

Art Appreciation Session in Visual Art Education

Nur Umairaa Omar¹, Dr. Wan Samiati Andriana Wan
Mohamad Daud², Ts. Dr. Siti Zuraida Binti Maaruf³
{umairaaomar@gmail.com¹, samiati@uitm.edu.my²,
sitiz610@uitm.edu.my³}

Faculty of Art & Design UiTM Shah Alam, Faculty of Education
UiTM Puncak Alam

Abstract. Art appreciation is a basis of learning to better understand and analyse art. It can also be referred to as appreciating, perceiving, thinking, responding and experiencing arts. Art appreciation is different than art criticism that focused on evaluating an artwork with a formal assessment and tied to theory. In contrast, art appreciation can be used universally if there is an artwork engaged, commonly in museum, art galleries and even in art education. In term of education, art is a subject that is more than artistic expression, but it has connections between understanding the visual arts and possession of knowledge and skills development in other disciplines. It can be completely subjective, depending on the personal interest and preferences of an individual or it can be achieved on several grounds. In Malaysian primary school, it is known as Visual Art Education and has its roots in drawing, patterns & designs, shape & build and traditional craft. In each fundamental, students are ought to perform art appreciation that allows them to appreciate their own work and their peers in terms of visual arts language, art history and culture as one of the standards in the curriculum. Thus, this paper presents a conceptual framework focused to understand factors and the reality behind ineffective art appreciation in primary school level. The sole objective of this paper was to investigate the implementation of art appreciation in primary school in context to the standard curriculum. In doing so, quantitative method was applied. The author intends to assert that the art appreciation have a critical place in Visual Art Education and indeed in children development itself.

Keywords: Art Appreciation, Curriculum, Visual Art Education, Conceptual Framework,

1 Introduction

Art is made to be eyed and art appreciation is the art to look at art. 'Art appreciation' in a global term refers to the reaction to an artwork. It interprets and recognizes the artwork. Therefore, art appreciation can be applied to various levels or situations if there is an artwork presents. Art education is one of the biggest fields where this element prevails. Art education is a subject in which pupils actively expressing themselves creatively and cultivating the potential to obtain and interpret works of art.² Those skills are called art appreciation.

For a person to perform art appreciation, they should be exposed to it from their early

childhood. Franz Čizek introduced the concept of art appreciation into his founded school of youth art back in 1897. In making art and observing artwork, the kids were comfortable in his school and freely spoke about the artwork they created.³ In Malaysia, Visual Art Education is a mandatory subject in primary schools. However it is excluded from major national examination. Hence, formal and non-formal assessments are conducted consistently for different components. In this subject, art appreciation is included in its curriculum and it is design based on the National Education Policy. A curriculum document guides the teachers with instructional lessons and describe what the learner should know and direct what the learner learns from the lesson.⁴ The curriculum of Visual Art Education comprises topics of drawing, patterns & designs, shape & build and traditional craft. For each topic, there are 4 standard contents; aesthetic perception, art application, creative expression and art appreciation. The fourth standard which is art appreciation allows pupils to appreciate their own work and their peers in terms of visual arts language, art history, and culture.⁵

2 Problem Statement

Evidently, art appreciation is included in the curriculum standards. However, the component is often side-lined. Often than not, art appreciation is put as backburner by both teachers and students in class. Teachers focuses more on psychomotor development than art theories like history and art appreciation because they are not skilled to teach it.⁶ Teachers have limited knowledge and skills needed to teach it.⁷ Thus they could not teach appreciation topic perfectly and worse, skipped them altogether. Undeniably, there are constraints and challenges for teachers to be knowledgeable in the art field. This, in many ways, affected the efficacy in applying art appreciation. One prevailing factor is, the lack of qualified teachers in art field (art, music and design). Consequently, random teachers are assigned to teach the subject⁸.

Moving along, art education essentially involves art production and appreciation. Art curriculum aims towards two vital goals: engaging students in the process of self-expression by art production and creating opportunities for students to achieve art appreciation.⁹ Usually students are capable to use art media yet fail to response critically to artworks. It is also discovered the fact that teachers find the implementation of art appreciation sessions to be unnecessary and might cause students to be frustrated if their art work has been criticized.¹⁰ Moreover, in most primary and secondary schools, art subjects are still taught conventionally and focuses heavily on art production.⁷ Consequently, students are compelled to complete an art project, without appreciating them, either through writings or orally. This is because the teaching focus is shifted towards the product rather than its production processes. Production process is nonlinear, and students should be taught to understand it will help to develop their problem solving and critical thinking. Fundamentally, according to Runco (1989), creativity is vital for a child to develop optimally.¹¹ Art is to educate a personality development by enabling one with adequate ability and capacity. Furthermore, it helps in developing primary school students' abilities and imagination in the art class.¹² At such art education is one of the bigger contributors in children's emotional development.

In line with previous points, it is understandable that art appreciation should be made a focus in children's education. Thus, Ministry of Education Malaysia plays an important role to

improve the quality of art education programs. This would further manifest the National Education Philosophy goals to develop individuals holistically through five aspects; physical, emotion, spiritual, intellect and personality⁵ Besides that, art education also provides children with important opportunities and experience to develop awareness and competencies in the fields of imagination, collaboration, soul-expression, creativity and constructive in solving problem, exchanging concepts and love for each other and for oneself. Children's involvement in arts education has also proven to have a positive effect on their learning performance, academic achievement and empathy growth towards others.¹³

Bearing in mind the previous points, arts would not critically develop children if not taught efficiently. To develop an optimal potential of student holistically, teacher plays a significant role in creating, training, and preparing them for critical thinking. Both of the elements, curriculum and teacher act as a medium for student to have a critical thinking towards art appreciation skill. Therefore, teacher and the curriculum are the basis variables in this study. It will help the author to look and investigate the implementation of art appreciation in primary schoollevel.

Thus, this paper sets to understand factors and the reality behind ineffective art appreciation in primary school level. This study involved Visual Art teachers from Petaling Utama district and findings of this study are aimed to provide solutions and strategies to improve the practice of art appreciation in primary schools.

3 Literature Review

3.1 Understanding Visual Art Education Curriculum

In Malaysian primary school, the current primary school's curriculum is referred to a Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran (DSKP). The latest version prints are 2019. This document explains the curriculum content of this subject as a reference for teachers to teach. The goals and objectives of this subject are clearly stated as guidelines to teachers on what needs to be achieved in teaching and learning.⁵ Significantly, this curriculum comprises the same topics and same standard contents which are aesthetic perception, art application, creative expression and art appreciation. The variable is only on the level of mastery that increases along with student age.

Aims

To produce students who are knowledgeable and skilled in the field of art in shaping harmonious, critical, creative and innovative human beings, practicing noble values, appreciating the aesthetics of art from various cultures, and appreciating the beauty of God's creation.

Content Module

Visual Arts Language Module
Visual Arts Skills Module

Visual Arts Creativity and Innovation Module

Visual Arts Appreciation Module – *which will be the focus area of this study*

Visual Arts Appreciation Module

Pupils enjoy and appreciate the aesthetic value of their own work, friends, local and foreign. Appreciation activities can be conducted orally and in writing. Through this module, students focus on active observation activities and respond to the work critically. Pupils are able to make connections between the arts studied and other disciplines. At the end of the lesson, students can appreciate and be grateful for the beauty of God's creation.⁵

3.2 Understanding Art Appreciation

Understanding is the heart of art appreciation.¹⁶ Feldman presented a method of the criticism and evaluation for works of art through his book of *Becoming Human Through Art* in 1970. A close examination of his theory reveals that he believes, before describing an art piece, the student learn the art by using thematic and utilitarian values.³ Teachers of art education have utilized it with the notion that if pupils grasp it, they will be able to think and discuss intelligently about art. Hobbs in his study believes that if children can think and discuss intelligently about art, they will be able to understand and appreciate it better.¹⁸

4 Application of Theory: Purpose and Functional

Researchers rely on two theories in this study. These theories help this study to form a relationship represent in the conceptual framework.

4.1 Feldman's Art Criticism Theory

Firstly, is Feldman's Art Criticism Model in his book of *Practical Art Criticism* (1994). This theory work as a base of this study. Feldman's identified four methods for the student to use in art-critical performance:

(1) Description—The process of taking inventory, of noting what is immediately visible in an artwork. Identifying things about the object that can be easily seen, named, described, and agreed upon by a group of people.

(2) Formal Analysis—Discovering the relationships and organization between the elements and principles of art within the whole work of art.

(3) Interpretation—The process of finding the overall meaning of a work that the critic has described and analyzed. Interpretation involving discovering the meanings of a work of art and stating their relevance to our lives and the human situation in general.

(4) Judgment—Judging a work of art means giving it a rank in relation to other works of its type. Discovering the relevance of technique, materials, craftsmanship and skill involved in the evolution of the art object. Comparing the art object under study with a wide range of comparable works in time and space.¹⁷

4.2 Formalism Theory

Clive Bell (1914) and Roger Fry (1920) believed that the lines, shapes, and colours within the frame determine the formal aesthetic features of painting rather than narrative content. Formalism focus on an artwork's form in term of the visual aspects and the way it is made,

which are principle & element of art. Basically, this theory accept nothing but purely artistic standards for assessing works of art.¹⁹

Moreover, formalism is primarily a view about what it takes to determine the aesthetic characteristics or features or properties of things.

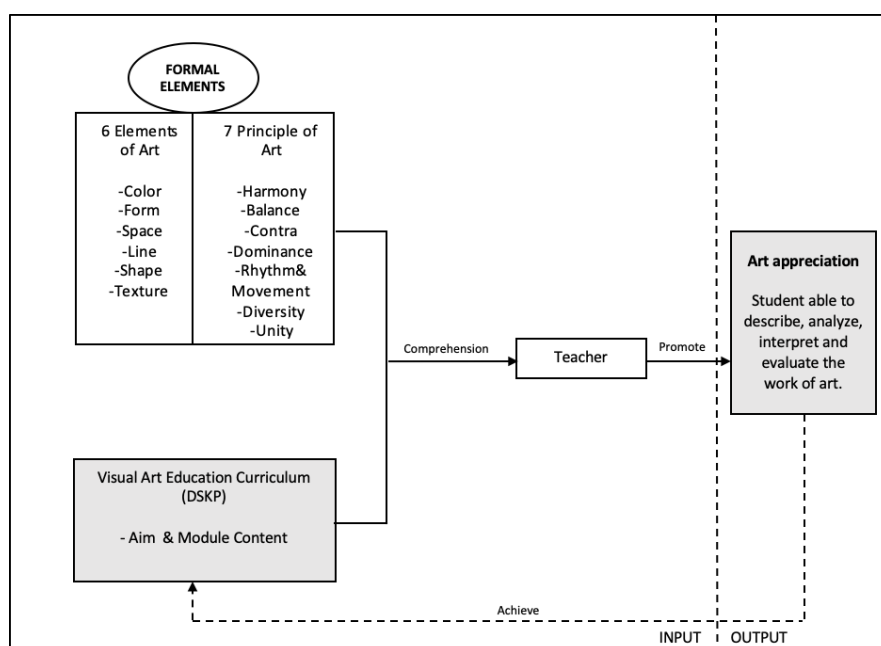
Simply giving a list of instances aesthetic traits such as beauty, ugliness, daintiness, dumpiness, elegance, and so on is one approach to give it a sense.²⁰ This method is very simple and suitable for a students to understand better. A more ambitious approach would be to state that the list of aesthetic criteria is non-arbitrary since they play such an important function, for example elegance, means being beautiful or ugly.

Both Fry and Bell have the same core idea: only “significant form” should be considered the “essence” of art. Because it may explain the very particular nature of aesthetic experience, art evaluation leads back to significant form. It is a symbol of the artwork's autonomy. Therefore, this study implemented the theory in the development of the conceptual framework as a root element other than the DSKP. These two roots essential to be comprehended by teachers first before convey it to students to aid them in appreciating art.

5 Conceptual Framework in Implementing Art Appreciation

This section will focus on applying the theories to a conceptual framework in implementing art appreciation. The whole framework represents a particular elements and how it can contribute to a successful art appreciation session.

Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework of Implementing Art Appreciation in Classroom



The conceptual framework (See Figure 1) was developed for this study and will conduct an investigation on the implementation of art appreciation in primary school based on standard curriculum (DSKP). Initially, the framework commence with two major roots which are formal elements and the DSKP. These two roots act as a constant variables and essential to comprehend by teacher before promote it to students. Therefore, a survey will be carried out to find out teacher comprehension base on this two roots and the result will show the level of their art appreciation implementation in class. From the first root, formal elements by formalism theory will help the teacher to understand on how to eye and describe art. The second is DSKP as a pedagogical reference to a teacher. The output result will somehow reflect back to the aims in DSKP either it is successful or not.

6 Method

This research is conducted by using quantitative methods. Primarily, this study will log the details contain in the DSKP of Visual Art Education issued by Ministry of Education from standard one to standard six (seven to twelve years old). The aims and content of art appreciation module will be used as a reference to develop a survey questionnaires as an instrument of investigation. Language and content validation by expertise will be carried out beforehand to get a legit mechanism. A pilot test will then be carried out as it will reveal areas that need to be clarified.¹⁴ The information gathered through survey is inclusive of three sections; Comprehension of Art Appreciation, Implementation of Art Appreciation and problem encounter by Visual Art teacher. The survey information is gained from the teachers who teach Visual Art Education in government primary school in Petaling Utama District of Malaysia.

Ordinarily, survey research aims to explain what is happening or to understand the reasons behind a particular purpose on business or social activity. However, some common goals of the survey are to classify the information about a specific group, apart from describing behavioral trends, to assess attitudes, quality and satisfaction. Most of the survey research is descriptive. In this research, questionnaire that has been distributed will be focusing on

the view and exposure of art appreciation among teachers, their understanding and their awareness in applying art appreciation in the classroom.

7 Findings and Arguments

In art appreciation, there are no right or wrong responses. Only individual understanding of the artwork and reaction to them. One must be able to perceive the universal qualities of art. Without knowledge and understanding of art in the wider context, it is impossible to truly appreciate any single artwork. In term of understanding, each human being has a different degree of understanding depending on a relativity of knowledge they possess.

This study shows that in Malaysia primary school level, appreciating art skill is uncommon and not a frequent practice even in Visual Art class. Hence, this skill need to be taught and unveil affectively. The mechanism is basically a transmission process that must begin with teachers who acquire the DSKP and the elements of formalism. This will empower to a greater competency and motivate student in performing art appreciation and not just creating art with no value taught in the class. Either teacher or a student, understanding in a particular matter is very important before become mastery in any field of knowledge. Nevertheless, teacher is the first person that must execute understanding and only then able to convey it in the best way to the student. If the teacher who impart the information do not understand enough what they deliver, then it is just a pointless act. Thus, teacher is the key player here that connect arts and curriculum to students. Even though all the formal elements and DSKP is something that constant and stagnate, appreciating art can be subjective. Depends on how the student look at art by the end of the class. However, teacher can be fluctuated depends on various factors that can affect the implementation of art appreciation.

Aside from that, art appreciation also helps to determine whether a work of art is positive or negative, depending on the perceptive and responsive ability of the students. This requires preparation and effort, so that the students may explain what they observe with the most suitable terms.¹⁵ However, as the people come from a diverse background, whether in the aspect of experience, education and family, thus certainly creates a different perspective on art appreciation. Therefore, thought, responses and suggestion must be wised and applied base upon knowledge and support with lesson transmit by the teachers.

Not forgotten, curriculum also plays a vital role to direct the teachers' instructional lessons to be used and provides the concept and method for measuring students' performance. While teacher is an intermediary between student and curriculum.⁴ It gives strong bonding and act as the instrumental in an education system. So do the implementation of art appreciation, as it is one of the standard contents in art education curriculum. In a broader perspective, curriculum is basically different for each level of education and each country implement their own curriculum based on their education systems. As it is a man-made and developed from time to time, there is no benchmark or standard to determine which or what kind of curriculum is approximately the best. However, if there is any curriculum without any flaws but the teacher do not refer to it or not competent to face their own challenges, the implementation of art appreciation still cannot be execute and vice versa. Hence, it is necessary for the curriculum and teacher at its best to support each other accordingly. Above and beyond, combination of

art and education would give the community and the younger generation a sense of appreciation and an aesthetic space in their souls.

However, in carrying out this study, one of the greatest challenges faced by researchers in the field of art that emerge with education is to scope the study as education itself is very wide and requires thorough attention in selecting, filtering and scoping the study area to get a legitimate outcome within the researcher's access. The sample may not represent the whole population of teachers in Malaysia and the result will be subject to bias. Therefore, it is very important to have an appropriate approach in collecting data, moreover, of which related to the society.

8 Conclusions

Primary school is not only about teaching the children how to write, read, and count across core subjects. Art is also essential for children's development and has its own prominence. Art appreciation in art education allows pupils to appreciate their own work and their peers in terms of visual arts language, art history, and culture.⁵ 'Appreciate' is the keyword where teachers have to understand and only then it can be delivered in a mountain of ways. While art appreciation is an individual mirror of appreciating, thoughts, responses, feelings, perceiving, experiencing, and analysing artwork. The quality of art education can be accomplished successfully with the implementation of effective and responsive artistic practices which is art appreciation.

This paper is a genesis point in seeking and understanding the current situation by surveying the implementation level of art appreciation in a primary school. This study will examine the two propositions derived from the conceptual framework in teacher perspective and how they implement art appreciation sessions in class. The result also may reveal the factors of ineffectiveness of art appreciation in primary school level. Ultimately, the implementation of art appreciation that starts from early childhood is essential with support by the curriculum, formal elements and teacher who master its comprehensions. Art educators who embrace this approach would foster cognitive and emotive learning possibilities alongside promoting critical thinking.

References

- [1] Law, S. S. M. (2010). An interdisciplinary approach to art appreciation. *New Horizons in Education*, 58(2), 93–103.
- [2] Duh, M., & Bowen, A. K. (2014). The development of art appreciation abilities of pupils in primary school. In *New Educational Review* (Vol. 36, pp. 42–54).
- [3] Gutteridge M., V. (1990). The classes of Franz Cizek. 90(2).
- [4] Jaghav, M. S., & Patankar, P. S. (2013). Role Of Teachers ' In Curriculum Development For Teacher Role Of Teachers' In Curriculum Development For Teacher Education. (October), 1–9.
- [5] Ministry of Education. (2019). Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran (DSKP) Pendidikan Seni Visual Tahun 1 [Standard document of curriculum and assessment; Visual Arts education year 1]. Putrajaya: Curriculum Development Centre, Ministry of Education, Malaysia.
- [6] Wahid, N., Bahrum, S., Ibrahim, M. N., & Hashim, H. Z. (2018). Pedagogical Content Knowledge of Art Teachers in Teaching The Visual Art Appreciation in School. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 7(12), 296–303. <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbs/v7-i12/3612>
- [7] Vethamani, M. E. (2016, May 16). Visual arts education: A rethink on creativit. *New Straits Times*.
- [8] Bernama. (2005, March 5). Schools lack qualified teachers to teach art, music and design-Kamalanathan. *Astro Awani Network*. Retrieved from <http://english.astroawani.com/malaysia-news/schools-lack-qualified-teachers-teach-art-music-and-design-kamalanathan-97342>
- [9] Zimmerman, P. (1985). Writing for Art Appreciation. *Roots in the Sawdust: Writing to Learn across the Disciplines*, 31–46. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aquaculture.2008.10.013>
- [10] Ariffin, M. S. N. (2010). *Sejauhmana Keberkesanan Perlaksanaan Sesi Apresiasi Seni Di Sekolah Menengah Dalam Pendidikan Seni*. Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris.
- [11] Runco, M. A. (1989). The creativity of children's art. *Child Study Journal*, 19(3), 177–189.
- [12] Duh, M., & Kljajič, A. (2012). The Level of Art Appreciation Abilities of Students in Lower Primary School Grades. *Školski Vjesnik : Časopis Za Pedagogijsku Teoriju I Praksu*, 62(2–3).
- [13] Bianca Power, & Klopper, C. (2011). The Classroom Practice of Creative Arts Education in NSW Primary Schools: A Descriptive Account. *International Journal of Education & the Art*, 12(11).
- [14] Olney, C. A., & Barnes, S. J. (2013). *Collecting And Analyzing Evaluation Data 2nd Edition*. In *Planning and Evaluating Health Information Outreach Projects Booklet 3* (p. 45). Seattle, Washington: National Network of Libraries of Medicine, Outreach Evaluation Resource Center.
- [15] Barrett. (2007). *Teaching Toward Appreciation*. In *International Handbook of Research of Arts Education*. New York: Liora Bresler, ed.
- [16] Feldman, E. B. (1970). *Becoming human through art: Aesthetic experience in the school*. Prentice Hall.
- [17] Feldman, E. B. (1994). *Practical Art Criticism*. Pearson; Facsimile edition.
- [18] Hobbs, J. A. (1985). Discipline-based art education and an enrichment of Feldman's method of criticism. *Texas Trends in Art Education*, 3(1), 21–23.
- [19] Van den Braembussche, A. (2009). *Thinking art*. Springer.
- [20] Subramaniam, M., Wardi, R. H., Hanafi, J., Kahn, S. M., & Zaki, S. (n.d.). *The Need of New Model for Art Appreciation Directed to Visual Communication At Tertiary Level : A Conceptual Framework*