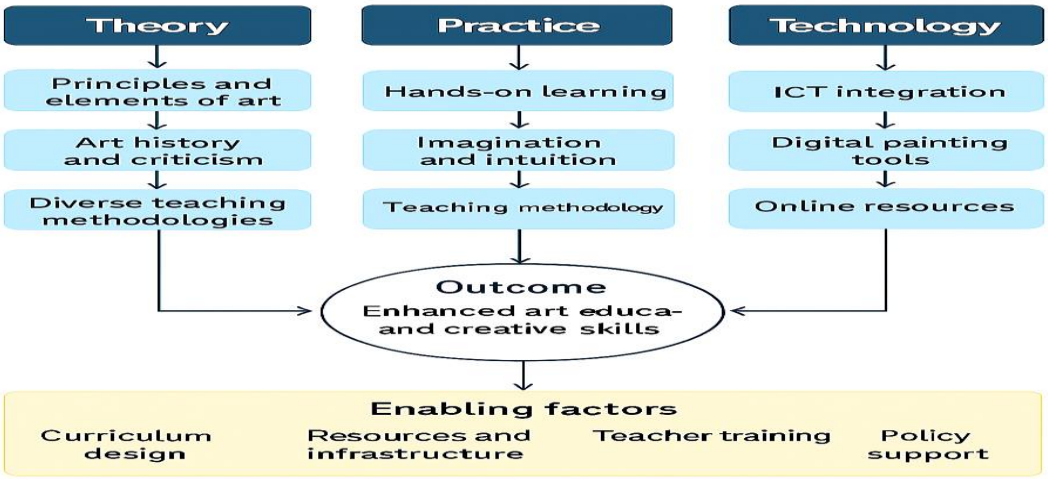



**Figure 1: Approach in Advancing Painting Pedagogy**

The diagram above shows a structured conceptual model of "Innovative Approaches in Advancing Painting Pedagogy through Theory, Practice, and Technology in the 21st Century."

**Art Theory**

Art theory refers to the principles and elements that guide the composition and practice of art and design. It clearly defines the activities of design practices that establish a broad foundation and standard for art pedagogy. These activities are designed to support a systematic mode of teaching and learning in art education. Theory is essential across all professions, including the arts. In other words, theories help the teachers adopt sound design principles that can generate new modes of operation. This guidance has been a major factor in planning and designing teaching curricula since the 19th and 20th centuries; it is directly applicable to fine and applied art practices as well as other areas of vocational education or trade that require specific prerequisites (Ocvirk et al., 2012).

Art theories are fundamental components of pedagogy, incorporated into the planning stages of art and design education, and explicitly included in sections of art curriculum. They provide the basic standards upon which art courses are taught and learned at all educational levels (Efland, 2002). Understanding these theoretical foundations is essential for effective art education and practices while also supporting the exploration of diverse

teaching methodologies. These principles are reflected in sections of the art curriculum and have long served as the basic standard upon which art courses are taught and learned at all levels of the education system. Understanding the integrity of art education and teaching, as well as art practice at all levels equally, requires exploring other means or methodologies.

Ajibade (2021) argued that teaching and learning art courses at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels in Nigeria require careful attention to curriculum and pedagogy. Notably, the creative innovations emerging in the arts increasingly involve computer interfaces, both software and hardware. These platforms include modern teaching and learning tools such as Microsoft interactive applications, artificial intelligence, YouTube resources, and other devices aimed at grounding students in essential knowledge. Consequently, art theories have promoted innovation and quality by fostering understanding of art history, phenomenology, and criticism, thereby enhancing the standards of art practices and the profession (Sausmarez, 2002).

**Art Practice**

Practice of art is defined as 'the act of doing,' that is, 'action' involving imagination, intuition, and qualitative approaches that respond to new ideas and responsiveness. In doing this, energy is involved, and activities are carried out in teaching and learning studios for all aspects of the vocation. Oriola et al. (2024) stated the physical manifestation of new ideas in art teaching has often been approached through both traditional and modern methods using various media. Learning in this field involves theory, practice, and the politics of the profession. This study, therefore, calls for a re-examination of our thoughts and a renewal of our approaches, since the essence of art or creativity lies in the spark of insight and the thrill of new discoveries. Preble (2012) argued that artists, whether in visual or performative arts, must continuously be open to change, new possibilities, and interpretation during the act of creation. However, it is important to note that any form of art and creativity must be conducted in a spirit of openness, which brings vitality and honesty into structures and provides a coherent foundation in the end.

**Integration of ICT in Art Teaching**

The evolution of computer-aided design in studio practical teaching in Nigeria and all over the world has been yielding positive results. This advancement has also been introduced into the teaching of visual arts, where students' performance is presented on many platforms. Other aspects involving creative design, such as costume and set construction and lighting, are also enhanced by the inputs from new media. This learning outcome helps improve both practice and theory, coupled with interactivity. As the millennium came to a close, there was a noticeable shift toward growing institutional interest in art teaching strategies. According to Aristotle (2000), by "2000, an emergence of a number of books and academic courses on net culture and related subjects indicated that online art forms were considered an instructive and vigorous intellectual

force." Consequently, computers have extended their influence to vital aspects of creative arts teaching, which include intuitionism, where students can now create and re-create imagery using paintbrushes, freehand drawing, AI, web-designs, and social media platforms such as facebook, instagram, and others (Ajibade, 2021).

**Instructional Strategies and Teaching Methodologies**

Learning and teaching are interrelated in the teaching profession, and within the complete chain of complete education, strategies are adopted for effective learning and communication. Enhancing the quality of teaching and learning involves demonstrations, interactivity, and audio-visual aids (Lanre et al., 2016). The ability to promote effective learning demands certain strategies or methods, adopted to achieve positive results. In this regard, the teacher or tutor strives to employ various factors such as demonstration, observation, action, audio-visuals, television, YouTube, and others, which are shaped into an interactive canvas for proper dissemination of instruction. According to Ajayi et al. (2024), fine and applied arts educators in Nigeria are currently incorporating diverse multimedia into the common studio-based (practical) teaching, and the ultimate goal is to challenge students' cognitive strength both conceptually and technologically. The Oxford Advanced Learner' Dictionary (2020) defines vocational education as the connection with skill acquisition and knowledge necessary to perform a particular job or trade. To buttress this fact, there are strategies that the teachers need to adopt before skills, knowledge, and technical know-how can be effectively imparted.

Brookfield, (2015) brought an introduction to the concepts and practices of creative arts, with particular emphasis on video and canvas art has been incorporated into the development of new curricula, with great emphasis on quality, visual perception, cognition, and the realization of millennium goals. This aspect of the module aims to establish a variety of techniques and skills through exercises and workshops that consider different conceptual approaches to drawing. These sessions include working from observation, memory, and imagination and producing abstract drawings that are driven by process (Okwu et al., 2023). In this trend, the outcome will be measured by students exploring the drawing process, reflecting on the subject matter, evaluating their personal abilities and ambitions, and finally adopting a creative approach to the possibilities offered by the drawing process.

**Methodology**

In creative arts, incorporating fine and applied arts as well as the performing arts, the procedure adopted for this research in the creative arts practices involves exploration of images, discovery, material experimentation, intelligible visuals, style, reflection, techniques, and processes derived from the researcher's studio activities. These were examined through practice to produce the final art form. The qualitative instruments that were used include tactile composed sketches, detailed paintings and drawings, interviews,

observation, improvisation for performative arts, and relevant literary analysis and review.

The research process is interactive, with the researcher actively involved in studio exploration, discovery, interpretation, and reflecting on research findings through creative processes. This methodology relies heavily on intuition as part of the creative practice. As Dandy (1998) says, "Action research is a form of practitioner research that can be used to help you improve your professional practices in many different types of workplaces. Practitioner research simply means that the research is done by individuals themselves into their own practices."

This approach is well-suited for research into "professional practices," and it characterizes the ideal way of working for visual artists and their counterparts in the performing arts. Artists often reflect on studio practice in light of new discoveries through experimentation, observation, and reading, all of which help inform what good practice demands.

Applying YouTube in studio instruction is a new template for teaching creative arts. It is a device or interface adopted as part of a teaching strategy, allowing learners to re-watch or replay lessons at different times. This becomes necessary because of cultural shifts and the ever-changing demands of modern technology and science. Notably, most students and their teachers are aware of the new trends and developments in acquiring artistic skills in creative arts since the start of the 21st century (Onwuagboke et al., 2015).

As Sausmarez (2002) noted, fundamental training is required to develop personal inquiry based on practice rather than theory. That is, when there is a constant search by the individual for solutions to societal problems. Emphasis must be placed on intuitive and analytical work, materials, and formative principles. The interface serves as an interactive platform for instruction, description, and discussion, as well as showcasing the artwork, be it student work or that of professional artists. With all these methods, the learning can be centered on subject matter or topics relevant to different aspects of creative arts teaching.

**Workshop and Studio Teaching Method**

Traditional and modern approaches in the teaching and learning have incorporated innovative strategies within workshops and studio teaching experiences. The teacher is tasked with using tools such as demonstrations and sensitization to promote effective learning. The learning achievement of students develops significantly in academics and personal classroom confidence, reflecting their intuitive abilities and interest in the subject and content (Christopher, 2022). The studio- based approaches and assignments do involve practice in drawing and the development of skills and concepts relevant to the discipline. They offer opportunities for personal development and expressions, supported are by stimulating and challenging materials that consider the potential for drawing in relation to a variety of visual sources and approaches to image making (Onwuagboke, 2015). The conceptual nature of image-making, with its implied

grammar and syntax, is developed through a range of methods, applications and interpretations in relation to meaning and context.




**Fig 2: The Teacher Studio Demonstration with Learners**

The act involved here is practice-based, with materials and surfaces to expose students to various rules and approaches for achieving specific skill and knowledge. The demonstration approach is part of a continuum in both art history and theory that encompasses strategies and themes such as instruction, appropriation and dematerialization in achieving desired goals. In this context, the teachers or instructors pay particular attention to ensuring full exposure in this aspect, as it forms the basis of learning technical skills. It is important to state clearly that any practice-oriented profession places significant emphasis on this method to achieve the objectives set within learning modules. The teacher highlights the intriguing aspects of the subject, while learners engage actively and are positively influenced within their chosen area of specialization.

**Description and Discussion Method**

Discussion and description are interrelated elements when conveying ideas to learners, enhancing their visual understanding, and ensuring that students acquire a solid grounding before embarking on their artistic journey. This approach aids the learning process by motivating students to explore available creative activities. Thus, many students perform excellently when encouraged to investigate ideas and materials. However, the teacher's role is often to assist students just enough to help them overcome immediate challenges, using questions and demonstrations without imposing a single idea on the learner (Brookfield, 2015).

**Innovation - Studio Methods Approach**

It is important to emphasize that studies have shown how creative adaptation and development of complex communication and social skills contribute to new achievements in teaching and learning. Paradoxically, specific learning outcomes associated with 21st century skills acquisition demand the use of interactive tools and conceptual understanding of developmental skills (Trilling et al, 2009).

A suggested skills approach based on self-discovery can serve as an excellent vehicle for developing these 21st century competency if properly adapted. These trends have been applied across nearly all areas of industry and higher learning. The procedure adopted for this study is studio art practice, involving exploration of images, discovery, material experimentation, intelligible visuals, style, reflection, techniques, and processes derived from the researcher's studio activities. These elements were examined through practice to produce art forms .

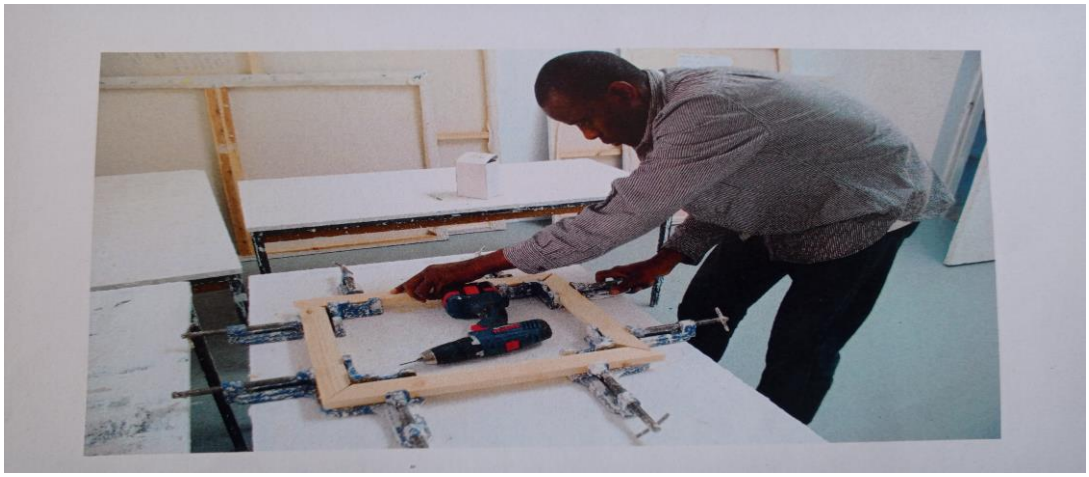


**Fig 3: Teacher Studio Session**

**Self-Expression Method**

Most art students need exposure to material and approaches that encourage the understanding that art expression should reflect their personal ability. The most important aspect of individual involvement in art is learning to effectively explore art forms and materials, as is the case with all other strategies. In our art schools, both adult and young art students are introduced to the fundamentals of art practice and theory to enable genuine self-expression. This self-expression is achieved through sustained effort, living authentically, and striving to create personal understandings of truth. Overtime, with dedication and hard work, individuals may reach a higher level of comprehension. The self-built skills and knowledge gained through assignments are common and they help in enhancing the quality of instruction. Hence, this learning is not permanent but develops over time, reaching its highest level through consistent effort (Christopher, 2022).

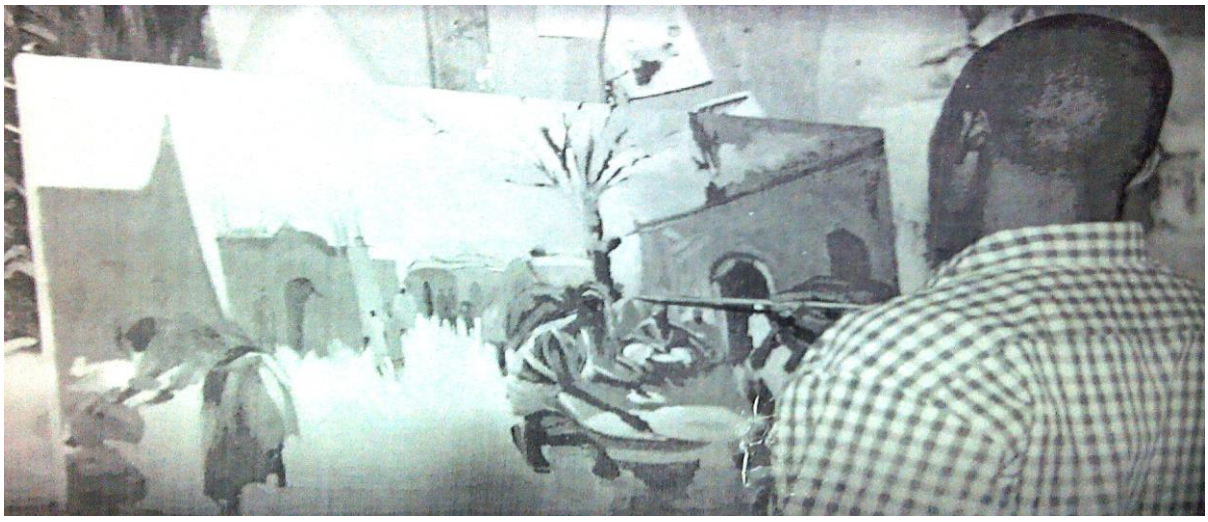


**Fig 4: The Teacher Centred Methods (Hands-on work) oil on canvas**

This is the teacher centred approach adopted method in form of instruction format, where learners are duly engaged in transferable skills. On the one hand reveals situations such as skills in control of variables developed by creative in science form. It captures a painting composition that express response based on Piaget's theory of how learners learn at different stages of cognitive development. However, this method often exposes curriculum developers to focus first on how to evaluate student progress towards learning goals, and then composed from an angle where some underlying factors such as real-time assessment which is continually directly under the control of the teacher.

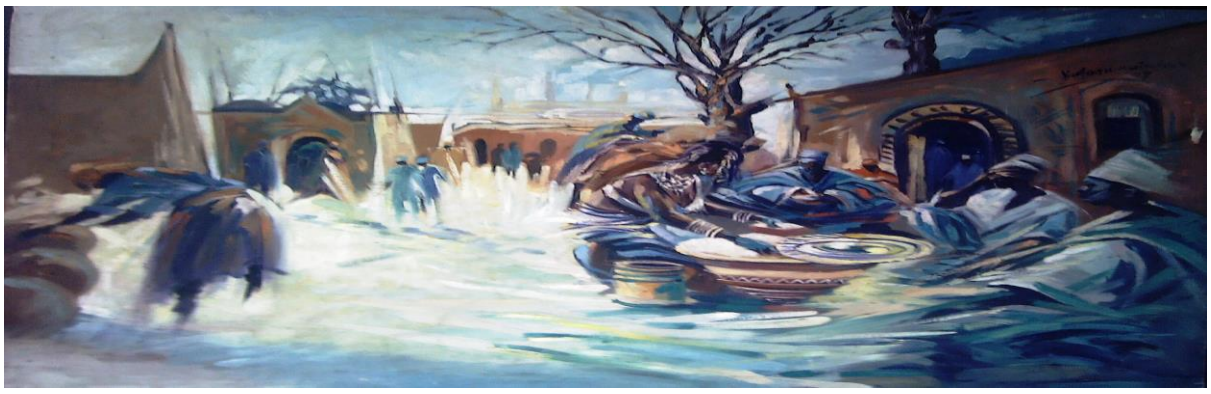


**Figure 5: Author's completed work as seen in "figure 4"**

**Group Project Method**

The group approach is also embraced in vocational courses such as creative arts and is used across academic disciplines. However, the difference lies in the basic understanding of the tasks required of both learners and teachers. The group method helps inspire, encourage pro-activeness,

and build intelligence. Evaluation is based on each student's capabilities. Adopting these methods of knowledge acquisition over time has supported skill development in teaching and learning (Dobbs, 1998). A widely held assumption about learning through visual arts is that understanding the concept of 'game' and strategy allows us to classify and specify all skill-learning procedures, which are similar to studio learning. Many performative activities share essential elements with games, making the interactive purpose clear.

This method has supported visual arts for centuries as both a theoretical and practical foundation. In the early twentieth century, many artists used this approach to inspire rather than simply describe what could be seen, defining instead what could not be seen. It required observers (learners) to occupy a single, unprivileged position, creating a unique perspective.

The group approach compares learning activities to paradigm of games. Here the most relevant examples explicitly resonate and which might be games of make-belief though it is performance skill explication and may be a routine like skill development. Evidently, what the teacher tries within certain instances of studio mechanism is presenting a sense of play with colour theory, which is a certain means to achieve a game of make-belief. Therefore, this method is exclusively an answer to the question of skill acquisition (Ajibade, 2021). Perhaps what seems relevant is acquired with building mastery of techniques through the teacher, the students are busy learning the practical skills needed in producing and academic engagement with traditional musical instrument. The environment is synonymous with shed like studio environment where the teacher and learners are involved in action practice led in effective teaching and learning the rule of the vocation.

**Pathways to Attain 21st-Century Art Education Standards in Nigeria**

As our educational strives to achieve the millennium development goals in Nigeria, the integration of visuals innovations through of software, hardware, curriculum implementation, and instructional strategies has helped students learn in innovative and professional environments. Interestingly, this approach has been successful utilized, with both staff and students understanding these tools within core academic subjects while enhancing overall knowledge. Students' mastery of 21st century skills should be recognized as one of the most critical outcomes of the teaching and learning process. Technology provides technical direction and helps create comprehensive learning roadmaps that leave lasting impressions on learners (Trilling, 2009). It is widely accepted that communication through creative arts using practical studio approaches such as graphical illustrations, drawing, photography, and computer-aided improvisation is, one of the most effective form of communication studies, it is often said that the human brain retains and understands visual information more effectively and for longer periods than auditory or written information.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has sought to establish the role of innovative strategies teaching and learning visual arts (Painting). These practices have been clearly addressed as it relates to the understanding and developing studio approaches that foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The connection between skills development and new teaching strategies is crucial for planning the future and building systems that ensure student success, not only in school and work, but also in life. However, this progress is supported by new media and associated technologies as an integral part of academic enhancement and their powerful role in mass communication national development. In doing this, the paper concludes by highlighting the importance of creative arts in facilitating national developmental objectives across all human endeavours.

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