Senior High Schoolers' Atitudes toward Visual Art Education in Ghanaian Secondary Schools

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Abstract:
This research aims at studying senior high school students' attitudes toward visual art education in terms of a) their gender, b) their level in education, c) the location of school. The current research was conducted with sample of 385 students selected from six senior high schools located in both urban and peri-urban precincts in Ashanti Region of Ghana in the 2015-2016 academic years. A perspectives scale of 50items was employed so as to obtain the data required. The alpha reliability for the scale of perspectives toward visual art education was found to be 0.766. The t-test was used in the comparison of pairs whereas one directional variance analysis and Scheffe test was used in comparing groups larger than pairs in data analyses. In consequence, the statistical data demonstrated that senior high school visual art students' perspectives towards visual art education did not differ on the basis of a) gender and b) education level, however, significant difference existed between those located in the peri-urban and urban communities.

Keywords: Senior high school, visual art education, perspectives towards visual art

1. Introduction

Art, is the product of human creative activity in which materials are selected and shaped to convey an idea, emotion, or visually interesting form especially within the graphic arts or visual arts including other forms of creative activity, such as dance, drama, and music. By and large the visual art is the bedrock of the creative industries that are changing peoples' life. Creative Scotland (2014) postulates that "the creative industries shape, and make, a significant contribution to our culture, communities and economy. They improve how we live, learn, work and participate. They generate income, employment in the creative economy and often act as a catalyst for regenerating places". Thus, for an interest in visual art studies to be rewarding and beneficial to pursue, first of all, visual art students need to have an in-depth understanding and appreciation for the visual art discipline. The purpose of this study is to examine the perspectives of prospective visual art students' outlooks on visual art education.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Visual Art Education

Visual art has become an important component of school curricula across the world (Fleming, 2010). NACCCE report "All Our Futures" in 1999 cited in Fleming (2010) indicated that arts in curriculum provided for "developing a full variety of human intelligence (in contrast with academic study and logico-deductive thought); creative thought and action (for adaptability); education of feeling and sensibility; exploration of values; understanding cultural change and differences; developing physical and perceptual skills". Many studies on Visual art education have been conducted around the world by researchers such as Watts, 2005; Alter, Hays, & O'Hara, 2009; and Indoshi et al., 2010. A review of their literatures has shown that Visual art education is sidestepped in relation to logico-deductive reason and for propositional knowledge (Steers, 2011) and time and quantity of subject matter in primary learning and development considered as "over-crowded curriculum" (Alter, Hays, & O'Hara, 2009; Indoshi et al., 2010). Several studies, especially those conducted by Indoshi et al., (2010), have simultaneously investigated environmental, administrative and curriculum related factors on visual art education. Alter et al. (2009) and Of STED (2013) discussed at length challenges with teacher preparation towards the teaching of creative arts at basic level of education.

A study by Dr. Eulalee Nderu-Boddington (2008) on Arts Education and Student's Perception found out that some countries are restructuring their art programmes. Sweden, for instance, is restructuring its art programmeto it an essential component for developing student wellbeing for the job market (Lindstrom, 1997). Japan, on the other hand, has

incorporated the arts in its curricula, which emphasizes on craftsmanship in school to cultivate excellence in the workplace. The teaching of expressive arts in the schools, particularly at the elementary level, has enabled the Japanese society to develop greater tolerance, problem-solving skills, and an appreciation for aesthetics, creativity, and decision-making in its students (Lindstrom, 1997).Some researchers also claim that arts revitalize neighbourhoods and promote economic prosperity (Costello 1998; SCDCAC 2001; Stanziola 1999; Walesh 2001). Participation in the arts improves physical and psychological well-being (Baklien 2000; Ball and Keating 2002; Bygren, Konlaan and Johansson, 1996; Turner and Senior 2000). The arts provide a catalyst for the creation of social capital and the attainment of important community goals (Goss, 2000; Matarasso, 1997; Williams, 1995). In spite of the numerous studiesin the arts, there is no study on the direct relationship between perspectives from art students in peri-urban and urban communities.

2.2. Visual Art Education in Ghana

The introduction of visual art into Ghanaian education system faced some initial challenges. Edusei (2004) recounted the history of the re-introduction of formal Art in Ghana's education system in 1919, after it was abandoned by the Christian Missionaries who setup and ran the mission schools in Ghana at the beginning of 20th century.Ross (2004), like Edusei (2004), sharpened and extended some important points about visual arts in Ghanaian education system. She observed thatthe artspermeate every aspect of Ghanaian culture and environment. However, sheidentifiedthree major challenges in thevisual art education in Ghana:(a) Western education and science, (b) commodification of traditional culture and (c) Christianity.

According to Edusei (2004) Ghanaian art and culture were considered fetish and primitive at the time by the Christian missionaries, hence, teaching art in their schools will invariable contravene the belief and practices of the new religion that was introduced in the mission schools. The conflict stems from the fact that African art products represented the beliefs, values and attitudes, as well as the history of the people and since the study of art develops appreciation of beauty in nature could increase the people's desire and love for their art and culture.

Although, the visual art education in Ghana has expanded to cover all levels of education in Ghana, yet, Ghanaians still have some reservations towards it. In one breath they appreciate and enjoy itsuse, in another breath despise it as a vocation, career or anti-Christianity. This attitude towards the visual art has transcended beyond controlled level. The decision to incorporate Visual Art into the curriculum of Ghanaian schools was worthwhile, among the rationale for teaching art goes further to include the production of high calibre professionals who will contribute to the development of the country in a wide variety of fields. However, results show that governments and officialdom pay lips service to thedevelopment of visual art (Source needed). It appears that anything to do with the visual art is considered by the powers that be as less important and can wait forever. No wonder, there are inadequate financial allocations to the schools for facilities, provision of art materials and inadequate professional art teachers teaching in at the primary levels. Pre-service training in art education is lamentably inadequate. There is little or no recognition for Art teachers, no provision is made for Art teachers to improve their skills, andfew of them have personal skills in the arts (Okonkwo, 2014; I.N.T.O., 2009).

Although some researchers such as Ross (2004), Evans-Solomon & Opoku-Asare (2011), have conducted studies on visual art education, their outcomes varied and were not conclusive.

3. Objectives

The present study investigates senior high school students' outlooks towards visual art education. To this end, the following research questions have been posed:

- Do the perception scores of the Senior High School students towards the visual art education differ significantly according to their gender?
- Do the perception scores of the Senior High School students towards the visual art education differ significantly according to their school location?
- Do the perception scores of the Senior High School students towards the visual art education differ significantly according to their level of education?
- Do the perception of influence scores of the senior high school students towards the visual art education differ significantly according to their location?

4. Methodology

This is a "descriptive" study aiming to examine visual art Senior High School students' outlooks towards visual art programme in terms of several variables.

4.1. Sample

The convenient sample group for this study comprised of 385 students enrolled in visual arts studies in 6 public senior high schools located in urban and peri-urban precincts in Ashanti Region of Ghana in the 2016 -2017 academic year.The sample group consists of 230 males (59.7%) and 155 females (40.3%) visual art students. The peri-urban group consists of 119 students (30.9%) and the urban group consists of 266 students (69.1%).

4.2. Data Collection Instruments

STIMULA developed by consortium of researchers from across Europeto measure post primary school pupil's perceptions toward science and technology was adopted in this study. This instrument has been widely used to measure perceptions related to the study of science and technology. STIMULA developed by Fraser (1981) originally consisted of 18

scales and 123 items. In this study only six scales consisting of 50 items from the original form of STIMULA were selected and modified. They are adaptation to visual art attitudes, enjoyment of visual art lessons, leisure interest in visual art, perception toward science and technology, social influence and career interest in visual art. The perception scale used in this study consists of 50 items in 5-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). The alpha reliability was found to be 0.776 for the scale.

The data were obtained in the classroom and during school hours. Before the administration of the questionnaire,the consent of the school authority was sought, and the Class was addressed regarding the purpose and process of collecting the data. It was explained to them that the data would be used for quality assurance as well as for research purposes and will be treated with confidentiality. Therespondents' cooperation was requested,and they participated voluntarily. The tests were run in the various schools by Teaching Assistants who have received prior general training on how to apply the instrument. The study was conducted in the 2016 -2017academic year, from November to December.

Variables	Items	Sampled Items
Attitude towards science and technology	7	"Improves your understanding of the things that affects you and family" "Improves your understanding of solving problems in your daily life"
Attitude towards visual art	9	"My friends will be a strong influence on my choice of career" "Visual arts subject are the most interesting to study at school"
Visual art learning value	12	"Visual arts are increasingly complicated" "Visual arts are concerned with the needs of people"
External Influences	4	"My parents/guardians will be a strong influence on my choice of career" "My friends will be a strong influence on my choice of career"
Visual art as a career	12	"They think is worthwhile" "People who have career in visual arts are typically boring"

Table 1

4.3. Data Analysis

Data collected in this study was analysed by using the SPSS 16.0 software for processing and the results were computed in the form of frequency, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, t-test and one-way variance analysis were used for independent samples.

5. Data Presentation and Results

This study focuses on examining whether there was a significant different between the perspectives scores of the senior high school students and some characteristics they have. In the following presentation, the findings and comments are presented according to the sub problems.

5.1. Do The Perception Scores of the Senior High School Students towards the Visual Art Education Differ Significantly According To The Gender?

Independent samples t-test was done in order to determine whether there was a significant difference among the outlook scores of the students towards the visual art education according to their gender. The results were presented in Table 2.

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	p
Outlook	Male	230	2.2998	.37536	382	-.996	.320
	Female	154	2.3353	.28478			

Table 2: The t-test Results of the Perspectives Mean Scores of the Students According to the Gender

According to Table 2, the perception score of female students is m=2.3353, while the score for male students is m=2.2998. From the table, the mean perception score of female students is descriptively higher than the mean score of male students. However, the t-test results, show that the perception scores of female and male visual art students do not show any significant variation (t(382)= -.996; p>.05).

5.2. Do The Perception Scores of the Senior High School Students Towards the Visual Art Education Differ Significantly According to Their School Location?

The schools of the students who participated in the study were grouped as peri-urban and urban, according to their location, development and government administration. Independent samples t-test analysis was used in order to determine whether there was a significant difference among the outlook score distribution of the students in these groups. The results were presented in Table 3.

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	p
Perception	Peri-urban	230	2.172	.3483	382	-5.677	.000
	Urban	154	2.378	.3198			

Table 3: The T-Test Results of the Perception Mean Scores of the Students According to the School Location

As shown in Table 2, the mean perception score of peri-urban schools' students has been determined to be m=2.172, while the mean perception score of urban schools' students is x =2.378. According to t-test result, it is understood that the mean perspectives scores of students in peri-urban and urban schools show significant variation (t(382)= -5.677; p<.05). This statistical difference is found to be in favour of urban school's visual art students.

5.3. Do The Perception Scores of the Senior High School Students Towards the Visual Art Education Differ Significantly According to Their Class?

The schools of the students who participated in the study were grouped according to their class. One-way variance analysis was used in order to determine whether there was a significant difference among the perception score of the students in these groups. The results were presented in Table 4.

	Source of the Variance	SS	Df	MS	F	p
The Mean Scores of the Perception	Between Groups	.123	2	.061	.523	.593
	Within Groups	44.666	381	.117		
	Total	44.789	383			

Table 4: The ANOVA Results of the Outlook Scores of the Students towards the Visual Art Programme to the Class of the Students

According to Table 4, there was no significant difference among theperception scores of the classes(first, second and third year visual art students). When the perspectivesmean scores of the students were examined, it was observedthat the first-year students (m=2.350), second year students (m=2.321) and third year students (m =2.303) had mean scores that were close to each other. Although there was no statistically significant difference, it was striking that the mean scores of the first-year students was higher than the second and third year students.

5.4. Do The Perception of Influence Scores of the Senior High School Students towards the Visual Art Education Differ Significantly According to Their Location?

According to Table 5, score average of students' perceptions of external influence towards visual art programme is 2.56 for students wholive and have their education in peri-urban areas whereas it is 3.12 for those wholive and have their education in urban areas. The t-test result shows that there are significant differences between influence score averages. The findings obtained reveal that there are significant differences available between the groups interms of external influence towards visual art programme and that they demonstrated divergent influences.

	Location	N	M	SD	Df	T	P
Perception	Peri-Urban	119	2.5588	.96205	383	-4.746	.000
	Urban	266	3.1047	1.07623			

Table 5: the T-Test Results of the Perception Concerning Visual Art Students' External Influence towards Visual Art programme on the Basis of External Influences

6. Discussion

The findings show that majority of respondents agreed that parents/guardians have strong influence and dictate on the type of career for their wards. These findings are in consistent with several studies done by educational researchers such as Knowles (1998); Marjoribanks (1997); Mau & Bikos (2000); Smith (1991);Wilson & Wilson (1992)and Khajehpour&Ghazvini (2011). Middleton and Loughead (1993) examined three parental influences on children: positive involvement; non-involvement; and negative involvement. Their report indicated that parents who fell under positive involvement were enthusiastic about their children's career exploration and were very supportive of young adult's individual goals. The non-supportive parents were just unaware of what to do, how to help, or that their involvement is desired at all (Middleton and Loughead 1993). Also Analysing the responses of 5-14 year old students from families that were classified as middle-class or poor, Weinger (2000) found that those from middle class valued their parent's income, felt it would help them obtain their professional career, and saw themselves in similar professional roles as their parents.

The respondents' mindset about students pursuing visual art studies, which includes visual arts students are typically creative, work in a studio, competitive, hardworking, works in teams, genius, work both gender types, not boring, not nerdy and addicted to their work, were evident in this study. By and large most respondents showed appreciable understanding and appreciation of the discipline and were encouraged by the prospects in the profession to stay focus with their education.

7. Conclusion

This study has been able to outline some mindset about people who pursue visual arts studies and most of these thoughts are positive. A number of negative factors, which affect students pursing visual arts, were observed in this study. These factors pose a great challenge to the profession and nation building. The respondents also have just little knowledge in the issues pertaining to visual arts since they are not exposed to visual arts exhibitions, field trips, experiments, speeches and competitions. Students are also not allowed to do more practical project to widen their knowledge scope. Moreover, it appears that students, teachers and parents lack education on the importance of visual arts in relations to the sciences and the businesses. These are important findings that should be considered in other to change the perception of students enrolled in the course in other to produce effective creative thinkers through the arts for the nation building.

8. Recommendations

The researchers make the following recommendations from the study:
- It is recommended that the findings of this study should be used by school authorities for planning, implementing and monitoring good critical analyses to help people understand visual arts issues, works and findings.
- Parents/guardians and school authorities should be educated on the importance of visual arts studies to the individual and the nation as a whole in a guidance form to help them make a good choice even in the branches and disciplines of arts.In addition, they should be educated on the importance of visual arts to the study of sciences and the businesses which they are more interested in.
- Adequate practical exercises in the various disciplines in the arts should be usedto broaden the scope of knowledge of students offering visual arts.
- Art teachers should be well trained in the visual arts and they should be compelled to use the designated curricula for visual arts in other to improve the outcome of arts for students.
- Senior High Schools offering Visual Art should collaborate visual arts institutions and create avenues for competitions, experimentations, research projects, speeches, field trips and exhibitions to boost the interest of Visual Arts students.

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