

Assessment of Art Elective Courses In Relation To the Pre-Requisite to Tertiary Art Programs In Ghana

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Abstract: Art elective course combinations offered in Senior High Schools hinder Art students from offering some Art program at the Tertiary level. The need therefore to assess Art and allied programs offered at the tertiary level. A mixed method approach involving qualitative and quantitative research strategies was adopted for the study. The study revealed that visual art students are limited in offering some courses at the tertiary institutions as most visual art students have no idea of the program they want to study in the tertiary level of education. The study, therefore recommends to stakeholders to ensure that orientations and seminars are conducted in pre-SHS and SHS to help students to choose relevant courses to be offered at the tertiary level.

Keywords: Assessment, Visual Art Programs, Pre-requisite, Elective courses.

INTRODUCTION

The educational system of any nation is a mirror through which the image of the nation can be seen, shaped and also likely to be shaped. Education has been and will continue to be the potential cause of change in any society. Education is also meant to develop manpower for different levels of the economy, which is an ultimate guarantee of national self-reliance.

Hence, the formulation and clarification of purposeful education must emerge the realities of life, taking into account the entire scope of human life and at the same time, considering the specific needs of the individual [1-3]. Education is the process of inviting truth and possibility, of encouraging and giving time to discovery. Everyone has the right to education [4].

Visual Art programs were first introduced into the school curriculum in the then Gold Coast, now Ghana, in the year 1908 [5]. It appeared as 'hand and eye' on the timetables of schools and colleges in an attempt to infuse practical subjects into the school curriculum to change the mere bookishness of school instructions. 'Hand and eye' as a drawing exercise consisted of copying with the objective of helping to develop the coordination between the students' hands and eye [5]. According to CRDD [6] as cited by Boateng [7], the Senior High School programme has General Knowledge in Art, which is a compulsory subject for all Visual Art students. Aside the General Knowledge in Art, students are also required to study at least, two other elective subjects; made up of a two dimensional subject and a three dimensional subject, as a means of getting exposed to a variety of vocational skills and career opportunities.

The Art programs have now become fully-fledge with varied combinations to prepare students into the tertiary institutions. It is also observed, however, that Visual Art elective course combinations offered in Senior High Schools hinder Visual Art students from offering some programs at the Tertiary level. Applicants with elective courses like; Leatherwork, Basketry, Bamboo, Bead Making and Ceramics are rejected at the tertiary level to read programs like; Communication Design, Publishing Studies, Business Administration, Social Sciences, Architecture, etc. courses, though applicants from these subject areas are permitted to offer visual art programs at the tertiary level. The argument has always been that; Visual Art students are not intellectually capable to offer science related courses [7].

According to Newman [8], as cited by Kessah & Kemevor [9], Education plays a crucial role in fostering self-development as well as the development of human capital for national socio-economic development. Education in Ghana was mainly informal, and was based on apprenticeship before the arrival of European settlers, who introduced a formal education system to the elites. Ghanaian schools now are characterized as good, average or poor, public or private, rural or urban. Grading depends on the quality of output and internal performance of schools with

indicators basically measured by students' communication skills and examination results of the pupils or students [3].

The secondary education occurs at the Junior and Senior High Schools. The Junior High education follows a six-year Primary education and lasts for three years. At the end of the period, students take the national Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) which qualifies them to be considered for admission into Senior High Schools of their choice to pursue specialized programs. Students are required to fill forms to choose schools based on a computerized system of placement [10, 11].

At the end of Senior High School, all students take the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE), to be qualified to the Tertiary Institutions. Admission into Ghanaian universities is highly competitive, especially in the fields of medicine, engineering, law, business and pharmacy. Also, the old educational system was found to be elitist in character in the sense that it catered for the needs of only those who could pursue vigorous academic studies leading to the universities. The vast majority of Ghanaians therefore dropped out of school after middle school education, thus making education irrelevant for many. These and other problems called for the Education Reforms of 1987. In the 1987 Education Reform, access to education was increased to provide education to all children of school going age in Ghana. Education financing was made efficient and cost effective. Teacher training programs were improved. The pre-1987 system of education with regards to its structure was seventeen (17) years pre-university education made up of six (6) years primary education, four (4) years middle school, five (5) years secondary school, and two (2) years sixth form. This structure was, however, changed to six (6) years free compulsory Primary School, three (3) years Junior Secondary School, three (3) years Senior Secondary School and three (3) or four (4) years Tertiary Education [12].

With reference to GES 2017, the Senior High School was introduced in 2007, expanding the system for four years, but not otherwise changing the curriculum, a policy that is being reversed after three years. As a result, there were no graduates in 2010 which led two cohorts graduating groups in 2013. On the other hand, because the old, established schools are well known and usually highly esteemed, studies of the educational system usually concentrate on their students. Ghana's formal educational system, although it is traced to the Castle Schools, has seen various reforms leading to a number a number of changes in the structure, curricula and governance of education [13-15, 7].

Currently, Education indicators in Ghana reflect a gender gap and disparities between rural and

urban areas, as well as between southern and northern parts of the country. Those disparities drive action against illiteracy and inequities in access to education [16]. The Visual Art program at the Secondary Level includes; Bamboo, Leatherwork, Ceramics, Textiles, Jewelry, Picture making, Graphic design, Sculpture, Pottery, Basketry, Calabash art, Jewelry and General Knowledge in Art (G.K.A). According to Siaw *et al.*, [11], the choice of program depends on resources available in each school's area of location. This means that if specific resources are not provided, students will not benefit from any other courses. The question however is if the students do not benefit from any of elective courses, are they not going to be affected in their subsequent level of education?

Recent reviews of the visual Art programs has led to additional non-visual art subjects to the Visual Art electives. They include; Economics, Biology, Chemistry, French and Elective Mathematics. The question is, are Art students allowed to study and specialize in any of these subject areas other than Art at the tertiary level? The courses in Art syllabus are structured such that Visual Art students are provided with an accurate foundation of knowledge and skills, in that, those who are not able to further their education after the SHS will have the opportunity for self-employment or apprenticeship as enshrined in the philosophy of Ghanaian Education. The visual Art programs help the individual to form his or her own situation. Thus, becoming self-reliant economically, socially, philosophically and culturally [17].

Edusei [5] throws more light on this that the introduction of Visual Art Education into the schools and college in Ghana was meant to foster creativity in students to enable them solve problems of national dimension with ease. The author explains further that it is possible because it is largely in the Art class that a person thinks, act and feels creativity. Art has an integrating effect on the student's personality. It offers an avenue for the mental, spiritual and that, after graduating from school, an additionally hands-on experience can make the learner practice his or her own art as a vocation. Again, the Education Reform System in Ghana [18] as cited by Boateng [7], concludes that "the Visual Art program is designed to equip students with the capacity to develop the requisite employable skills towards self-employment and wealth creation after the years of training".

Even though visual art elective courses have other non-art elective subjects such as mathematics, science, social studies and English Language, etc., preference is not given to the Visual Art students as compared to the Science, Business, and General Art students when it comes to admission into tertiary institutions to read allied programs like Architecture. When one studies, then preferred opportunities are geared towards Publishing Studies, Communication

Design, Graphic Design, Fashion, Textiles, Metals, Ceramics Integrated Rural Art and Industry and Painting and Sculpture, communication studies, African Art studies etc., at the tertiary institutions. According to Edusei [5], the University level has an intensive theoretical study in history of art, psychology, art, aesthetics, sociology and philosophy of Art is taken together with practical productions for the degree of Bachelor of Art and Bachelor of Fine Art. Further, all these programs are run in the College of Art, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana. The Department of Art Education at the University of Education, Winneba also offers a Bachelor of Education in Art Education program and the Department of Art Education at the University of Cape Coast. The Faculty of Art at the University of Ghana also offers Bachelor of Art.

There are however ambiguity in admission into one's preferred program of study at the tertiary level. The need therefore to assess Art and its allied program offered in the tertiary and to examine the factors that influence the choices of visual art program at the tertiary institutions becomes very crucial to minimize the challenges thereof for the sustainable development of Art education in Ghana.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed the mixed media approach of qualitative and quantitative research strategies focusing on case study and descriptive survey methods. The target population for the study was

mainly staff and students of Tertiary Institutions in Ghana with the accessible population selectively drawn from the Eastern, Ashanti, Western, Central and Greater Accra Regions respectively. Quantitative research approach enabled the research team to retrieve statistical information through questionnaire and the qualitative research approach enabled the research team obtain additional information through interviews and observations to ensure fairness and credibility of data. The selection of schools and students were sampled randomly for the study. The study sampled 97 respondents, out of this total, 57.7% were males and 42.3% were females. Closed ended questionnaire was designed to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire was validated by an expert in education who has over 20 years' experience. The completed questionnaire was retrieved, coded and assembled using the SPSS software. For the qualitative, interview guide and an observational checklist were designed and administered personally by the research team. This was to ensure relevance and authenticity of data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent's Demographics

The study sampled 97 respondents, 57.7% were males and 42.3% were females. In the region of institution, 40.2% represented Ashanti region, 34.0% were from Central, 7.2% represented Western, Eastern had 16.5% and Greater Accra occupied 2.1%.

Visual Art Programs offered in the Senior High School

| | |
|--|----------------|
| The study found the following as major courses at the SHS (SHS Syllabus, 2011) | |
| General Knowledge in Art | Bead making |
| Ceramics | Picture Making |
| Graphic Design | Textiles |
| Leatherwork | Sculpture |
| Bamboo art | Calabash Art |
| Jewelry | |

Art and Allied Programs Offered in the Tertiary Ghanaian Institutions

The following allied Programs were obtained from the Universities (KNUST, UCC, UEW and UG) entry requirements and guidelines in Ghana.

| KNUST | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Architecture | Fashion Design Technology |
| Painting | Textile Design Technology |
| Sculpture | Ceramic Design and Technology |
| Communication Design | Publishing Studies |
| Integrated Rural Art and Industry | Metalsmithing and Jewelry Technology |

| UCC | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| African Studies | Film Studies |
| Theater Studies | Communication Studies |

| UEW |
|--------------------------------------|
| Graphic Design |
| Theater Art |
| Fashion Design and Textile Education |

| UG |
|---------------|
| Theater Art |
| Dance Studies |

Table-1: Senior High School Art Programs vis-à-vis the Tertiary Art Programs

| SHS Subject Combination | Tertiary Art Programs |
|--|--|
| General Knowledge in art Graphic design Textiles | Communication Design / Graphic Design |
| General Knowledge in Art Picture Making / Graphic design Textiles Sculpture Leatherwork | Culture and Tourism |
| Any three elective visual art subjects | African Studies Art Theater Studies Dance Communication Studies Music Film Studies |
| General Knowledge in Art Any two visual art elective subjects | Painting and Sculpture |
| General Knowledge in art (Credit passes in three of the following elective subjects) Picture Making Leatherworks Sculpture Jewelry Food and Nutrition Clothing and Textiles Physics Chemistry Elective Mathematics Technical Drawing Wood work Metal work Ceramics Management in Living Economics History Akan Literature in English Business Management Accounting Costing | Integrated Rural Art and Industry |
| General Knowledge in Art Graphic design / Picture Making Textiles / Sculpture / Leatherwork | Publishing Studies |
| Any three elective subjects from visual art | Ceramic Design and Technology Metalsmithing and Jewelry Technology Textile Design Technology Fashion Design |

Field Survey, 2018

SHS Art Subject Combinations and Possible Program of study in the Tertiary Institutions

The Challenges facing Art applicants to the Tertiary Institutions in Ghana

The study found that the course combinations made in the senior high school, sometime restricted students to offer some of the visual art programs in the tertiary level. Programs such as Graphic Design/Communication Design do not admit SHS applicants with courses such as leatherwork, basketry and bamboo art. Thus, students who offered these courses as a compulsory course offered in their respective schools are not able to offer Communication Design/Graphic design even if they select it as their preferred course. Evan- Solomon [19], Owusu-Afriyie [20] as cited Boateng [7] confirms that Visual Arts program are numerous and they are mainly due to the various courses, and what students have to do in fulfilling the requirements. Other problems are attributed to the admission criteria, the attitude of some parents, tutors of non-Visual Arts subjects, heads of schools, some Visual Arts tutors and students towards the program.

Every school chooses one visual art course, aside General Knowledge in Art (G.K.A) and makes it a compulsory course to be studied by all the visual art students. According to Siaw *et al.*, [11], the choice of program one depends on resources available in each school's area of location. Furthermore, it was realized that most respondents had no idea of the courses they selected to offer in the tertiary until they are given admissions in a particular tertiary institution. Again the respondents express their reasons for selecting a particular art program; one interviewee said he wanted to be an economist in art, but upon viewing the courses offered in the tertiary schools, he realized that there was no course as such therefore he had no option than to select a course he did not wish to offer. These challenges therefore make the students in the Senior high school level forgo the Visual Art program for other Non-Visual Art program. Anamoah Mensah [21] as cited in Boateng [7] confirms that the attainment of the aim for institutionalizing the Visual Arts program is

being hampered by several challenges such as Visual students abandoning the program for other Non-Visual Art program such as General Art, Agriculture, Business, Science, Home Economics and other Technical programs.

Generally, the study revealed that, some of the respondents did not wish to specialize in their current elective when they were admitted to the tertiary. Could this mean that most Senior High Schools were not provided with the necessary tools and materials and a good studio to enable smooth practical activities? Or the teachers were obsolete with their methodologies for effective teaching and for that matter most students lost interest in studying Visual Art right from the beginning? During the interview, most respondents complained that they were not provided with the necessary tools and materials whereas others contended that, they were charged for elective courses aside their School fees. Aside that, the respondents also complained of some of their teachers being too obsolete with their pedagogical strategies and were not updated with the current trend in art practice as compared to fresh graduates.

Others also complained that their teachers always accused them of not being serious and so they use that as an excuse to miss classes. Asihene [22] as cited in Nimade [23] opines that the core subject teachers usually argued that most of the students studying Visual Arts program are academically poor and non-serious; hence they cannot keep pace with the teaching of the core subjects, especially in the Visual Arts classrooms. Conversely, Visual Arts students blame the core subjects for being uncaring and disinterested in the teaching in their classrooms because of the negative perceptions that they hold about them.

Factors influencing the choice of Visual Art programs at the Tertiary Institutions

Table-2: Shows gender and factors that influence choice of Art program at the tertiary institution

| Gender of respondents | Cut-off Points | Peer Pressure | Parental influence | Course combination | Others | Total |
|-----------------------|----------------|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| Male | 11(6.3%) | 9(5.0%) | 5(3.0%) | 23(13.0%) | 8(5.0%) | 56(57.7%) |
| Female | 11(5.0%) | 8(4.0%) | 7(3.1%) | 10(4.2%) | 5(2.1%) | 41(42.3%) |
| Total | 22(22.0%) | 17(17.0%) | 12(12.0%) | 33(33.0%) | 13(13.0%) | 97(100.0%) |

With regards to gender and how they ended up with the specific visual art course they are offering, a sum of 22.0% respondents were selected based on their cut-off points out of which 6.3% represent males and 5.0% also for females. Seventeen percent of the total selected their current course based on peer pressure of which 5.0% were males as against 4.0% females. With parental influence, a total of 12.0% respondents were obtained, 3.0% for males, 3.1% for females. Accounting for course combinations also, a sum of 33%

respondents were accessed, 13.0% males as against 4.2% females and lastly 13.0% respondents chose their visual art courses based on personal reasons of which 5.0% were recorded to be males as against 2.1% females. The calculated value in this investigation is 3.981 in 4 degree of freedom and the critical value is 9.488. The critical value denotes a greater value than that of the calculated value, thus the null hypothesis is accepted, meaning there is no relation between gender and how they end up in their current visual art courses.

The need for the review of Visual Art course combination in Senior High School

Table-3: The respondents' views on the need to review course combinations in the SHS are presented in

| Gender of respondents | Agree | Strong Agree | Disagree | Total |
|-----------------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Male | 23(13.0%) | 25(15.0%) | 8(5.0%) | 56(57.7%) |
| Female | 16(7.0%) | 20(9.0%) | 5(2.1%) | 41(42.3%) |
| Total | 39(39.0%) | 45(45.0%) | 13(13.0%) | 97(100.0%) |

With regards to gender and review of visual art course combinations in Senior High School, a sum of 39.0% respondents agreed that the visual art course combination in Senior High School should be reviewed, 13.0% males and 7.0% females. Forty-five percent of them strongly agreed out of which 15.0% were males as against 9.0% females. Of those who agreed to the decision that visual art course combinations should not be reviewed sum up to 13.0% respondents, 5.0% were males as against 2.1% females. The calculated value is .189 in 2 degree of freedom and the critical value is 5.991. Here, the calculated value is lesser than the critical value according to this study, thus, the null hypothesis is accepted in the sense that there is no relationship between gender and reviewing of visual art course combinations in the Senior High School.

Observations revealed that each Senior High School selects a particular Art course and makes it a compulsory course to be studied by the students making it difficult for them to offer some courses thereby restricting them from studying other courses in the tertiary institutions. This makes them find themselves in other areas of specialization which makes them regret offering Visual Art in the Senior High School. Further information was gathered from the respondents that the visual art electives being taught in the Senior High School are not in relation to most of the programs studied in the tertiary institutions.

The regret of Students for offering Art Program at the SHS level

Table-4: Students at the tertiary institutions that study accessed indicated the regret for studying Art at the SHS/Tertiary level

| Gender of respondents | Yes | No | Total |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Male | 17(10.0%) | 39(23.0%) | 56(57.7%) |
| Female | 25(11.0%) | 16(7.0%) | 41(42.3%) |
| Total | 42(42.0%) | 55(55.0%) | 97(100.0%) |

Based on the report provided on gender and regrets in offering visual art, a total of 42.0% respondents confirmed that they have regretted offering visual art related programs in the tertiary institution, 10.0% of them were males and 11.0% females. Fifty-five percent respondents also disagreed that they have regretted offering visual art related programs in the tertiary, 23.0% were males as against 7.0% females. The calculated value given here is 9.039 in 1 degree of freedom, whereas the critical value is 3.841, here, the calculated value is greater than the critical value so the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning there is a difference in gender and regrets in offering visual art related programs in the tertiary institution. The students poured out that even their parents do not know they are studying art in the school. They explain further, that they seem neglected in the society and the industries in Ghana. Courses such as Law, Business Management, Medical field, etc., are well recognized in the country which makes students who falls under such category fit in the industry. These therefore make them regret offering the art program. Edusei [13] as cited in Boateng [7] confirms that students who pursued programs related to practical vocational skills were usually not respected as academics. He stated further that people have always been given preference to theoretical education which limits one to pen and paper.

Most societies, even parents do encourage their wards to pursue programs leading to Law, Business Administration, Mathematics and Medicine, as against those that require critical and practical vocational skills.

Again, the government has many priorities of which preference is given to Science and Technology, Agriculture, Industry for restoration of the economy and political stability meanwhile, the plan for Art as a means of solving national problems is missing in the action and minds of policy makers [24, 25, 7]. This very worrisome and needs on tied attention for the development and sustainability of Technical and Vocational Educational Training (TVET) in Ghana.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that, visual art students are limited in offering some courses in the tertiary institution. Some schools do not allow their students to offer certain courses, but make selected courses compulsory which makes it difficult for the students to acquire the needed skills. Most visual art students have no idea of the programs they want to study at the tertiary level. There are inadequate tools and materials to aid in the practical activities at the SHS. Further, the pedagogical strategies used by their teachers are obsolete and are not updated with current trends in art

practice. The teachers also accuse students of not being serious enough and use it as an excuse in absenting themselves from classes. Also, some course combinations are rejected in the tertiary course placement when choosing specific programs to offer at the tertiary level.

The study recommends to stakeholders to ensure that orientations and seminars are conducted in the pre-SHS and SHS to help students choose relevant courses at the tertiary level. A collaboration between the SHS and the tertiary institutions is key in ensuring that applicants for tertiary education are well abreast with programs to enable them choose relevant ones. The visual art courses should be reviewed to suit the tertiary art programs to facilitate selection of the program at its tertiary institutions.

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