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## Art Facilities and Learning Outcomes in Selected Ghanaian Public Senior High Schools in the Central Region

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### Abstract

*This article examined available facilities (tangible and intangible) in selected Ghanaian public Senior High Schools to find out if they possess what it takes to impact the needed skills in students to meet the demands of the 21st Century job market. Four schools were purposefully selected to fairly represent the various grades of senior high schools in the Central Region of Ghana. Data was collected through interviews and observations whereas analysis was done using the thematic approach. Findings indicate that facilities in schools were highly inadequate. Visual arts teachers were not motivated to teach while students lack basic learning resources thereby impacting negatively on performance outcomes of both teachers and students. The future of Visual Arts education in Ghanaian Senior High Schools is feared to remain sustainable as a practical programme as authorities continually fail to provide needed basic art facilities*

### Keywords

Art facilities,  
Visual Art,  
Senior High School  
Education,  
Learning,  
Teacher motivation

## **1. Introduction**

Art Education has seen multi-facet changes throughout the history of education in Ghana. Eshun (2013) argues that the underlying factor for which the Anamuah-Mensah reform committee of 2002 was set up was to intensify vocational and technical education in Ghana. The reform was to address the inadequacies in the previous reforms thereby providing enabling environments for all Ghanaians of school going age with adequate training and employable skills after completion of Junior High School (JHS). Interestingly, the reform introduced a new subject named Basic Design and Technology (BDT) which has Visual Arts, Technical and Vocational Skills components. Prior to the introduction of the BDT in the JHS curriculum, Visual Arts Education had already gained grounds in Ghanaian public Secondary Schools. It was, therefore, a good call to introduce components of it at the Junior High School level to provide fundamental knowledge for learners who intend to progress academically. However, the implementation of educational reforms in Ghana over the years has faced many challenges including lack of adequate infrastructure, teaching learning resources, and qualified teachers (Eshun, 2013). Acceptably, the Visual Arts education is a practically-oriented field which needs much practical pedagogical approaches to impact adequate skills in learners. Duku (2012) acknowledges that quality art education in Ghanaian schools can be attained by training competent teachers who are vested in pedagogical knowledge, skills and possess the ability to deploy learner-centered instructional strategies. Sadly, the programme has been neglected and not provided with needed facilities by policy makers and management of many schools including universities that train teachers for the senior high school art education in Ghana (Duku, 2012). This article focuses on examining the state of Visual Arts facilities in four Senior High Schools in the Central Region of Ghana.

## **2. Review of related literature**

### **2.1 Visual Arts education in second cycle schools in Ghana**

Visual Arts education is a process of learning about different types of artistic expressions, including different media and formats for making an artwork which involves diverse movements such as impressionism, surrealism, cubism, realism and styles (Eça et al, 2017). It is commonly taught to students of different age ranges and can be a focus of learning during secondary education, at a college or university (Wiesen, 2016). Wiesen explained that this type of education is usually taught by art teachers and can include practical understanding

such as how to use different tools to create artwork, understanding of how to appreciate artistic creations, such as drawing, painting and sculpture. This form of education usually requires an experienced art teacher or artist with a background in different types of artistic creation and teaching pedagogies (Duku, 2012). The descriptions purported by both Wiesen and Duku relate to the trend of how artistic knowledge is acquired through the school system in Ghana including the Senior High School (SHS) level. According to Foster (1967 as cited in Edusei, 2004), Visual Arts education was first introduced in Ghana (formerly named Gold Coast) in the year 1908 as Visual Art. It was a form of education acquired through the school system as against the apprenticeship system of skill acquisition (Edusei, 2004). Edusei further explained further that the rationale for introducing visual arts education in schools and colleges became imperative to flash out the bookish curriculum run by the missionaries to enable students acquire creative skills and become problem solvers of national dimension with relative ease (Edusei, 2004). But, since its introduction, Visual Arts education has met various technical difficulties which bedevil its progression even at the tertiary level in Ghana. These challenges include; overspill of student to teacher ratio as prescribed by Ghana Education Service and National Accreditation Board, lack of studio tools and equipment and negative perceptions about art education as a field of study (Duku, 2012; Essel, Agyarko, Sumaila & Yankson, 2014). The UNESCO Road Map for Arts Education (2006) presents the relevance of art education on humanity stating that 21st Century societies are in demand of creative, flexible and innovative workforce to deal with its problems. Due to its sensitive impact on growth, developed countries like the United States invests in surveys bothering on art education (Parsad & Spiegelman, 2012). Regardless of the uncovered power of art education and its relevance to humanity through various studies, visual art education remains a subject which is the least spoken of and totally abandoned in Ghana (Essel, Agyarko, Sumaila & Yankson, 2014). It is, therefore, abhorrently worrying to enroll learners in schools to study visual art without making provisions for necessary facilities to support the learning processes.

## **2.2 Tangible resources for teaching and learning**

Highlighting on the need to have physical resources for adequate teaching and learning of art, Kemp (2013) explained that, makerspaces are perfect solution for many creators in this era of technological advancement, and that incorporating this in the schools system promotes democratization of design and making of ergonomic products as a result of integrated teamwork through interdisciplinary projects. The makerspace which is a common studio where

individuals with interrelated skills meet for integrated artistic production thus serves as an interdisciplinary studio where learners with varied artistic and scientific backgrounds can converge to embark on creation of a common project and this has been adopted by many advanced schools in some developed countries. As a developing country, Ghana has limited resources to support quality education (Adu-Agyem & Osei-Poku, 2012). Therefore, the introduction of makerspaces concept would be fitting for the high school system in Ghana. This is because the makerspaces will not only promote interdisciplinary creativity but also serve as means of reducing the financial burden of providing all senior high schools with visual arts facilities. Again, it will not be difficult to provide these makerspaces in every district across the country because there are science resource centers built in 110 districts by the Ministry of Education which serve as common laboratories to support teaching and learning of the science programmes in the Senior High Schools in Ghana (Karim, 2011). If it has been done for the sciences then it should be possible for the Visual Arts since both areas of study require practical production. On the contrary, there are no makerspaces for Ghanaian Senior High Schools but some few schools have common art rooms where interchange of ideas and peer education take place among students with diverse art backgrounds.

### **2.3 Intangible resources**

The *intangible* facilities on the other hand comprises non-physical things that support effective teaching and learning of art such as allowances (overtime, research, risk, travelling), healthcare, scholarships, exchange programmes, awards and other incentives preferably termed as conditions of service by some professionals. Both students and teachers need something motivational in addition to physical facilities to push them with much enthusiasm to study and work harder respectively. Commenting on motivation, Lunenburg and Ornstein (2012) explained that they are processes within an individual that stimulates behaviour and channels it in ways that should benefit the organization. Interestingly, teachers in Ghana think they are unfairly treated and usually become demotivated when they compare their pay and incentives with others in the non-teaching profession with equivalent qualifications (Seniwoliba, 2013). When teachers are not properly motivated, their attitude toward teaching becomes poor and that affects learning outcomes of students (Perkins, 2010). Teacher promotion to higher ranks is a form of intangible facility which when done properly without any frustrations can advance the efficiency of art teachers. The absence of this in the senior high schools perhaps compelled Axadzi (2014)

to posit that facilities for learning Visual Arts in schools are not available. Art teachers therefore, need to be highly motivated; hence, issues relating to their salaries and promotions must be of essence to school authorities. Elaborating on the profile dimension for teaching learning and assessment of the visual arts subjects, the Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) now, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) allocated 15% to Knowledge and Understanding, 25% to Application of Knowledge, and 60% to Practical Skills (CRDD, 2010). The CRDD therein confirms the importance of practical skill development in the visual arts education with reference to the percentage distribution. Besides, successful implementation of the curriculum lies greatly on the availability of adequate facilities (Bediako, 2019). Repercussions of these phenomena could be a key factor leading to poor performances of students during the West African Secondary School Examinations (WASSCE) as revealed in the 2014 Chief Examiner's Report for visual arts subjects.

### **3. Methodology**

The study espoused a qualitative research approach using narrative inquiry which allowed writing the experiences of respondents, and descriptive case study survey design which enabled detailed interrogations. The study aimed at examining the state of Visual Arts facilities in senior high schools through observation and interviews. Using four Senior High Schools offering Visual Arts programme within Abura Asebu Kwamankese District located in the Central Region of Ghana as the population, a sample size of thirty-two (32) respondents were selected. The sample size of thirty-two (32) respondents (comprising of eight (8) parents, eight (8) teachers, four (4) heads of Visual Arts departments and twelve (12) students) were selected purposefully using the stratified technique from four schools namely; Aggrey Memorial A.M.E. Zion, Aburaman, Abakrampa and Moree Senior High Schools. The sample fairly represents the Ghana Education Service ranking of schools from grade A to D respectively. The small sample size made it possible for single-interview per respondent making it convenient to obtain rich qualitative data (Vasileiou, et al, 2018). Table 1 presents detailed information on the distribution of respondents and sample size for the study.

Table 1

## Sample Size (Respondents)

<b>Name of School</b>	<b>Number of Head of Department (HODs)</b>	<b>Number of Teachers</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Number of Parents</b>
Aggrey Memorial A.M.E Zion	1	2	3	2)
Abakrampa Senior High	1	2	3	2
Aburaman Senior High	1	2	3	2
Moree Senior High School	1	2	3	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>				<b>32</b>

(Source: Fieldwork, 2019)

The Central Region was selected because of its keen position in the history of education in Ghana. The region is endowed with some of the oldest Senior High Schools in the country with the majority of the schools offering the Visual Arts programme hence, providing a perfect ground for the credibility of this study (Ayebi-Arthur et al, 2009). Qualitative data was gathered through analytical examination of the facilities and interviewing respondents. The field observations were the main factors which instigated probing questions during the interview for obtaining rich and comprehensive data. The observation was aided by a guide to obtain data on the facilities available in the schools selected. Also, data was collected through photographs and note taking for analysis. Tangible art facilities including classrooms, art studios, art equipment, textbooks, and syllabi for teaching visual art subjects, storages, tools, marked exercises and practical works were observed using observation checklist concentrating on essential areas such as studio equipment, tools, and teaching learning materials. Electronic gadgets including telephone, digital camera and audio recorders were used for the data collection. The parents were interviewed during Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings. However, ten of the respondents, consisting of parents and teachers were contacted via phone calls

for further interactions. This strategy helped in obtaining detailed information especially from the parents because parents needed to spend time with their wards after the PTA meeting therefore engaging them in a lengthy interview would be unethical and might affect the quality of data. Two teachers were also interacted with through a phone call. This was done to counter validate and probe further the information gathered during the face-to-face interview. The strategy paved the way for teachers to express their view passionately with much more details which they were unable to do while in the workplace. Arrangement for the phone interviews was done at expediency of respondents. Initial calls were made to schedule interview sessions for each of the respondents. In each of the schools visited, a customized interview guide was designed for the interviews where students and teachers were interviewed both individually and in focused groups of 3 and 2 respectively to counter-check the authenticity of data gathered which was later assembled in figures, tables and charts. Interviews and field observations were pre-scheduled to the convenience of respondents whereas permission was sought from school authorities for approval before visiting. Students' WASSCE results and class assessment scores were collected. The researchers adhered to all other protocols including sticking to time schedules with respondents choosing a language suitable for them to communicate with. Analysis procedure began after data collection with recognition and sorting of subjects, configurations, sequences, contrasts and similarities deduced from the findings using the thematic approach.

## **4. Results and Discussions**

### **4.1 State of art facilities in the public senior high schools in Abura Asiebu Kwamankese District**

Observation of the tangible facilities in the selected schools revealed that the selected senior high schools in the Central Region of Ghana offering the Visual Arts programmes are confronted with serious deficits of inadequate facilities to support quality teaching and learning of art. Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4 present the subject combinations for the visual programme studied at Aggrey Memorial, Aburaman, Abakrampa and Moree senior high schools respectively. These subject combinations were compared to the available art facilities in the school which supports teaching and learning of the visual arts subjects.

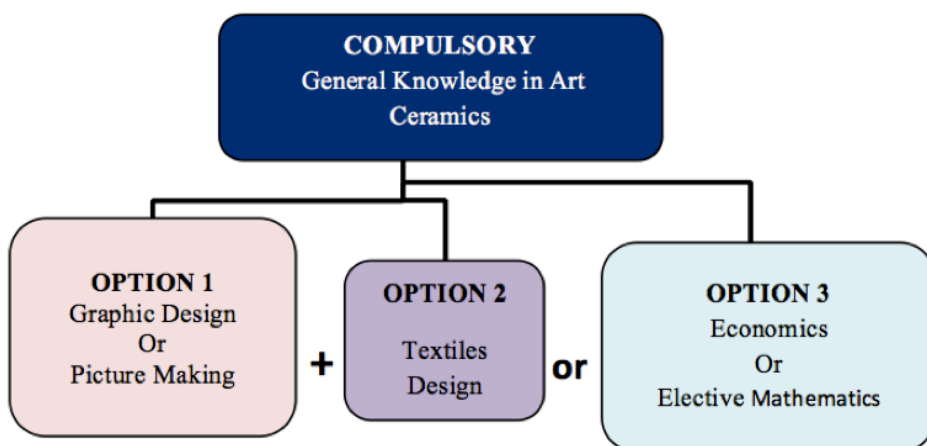


Figure 1: Elective subject combinations in Aggrey Memorial SHS  
(Source: Fieldwork work, 2019)

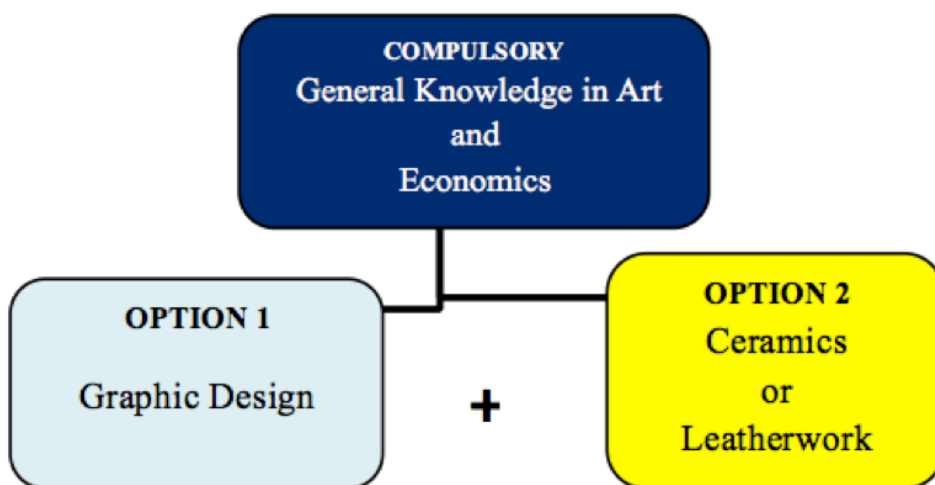
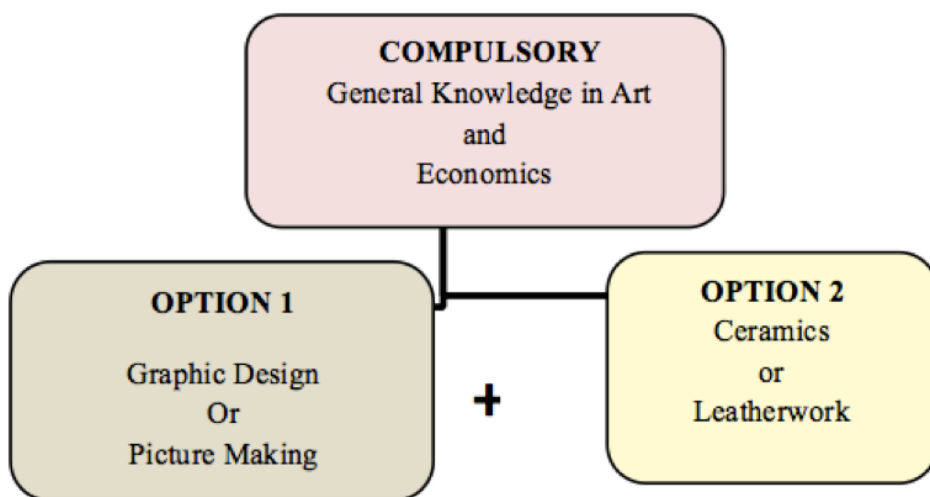
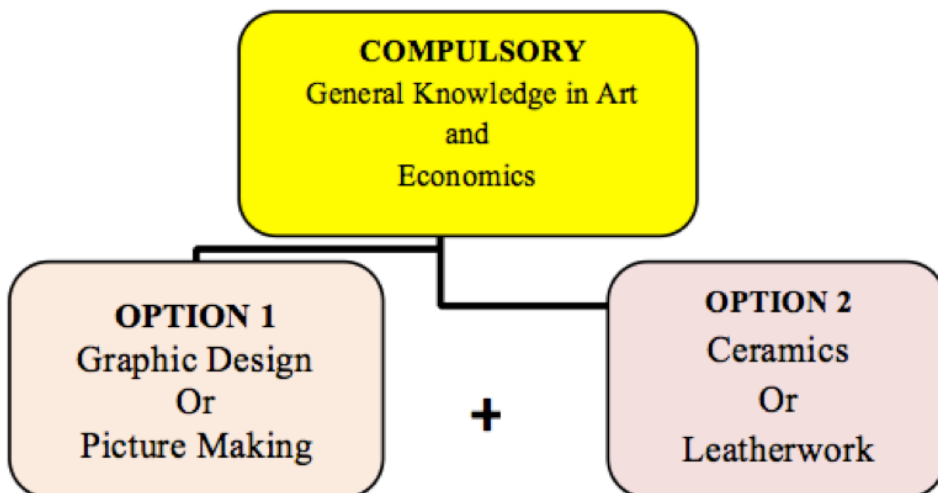


Figure 2: Elective subject combinations in Aburaman SHS.  
(Source: Fieldwork work, 2019)



*Figure 3: Elective subject combinations in Abakrampa SHS.*

(Source: Fieldwork work, 2019)



*Figure 4: Elective subject combinations in Moree SHS.*

(Source: Fieldwork work, 2019)

The findings regarding the state of tangible facilities in Aggrey Memorial A.M.E. Zion, Aburaman, Abakrampa and Moree Senior High Schools clearly showed that teaching syllabus were available for the various subjects but without accompanying textbooks. Findings revealed that the most common textbook was General Knowledge for Schools by Amenuke et al published in 1999. Picture Making, Textiles, Jewelry and Leatherwork textbooks were difficult to obtain, therefore, students depend highly on notes provided by teachers. It was observed that the schools had an average of 4 teachers in their visual arts department who are all graduates from the University of Education, Winneba with Bachelor's Degree in Art Education while few had the Master's Degree (See Table 2).

Table 2

Number of Teachers and their qualifications in the selected schools

Name of school	Number of Visual Art Teachers	Teacher Qualifications		Remarks
		Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	
Aggrey Memorial SHS	7	3	4	Impressive (Above average)
Aburaman SHS	5	4	1	Good
Abakrampa SHS	6	5	1	Good
Moree SHS	3	3	-	Average
<b>Total</b>	21	15	6	Good

(Source: Fieldwork, 2019)

However, analyses of findings indicate that there is the need for art teachers to engage in continuous professional development in order to improve on their instructional strategies both in theory and practicum. This confirms the earlier position of Bediako (2014) that inadequate facilities can lead to poor performances and learning outcomes. Comparatively, the results indicate that tangible facilities at Aggrey Memorial A.M.E Zion SHS which is a grade 'A' school by GES ranking were not adequate. However, they proved to be better than that of Aburaman, Abakrampa and Moree Senior High Schools. Even though a greater portion of the structure meant for the Visual Arts department at Aggrey Memorial SHS had been converted into boys' dormitory in 2008 by the schools' authorities to ease congestion, the remaining quarter of the structure is still

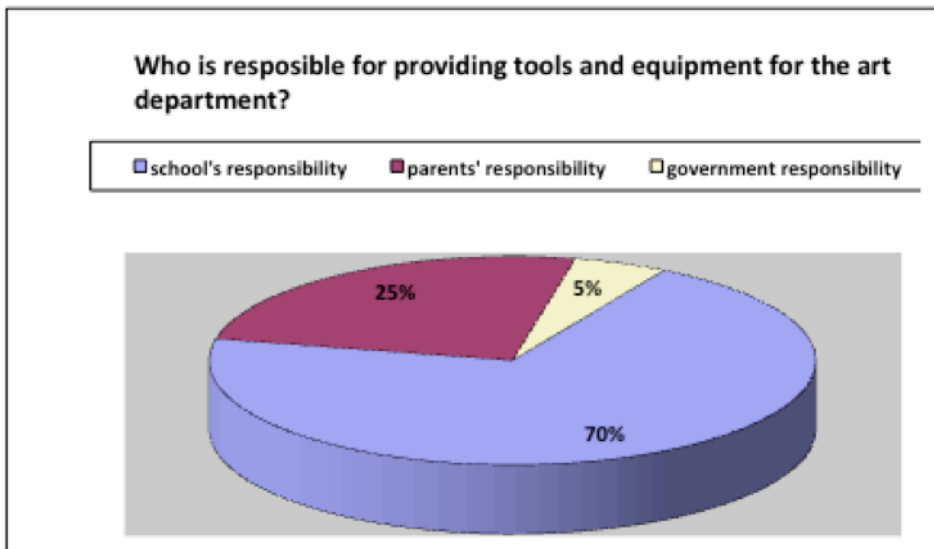
in use by the department. The respondent recounted that several attempts have been made over the years to reclaim the structure back but to no avail. An earlier study by Axadzi (2014) established that facilities for teaching and learning Visual Arts in Ghanaian schools are not available. However, this study found out that, though inadequate, there were few facilities in the selected schools visited. Though the study of Axadzi (2014) can be true, this article posits tangible facilities in broader scope, comprising a wide range of physical things such as furniture, equipment, studio, and teaching aids that support teaching and learning of art. Further inquiry in an interview with the teachers to ascertain whether their school management has any positive plans to restore or provide the needed art facilities in the schools proved to be negative. Responses from the teachers and department heads indicate that even the current poor state of the facilities can eventually worsen in the future if authorities continue to disregard the Visual Art departments in the senior high schools. For such eventuality in the future, Axadzi's position will remain valid. The study also revealed that apart from visual arts, music is studied in some senior high schools but just like the visual arts, they also lack the adequate facilities hence making the programme unattractive for patronage. This confirms the claims of Dordzro (2019) who argued that schools lack both musical equipment and trained teachers. Figure 5 shows an example where students use their exercise books for graphic design practical work due to lack of cardboards and acrylic colours. When interviewed, the teachers lamented that their students do not get to practice brush and colour work since they cannot paint in the exercise books because they are made of newsprint paper, and can easily get soaked and torn.



*Figure 5: Students do graphic design practical works in their exercise books for assessment, Aburaman SHS*

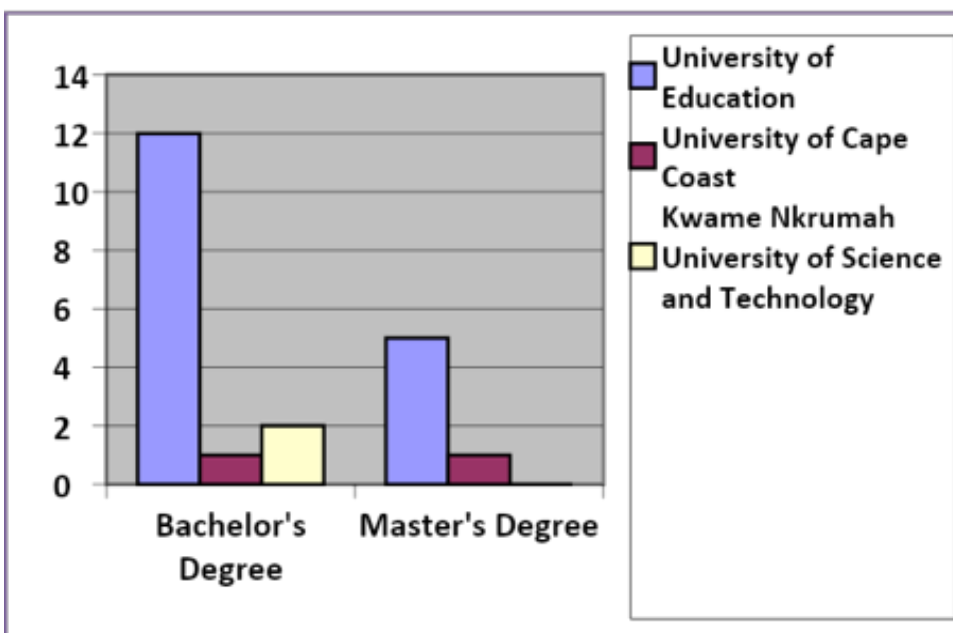
(Source: Fieldwork work, 2016)

A further inquiry into who should bear full responsibility of providing the needed tangible facilities such as tools and equipment for the visual arts department revealed that respondents including parents, teachers and students feel it is the utmost duty of school authorities to do so as presented in Figure 6. It is the responsibility of Ghana Education Service in collaboration with other agencies under the Ministry of Education to ensure that schools are furnished with the required facilities that support quality teaching and learning (Education Bill, 2015. p16) But as to whether the bodies that are to ensure standards are met holistically by schools are aware of the current situation remains another question which requires further investigation.



*Figure 6. Provision of tools and equipment*

(Source: Fieldwork, 2019)



*Figure 7. Institutions where arts teachers had their training and qualifications*

(Source: Fieldwork, 2019)

The unavailability of adequate teaching and learning materials posed some challenges yet did not prevent Visual Arts teachers from impacting theoretical and practical knowledge. According to the findings, some teachers used part of their salary to buy needed basic tools and materials for demonstrations in class while others appeal to parents and old students for support. But this practice of some teachers using their own money to purchase some teaching and learning materials in some cases is not sustainable. Teachers were dynamic and improvised with found materials within the schools' environment for teaching which is commendable. Interestingly, Duku (2012) had opined that, the Art Education programme at the University of Education, Winneba is modeled with rich pedagogies to train visual art teachers for the pre-tertiary level. The finding of the study therefore confirms Duku's position, in that, study results show the majority of the teachers in the selected schools were products of University of Education, Winneba. Based on this finding, it is comfortable to argue that, University of Education, Winneba is the leading trainers of graduate art educators for the senior high schools in Ghana (See Figure 7). Sadly though, when probed on the availability of intangible facilities such as incentives, overtime allowances, promotion to higher rank based on efficiency, awards for good performance and allowances for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to motivate teachers, the results turn out to be discouraging. Teachers expressed their gross displeasure on the fact that school authorities do not even show any form of appreciation for their efforts towards impacting employable skills in their students. They added that they mostly spend several hours beyond instructional time with students during practical lessons and especially when preparing students for their final year external examination project. This explains the reason why some teachers were found exhibiting some forms of apathy during the field observation thereby confirming the assertion of Lunenburg and Ornstein (2012) who stated that lack of motivation affects work input and the results may be devastating.

In a focused group interview, students blamed their unsatisfactory performances on lack of tools, materials and textbooks. They added that acquiring their own materials for project works is a difficult task since most of them come from low income homes. Nevertheless, they constantly appraised the efforts of some committed teachers who do all things possible to help them succeed as learners. According to the teachers, most students perform poorly in the theoretical assessment because they have very low academic backgrounds prior to their enrollment for the visual arts programme and, majority of them lack interest and prerequisite skills in the arts therefore makes it difficult to transform them

over the three-year period. Some heads of the visual arts department disclosed that candidates who passed out from the Junior High Schools with low grades during the Basic Education Certificate Examination were often placed into the visual art class with the perception that the visual arts programme requires no intellectual abilities. This recounts the assertion of Essel, Agyarko, Sumaila and Yankson (2014) that there is a great deal of stigmatization and negative perceptions towards individuals studying technical and vocational related programmes in Ghana as people with low intellectual and critical thinking abilities. The heads of visual art departments continued to add that their efforts towards preventing school authorities from flooding the visual arts class with learners who were poached purposely for representing the schools in sporting activities had remained unfruitful. Teachers also blamed the poor performance of their students in practical assessment on lack of resources for teaching and learning. They admitted that the situation has affected the quality of instructional techniques they use in teaching practical content. Explaining that practical lessons were mostly taught theoretically which negatively affects skill acquisition of learners in the various visual arts subjects.

## **5. Conclusions and Recommendations**

Arts facilities in selected Senior High Schools at the Abura Asebu Kwamankese District were examined. The study found out that the facilities were inadequate to support teaching and learning of the Visual Arts programme. Infrastructure, storage space, furniture, equipment, teacher station or offices and teaching learning materials were inadequate in some schools. Schools were not furnished with the needed facilities. The current conditions in the schools are bad and could be more damaging in the future if vital steps are not taken to restore needed facilities for teaching and learning visual arts in the senior high schools. This phenomenon when not resolved could also result in the nation's inability to raise a future generation of Ghanaian children equipped with quality artistic and creative skills for the highly competitive, innovative, critical thinking and problem-solving 21st century job market.

It is therefore recommended that swift practical steps be taken by the government to beef up art resources in schools. In view of the economic challenges in Ghana as a developing country, it could be financially derailing to provide the over 600 Senior High Schools in Ghana with well-furnished tangible arts facilities but it is relatively achievable to build makerspaces. The Art Teachers Association of Ghana (ATAG) should therefore, lobby through sound arguments and justifiable

proposal along with findings of this study for establishment of district or zonal makerspaces to serve as a common studio for schools offering Visual Arts to use as a resource center to promote inter-disciplinary and collaboration among the visual art students. Also, the GES and the Ministry of Education should ensure that the needed arts resources for schools are provided. It is also recommended that the National Inspectorate Board intensifies its school supervision programmes backed with frequent reports to expose the inconsiderate attitudes of some institutional heads towards visual arts educations in Ghana – an act which would ensure proper management of the few facilities left.

Again, the study revealed that Visual arts teachers at the four selected Abura Asebu Kwamankese Senior High Schools are trained and qualified teachers mostly from the University of Education, Winneba and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. Their minimum qualification was Bachelor's Degree and maximum was Master's degree which is commendable, however it recommended that art teachers continually enroll in personal professional development programmes and higher studies to improve their knowledge and practical pedagogy. ATAG, as a professional body, should provide frequent intensive training for art teachers at the pre-tertiary level nationwide.

Regarding intangible facilities such as extra duty allowances, scholarship system for both teachers and students, awards and field trips as well as exchange programmes for both teachers and students were completely missed and unavailable or even spoken of in the public schools. Visual Art teachers spend extra instructional hours with students amidst other responsibilities, hence recommended that the government provide an appreciable basic salary along with some allowances including overtime teaching allowance to motivate art teachers. Teacher unions namely Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT) and the Art Teachers Association of Ghana (ATAG) should champion this course and ensure that art teachers are provided with these allowances.

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