



ART EDUCATION ENHANCEMENT: ADOPTING CANVA APP AS A PRACTICAL TOOL FOR TEACHING GRAPHICS IN NIGERIAN ART SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Over the years, the antiquated style of creating graphic visuals through the use of hands, using stenciling technique and/or direct color application with brushes and paints have monotonously been the major trend in almost all the three tiers of Nigerian tertiary education; either as a result of the long standing unimproved curricula the educators must key into, the inadequate funding of department of fine and applied arts in most of the Nigerian tertiary institutions or as a result of the inflexibility of the art educators. The resultant effect has always plagued most of the Nigerian graduates in art, especially graphics, with the inability to cope with the fast-rising technological demands in the art industries and/or media agencies. Hence, in neutralizing the plague, it behooves us to embrace curriculum modification by integrating technological innovation in curriculum delivery. Canva is a drag-and-drop graphic design platform for creating graphic visuals for social media, presentations, posters, documents, and other visual content. This study, therefore, unearthed the simplicity of using Canva, a smartphone application for enhancing curriculum delivery by graphic art educators in Nigerian art schools. The paper also aimed at exposing prospective graphic art students to the use of the application for creating simple graphic visuals in a bid to broaden their horizons technologically not excluding the possibility of generating income from its uses.

Keywords: Canva, Curriculum, Education, Graphics, Technology

INTRODUCTION

The past years have witnessed a sequential trend of professionally trained graphic artists being forced to undergo training from scratch, training in computers and the use of design software/applications after graduation. This is to enable them to rub shoulders with the designers who only pride themselves on the use of CorelDraw, which has been instrumental for such designers to classify themselves as graphic art designers while some even claim to be professionals. Hence, a need for curriculum enhancement and modifications in graphic art courses so as to expose prospective graphic art students to acquire the required skill in the discipline.

Heraclitus, the great Greek philosopher, once said “change is the only constant in life” (Lucy, 2019) which means that, every nation that desires economic development and growth must

prioritize the enhancement and modifications of its academic curriculum from time to time to suit the current trends in global markets which will consequently determine the quality of manpower it produces for the available job opportunities and for economic boost. The absence of this in many underdeveloped nations is what has brought many into the deplorable situations of being irrevocably in recession.

The dynamics of any society are to ensure that a continuum of interrelated changes is carried out from time to time. Ozovehe (2016) validates the goal of this study, which seeks not to displace the long-existing handmade form of Graphic arts but to further integrate a technological input that the Canva application has to offer to enhance the teaching of the modules and give the students an up-to-date knowledge, and keep pace with the present technology in this way.

The emergence of modern art education in Nigeria in 1923 through the indefatigable individual efforts of Aina Onabolu and Murray as well as the emergence of the term graphic design in 1922 which came to existence when William Dwiggins employed the term to describe the art of designing with graphics all came hand in hand as a double faceted good tiding (Chidum, 2001; Crowder, 1976; Wangboje, 1968; Daily, 1948). Since their emergence, societies have been evolving in accordance with the growth or deplorable state of art in such societies. Tracing it all the way from the period of drawings on the cave walls, which controversially were considered a form of ancient graphics, fast forward till the 1900s when visual signs were considered as a form of expression, as technology evolved with changes and wide availability globally, graphic design began to evolve (Chidum, 2001). The impacts of art education and its adaptability to technological innovations cannot be overemphasized. Art education, which has an all-encompassing module that promotes self-empowerment and entrepreneurial skills (Ajayi, 2017; Egbedokun, Badru, Adeyanju, and Idowu, 2006), must be patterned to be receptive to technological enhancement at all levels of education, especially, tertiary level. (Ajayi & Seyi-Gbangbayau, 2020).

The definition of graphics by Ajayi & Siyanbola, (2020) suggests that it is a facet of art that manifests itself to be the art or process of creating print media and audiovisual communication by combining typographic components, audio, motion, and/or photographs for the purpose of conveying messages to the target audience.

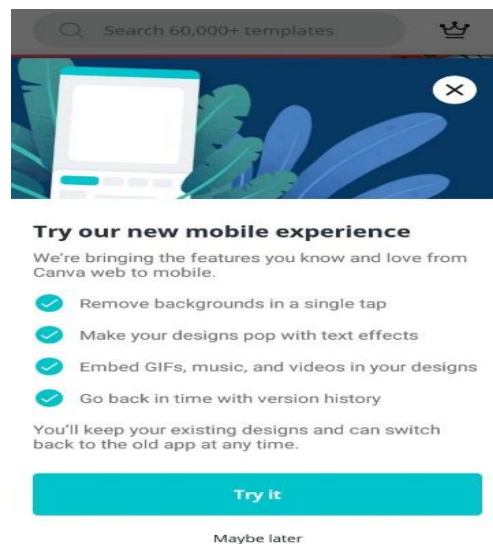
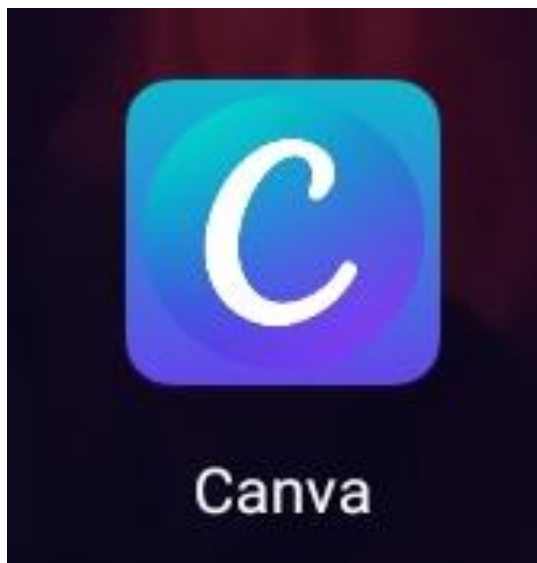
Moreover, the course modules for National Diploma 1 and 2 (ND 1 and ND 2) in the currently used National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) curriculum (1989) suggest that the students be taught elements and principles of design, symmetric and asymmetric types of balance, publicity and advertising, logo design, and others. Fortunately, almost all of the above contents are deeply rooted in the mobile application called Canva. It is a drag-and-drop graphic design platform for creating graphic visuals for social media, presentations, posters, documents, and other visual content. Beyond the usefulness of creating designs either by choosing from already existing

templates or creating a design from scratch, Canva and other mobile phone/PC software/applications for visual creations span beyond creating contents to connect with social media friends but also could be maximized for research explorations not exempting academic functions (Mao, Tian, Li, Wei & Liang, 2017). Meanwhile, it is worthy to note that as technology began to change and become available to more people, the entire industry that would become known as graphic design began to emerge.

According to dissimilar studies from (Kim and Altmaann 2012; Payne *et al.* 2012; Mohtar *et al.* 2013; Ajagbe *et al.* 2013; Alfawareh and Jusoh 2014; Soyemi, Oloruntoba and Okafor, 2015) almost every college student nowadays owns a smartphone. While some are channeling the use towards research and scholarly activities some are predominantly using mobile phones for social and networking (Soyemi, Oloruntoba and Okafor, 2015). This makes the integration of Canva as an enhancement for teaching graphics plausible among the students.

The CANVA Application and Features

Canva is a graphic design platform, used to create social media graphics, presentations, posters, documents and other visual contents. The app already includes drag and drop templates for users to use. The platform is free to use but offers paid subscriptions like Canva Pro and Canva for Enterprise for additional functionality and more creative and advanced contents. Impressively, Canva can be used on both smartphones and personal computers. That is, it is compatible for both phone and computers (windows, android and apple). Hence, irrespective of phone brand/computer, canva will be accessible for all. The latest version of Canva has features that enable users to remove



background in a single tap, add text effects that enable designs to pop, embed GIFs, music, and

videos in designs, and can also switch to the old app and having the existing designs intact. The image (Plate 2) below shows a pop-up notification received from Canva after updating the old version to the latest version. The notification signaled the latest features that are now realistically achievable on canvas against the backdrop of the previous version. Plates 1 and 2 are the snapshots of Canva logo and notification.

Plate 1: Canva Logo

Plate 2: A pop up notification from Canva about its latest feats. Source: Canva

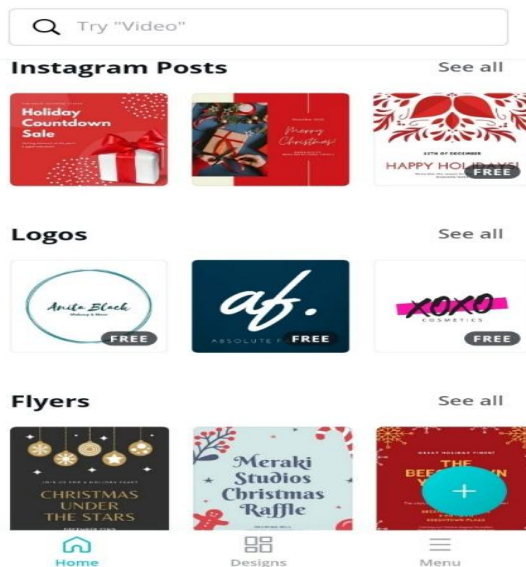


Plate 3: screen shot of Canva at home mode.

All your designs

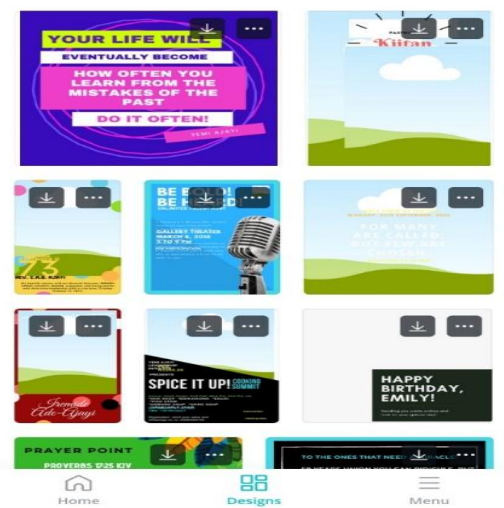


Plate 4: screen shot of Canva at Designs mode

Plates 3 and 4 are the three different navigation snapshots of the Canva App: Home page, Designs page and Menu. The Home mode contains thousands of free and payable templates to modify in a way to suit one's choice. The Designs mode contains all the previously modified designs and they are usually editable and reusable (without necessarily using the internet connection), while the Menu mode contains pieces of general information about user and allows user to modify some settings and view all the created folders for one's modified visuals. The payable templates allow editing/modification. About 50,000 different templates are available on the application and have been classified into different groups such as: Instagram Posts, Logos, Flyers, Posters, Instagram Stories, Animated Social Media, Fashion Logos, Facebook Post, Your Stories, Infographics, Presentations, Instagram Story Highlights, Phone Wallpapers, Gaming Logos, Video Presentations, Animated Logos, YouTube Thumbnails, Photo Collages, Invitations, YouTube Channel Art, Videos, Facebook Covers, Cards, Mind Maps, Brochures, Beauty Logos, Facebook Shops Logos, Business Cards, Sale Instagram. Posts, Food/Drink Logos, Love Instagram Posts, WhatsApp Stories, Food Instagram Posts, Clean Minimalist Instagram Stories, Birthday

Invitations, Posters (Landscape), Birthday Cards, Presentations (4:3), Comic Strips, Education Presentations, Menus, Concept Maps, Social Media, YouTube Intros, YouTube Icons, Zoom Virtual Backgrounds, Magazines Covers, Education Infographics, Book Covers and T-Shirts. Judging from the diverse categories of graphic visuals covered by Canva, it gives an impressive indication that it is an all-encompassing graphics platform that can easily be used for both teaching and learning.

Designing with Canva Application

As a beginner, choose from the existing design templates available on the canva platform. It is advisable for beginners to usually click on the templates that has “free” inscription in order to be able to edit/modify it without being billed. Plates 5 to 7 are screenshots showing few of the free templates on Canva app. In Plate 5, the first 2 templates having color red do not carry free tags, hence, it means if clicked, user will be charged to save the final work or send; unlike the ones that carry the free tags. The following icons usually show when editing or modifying a design template

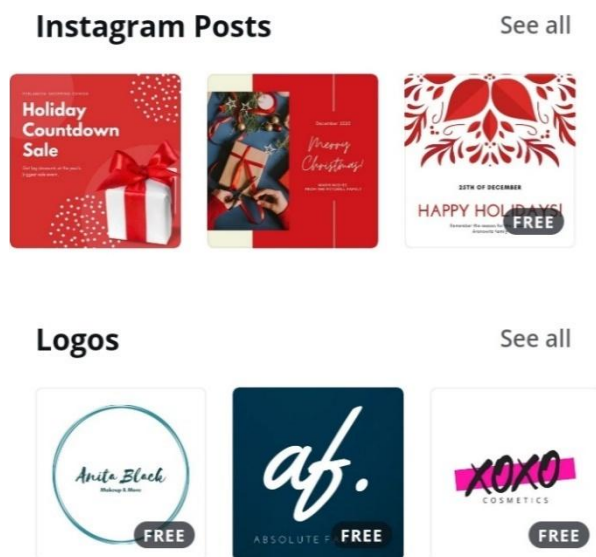


Plate 5: A screenshot of Canva at Home mode displaying few templates

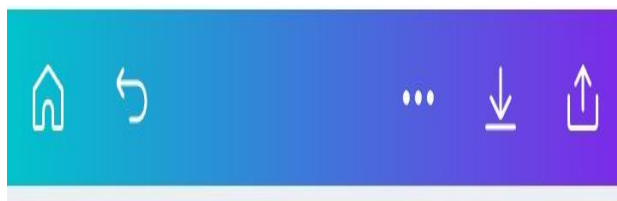


Plate 6: Canva Icons in Edit mode.

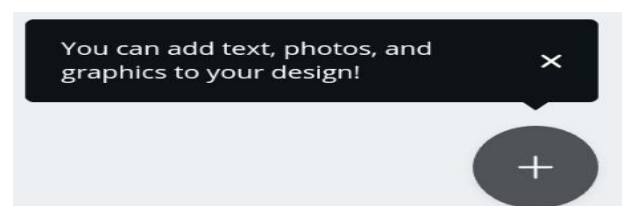


Plate 7: A circled + sign which means to create/add tools

In the Plate 6, the first icon is the Home icon which is the dashboard for displaying diverse design templates (free and payable). The second icon indicates undo, that is to go back to previous action(s), while the three dots icon links user to different options such as save, save to folder, share, and so on. The arrow down icon if clicked would save the modified template and the last icon “arrow up” will export an edited template if clicked. On the other hand, as shown in the Plate 7, the circled plus sign is usually shown at the lower right side of the Canva platform and enables user to add contents to the templates or start a design from the scratch.

Once any of the existing templates is clicked, one will have to click on any part of the template in order to start modifying the template. The text can be edited to carry a new caption or textual feats, the text can be reduced and/or increased, the color of the text can be changed also. The background colors can be changed to either solid color or a pictorial background. Among other modifications that can be done on the platform.

Challenges with Canva App

As a way of improving some of the existing applications, software and other technological innovations users' reviews have always been instrumental for the developers in improving the functionality and usability of such product(s). Hence, while probing into the users' reviews for canva, asides millions of positive reviews that earned the product a 4.7-star rating, the focus was shifted to the challenges and modifications oozing from millions of Canva users. Few modifications suggested by users were selected randomly. This further authenticates the goal of this study as relates to the need for continuum enhancement and modifications in curriculum delivery for art disciplines and equals. Few randomly selected remarks about canva are; the need for data to access existing templates, limitation in phone storage, tiny screen as relates to phones, lack of guidelines, absence of search function, high rate of paid template, among other (trustradius, 2020).

The essence of the randomly selected reviews is to intimate the beginners with some plausible challenges that are likely to be encountered while using the application. Hence, it will prepare users who are beginners ahead of time to be able to know how to cope with the world of templates embedded in Canva.

Generating Income with Canva App

Asides the fact that students would be exposed to trending technological innovations if canva and other computer applications/software could be integrated to further enhance the curriculum delivery of the educators in Graphic arts, the knowledge of Canva can also be utilized to generate income by the students as a way of empowering themselves financially and easing their parents of some financial responsibilities. With few feats embedded in the platform coming in dissimilar

categories previously analyzed, it makes it quite possible for students to generate income from the skill developed. Few of the categories of design templates on Canva that could be maximized for financial empowerment are but not limited to Logo, Comic Strips, T-Shirts, Birthday Cards, Business Cards. Canva can also be used to produce different designs of T-shirts. With several templates of both still and animated logos, the students who are to use same phone for networking as posited in the previously cited studies, the possibility of getting potential customers to design such creative Logos would be realistic. The same thing applicable to Comic Strips which can be leveraged for product marketing and equals.

The need for Art Education Enhancement in Graphics

With lots of diverse categories of editable graphics, visual templates strategically grouped in Canva, indicating the availability of more than enough working templates that could be used by educators to enhance the teaching of graphic arts and enable the students to be technologically skilled, rather than predominantly being exposed to the archaic style of handmade graphics which are barely patronized in this fast computer advancing age. This will also make the students relevant in addition to generating income from the skill gained using Canva which will in turn foster the actualization of objectives of the course modules for both ND 1 and 2 levels even right from school. With lots of different graphics areas covered in Canva, there are more than enough course modules that Canva has been able to address from ND 1 all through ND 2 course modules. For example, for the knowledge of elements and principles of designs which are parts of the course contents for ND 1 level, there are thousands of existing templates to analyze for identifying the elements and principles of art/designs accordingly. Similarly, in ND 2 the modules and course objectives focus on identity creation through logo and other publicity and advertising apparatuses, all of which are abundant in Canva.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Having probed into the abundant features embedded in the proposed graphics platform (Canva App) alongside the rate at which smartphones are commonly used by students and it was uncovered that the rate is impressively good, this makes the essence of this study plausible and viable, hence, the recommendations to integrate Canva Application and other graphic arts applications into the curriculum to complement the existing courses. Also, there is a need for prompt review and modification of the currently used NBTE curriculum especially in Art programme to accommodate the trending impacts of technological innovations and digital influence.

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