

VISUAL ARTS PROGRAMMES OFFERED IN TAMALE TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY: THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION

Francis Kojo Kokro

Lecturer, Art and Design Innovation Department, Tamale Technical University

Ndah Divine Selorm

Lecturer, Department of Creative Arts, Seventh- Day, College of Education, Koforidua, Ghana

Emmanuel Amankwah

Lecturer, Department of Creative Arts, Saint Monica's College of Education, Ashanti- Mampong, Ghana

Alidu Tahiru Rajab

Old Airport Ridge School, Accra – Ghana

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ABSTRACT

The role of Art is indispensable in the socio-economic development of Ghana; unfortunately, in this present Ghana people have had wrong perceptions about Visual Art and this has brought about unfair criticism by the general public, instead of appreciating the significance of Visual Art Education and accepting it as part of our culture. The study looked at the perception of the general public with regards to the study of Visual Art programme in Tamale Technical University. The main instrument for the study was the questionnaire, which was designed by the researchers and validated. The total of hundred (100) questionnaire was administered and ninety (90) was retrieved. The data collected were analyzed. After analyzing the data, the researchers found out that majority of the respondents do appreciate Visual Art programme run at Tamale Technical University (TATU) and have positive perception of the Visual Art programme. Additionally, it came to the fore that they have fair knowledge about the Visual Art programme, however, based on the foregoing findings, it was recommended that the intake of students from Senior High Schools must be based on the interest of the students rather than as is usually the case upon admission offered. In addition, attention should be given to (Creative Arts) at the Senior High Schools so that students will have a feel of Visual Art and appreciate it better.

Keywords: Creative Arts, Visual Arts, Perception, Tamale, Technical University.

1. INTRODUCTION

Art in Ghana is traceable to the prehistoric era. Art making is a necessary part of everyday life in Ghanaian societies. The aesthetic aspect of life is represented by visual and physical forms; buildings, carvings, baskets, textiles and so on, but these also reflect the philosophical, spiritual and psychological attributes of Ghanaian culture. (Probine, 2018).

Visual Art as an aspect of Art has been part of Ghana's educational curriculum over the years. It has survived numerous Governments and Educational reforms that had occurred to the sector over the period.

Ghanaians have unknowingly benefited from art and the activities of artists. In Ghana, art can be classified into Visual Art, Verbal Art, Auditory Art and Performing Art. The visual arts are art forms that create primarily visual works, such as Ceramics, Drawing, Painting, Sculpture, Printmaking, Graphic design, Crafts, Photography, Textiles, Video, Film making and Architecture. Verbal Arts as the name suggests, are artistic and verbal expressions. Examples are Poetry, Dirges,

Lyrics, Oaths, Libation and Story-telling. Performing Art on the other hand refers to art expressions that are performed rather than made. They include: Music, Drama and Dance. (Selase & Mawuli, 2014)

Statement of the problem

Most people especially, in the community around the Tamale Technical University (TATU) look down upon the Visual Arts programme. Comments made by some people to Visual Art students are clear evidence of their perception about the programme. This is because little is known of the value of Visual Art programme to such audience. In the light of this that this topic is so vital so as to gather the thoughts of the general public on the topic hence propound appropriate recommendations towards its teaching and learning at the Tamale Technical University.

Objective

Examine the perception of people especially, in the community around the Tamale Technical University towards Visual Art programme in Tamale Technical University.

Research Question

What is the perception of the people especially, in the community around the Tamale Technical University towards Visual Art programme in Tamale Technical University?

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Concept of Art

Art forms an integral part of life and without its life in society becomes meaningless. One will realize that art in indigenous life is functional. It has specific uses in everyday life. It may encourage social relationship, and communication; it may convey power, status and wealth. For example, a stool or a throne of a chief expresses power and status. A decorated leather amulet may be worn by a hunter or a warrior for protection or to ensure success. The purpose of art forms maybe religious, economic, personal or political; this, therefore, means that Ghanaian art forms are an integral part of life.

The Meaning of Art

Art plays a large part in making our lives infinitely rich. Imagine, just for a minute, a world without art! Art gives a line of attack to be creative and communicate ourselves. For several people, art is the total sense they pick up out of the foundation in the morning. You could say “Art is something that makes us extra helpful and well-rounded humans.” (Holmes & Tuami, 2022). He continued to say that, art is such a large part of our everyday lives that we may hardly even stop to think about it.

Look at the desk or table where we are, right this minute. Someone designed that. Even our shoes are art, your coffee cup is art, all functional design, well done is art. So, Art is something that is both functional and (hopefully) aesthetically pleasing to eyes.

The definition of art has evolved and varies based on context; anything can be art, and the term continues to evolve. The nature of art has been described by philosopher Richard Wollheim as “one of the most elusive of the traditional problems of human culture” (Holmes et al., 2022).

Brief History and Significance of Art

Art originated during the Stone Age. The early man's earliest forms of artistic activity included the creation of myths, songs, and dances the depiction of animals on cave walls and ornamentation of tools, weapons, clothing and the human body. These activities were of enormous importance (Wyszomirski et al., 2015).

The contribution and the strengthening of human collective life, developing the early man's spiritually and helping him to understand his social nature and his differences from animals. In other words, man's artistic activities served as an important historical agent of his humanization (Coeckelbergh, 2017). At this early stage of development, art was not an independent form of human activity. All intellectual production at this time was 'directly interwoven' with material production (Higor, Matja, and Haroldo 2018). They plain that the various spheres of spiritual culture had not yet become differentiated. Correspondingly, art was inseparable from practical activities, religion, games, and other forms of human associations. Each of these activities was of an applied character.

Purposes of Art

Al- Zadjali (2024), states that, Art serves not just to entertain but to enrich, inform, placate, unite, challenge, and generally to express the human experience. Great art has an historical value in the form of record, an instructive value, a social, and a political relevance. Throughout the ages, art has played a crucial role in life. Over the years, art has recorded and continues to record history. Most art forms are created for a specific reason or purpose, it has a way of expressing ideas and beliefs, and it can record the experiences of all people. Historically, the primary objective of art was to provide amusement and enjoyment for those taking part in it and for those being exposed to it. He further explains that It is undoubtedly this element of art that has led many to feel that it is, as a subject, separate and inferior to the more 'serious' endeavours such as science. Apart from the entertainment aspect of art, great thinkers like Confucius (551-479 B.C.), believed that art had a role in the moral education of a man as well as the reformation of society. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) believed much the same. He acknowledged art's great power over the emotions. He understood how art, could act as a form of education that provided moral insight and fostered emotional growth. It is important to consider the corrupting power of art in the context of the modern media, propaganda, advertising, and the industries, which are slaves to art. Art programs targeted toward very young children help to decrease negative behaviours and increases in attention span, commitment and tolerance

Probine (2018), again saw art in general as providing students with careers as independent artists, potters and designers in the industry, or specialists in education, closely connected to the idea that art can be a means of education is the idea that Art enriches life.

An appreciation of Art could lead a person towards perfection and become kinder, and those who reject Art tend to become continually crueler. Indeed, the enhancing power of Art, may be easily seen when it's taken away or perverted. Art as enrichment is close to the principle that Art can soothe and uplift a troubled soul; even heal an unhealthy body. Art is central to a civilized society. Kids who create don't destroy.

Essel et al., (2025), also state that, Artists seemed to compose work specifically for a set of society that would understand the work. Arts have a social purpose - in a social formation that remedies the injustices of capitalism. Art to challenge or give people better understanding of the world, either by defying artistic convention, or by highlighting social issues within the Art. There is no

doubt that Art can be a forum for political expression. The art that is most effective in this way is Art that is inspired by a particular social point or conditions in that environment. It is clear how Art can fulfil an important political role, and also used as a social tool to affect people.

Importance of Art Education

Art education is vital for today's world including the ability to allocate resources; to work successfully with others to find, analyse, and communicate information to operate increasingly complex systems of seemingly unrelated parts; and finally, to use technology.

Learning is an active process, and the arts allow students to take action, to do things, to make mistakes, to explore and search for answers. No other educational medium offers the same kind of opportunity (Knapp, 2023). He further outlines some benefits of studying Visual Art as follows, Visual Art

- Put us in touch with other customs, heritage, society and civilizations.
- Therapeutic
- Develop fine motor skills.
- Teach us about materials and processes.
- Allow you to express yourself creatively.
- Lead to a range of creative career options.
- Assist us to explore challenges and test out ideas.
- Add to our cultural depth.

These and many others are the significance of Art Education. Touching on the above importance of studying Visual Art,

The Visual Arts Programme in Senior High Schools in Ghana

The process of educating or teaching towards developing the knowledge, skill, or character of a person through a planned procedure. The subjects, courses or modules usually define what is taught to students (Opoku-Asare, Tachie- Mason & Essel 2015).

At the Senior High School level of education in Ghana, according to the GKA Syllabus (2010), Basketry, Ceramics, Graphic Design, Jewelry, Leatherwork, Picture Making, Sculpture, and Textiles are the elective subjects of the Visual Arts programme, which are studied with other core subjects. The Visual Arts curriculum at the Senior High School level builds on the Visual Arts knowledge acquired by students at the basic school level. It assists students in their acquisition of artistic and aesthetic experiences, knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, all of which contribute to the student's whole-personal development (Avotri 2015). He adds that, the Senior High School Visual Arts programme also has General Knowledge in Art, which is a compulsory subject for all Visual Arts students. Aside the GKA, each student is also required to study at least, two other elective subjects: one two-dimensional subject and one three-dimensional subject, as a means of getting exposed to a variety of vocational skills and career opportunities.

Disciplines in Visual Art under Ghana's Education Curriculum

- **Leatherwork**

According to NACCa Curriculum (2020), leatherwork is the processing of various hides and skins of animals into leather and the use of appropriate tools and techniques to make a variety of articles from natural and synthetic leather. The document further explains that, leather involves turning

skins of animals into leather and using the leather for a variety of products as clothing, bags, and belts and so on. It can be inferred from the above definitions that leatherwork is when the outer covering of animals (skins and hides) undergoes physical, chemical transformation to obtain leather and using the leather for various products.

- **Ceramics**

Ceramics are generally made by taking mixtures of clay, earthen elements, powders, and water and shaping them into desired forms. Once the ceramic has been shaped, it is fired in a high-temperature oven known as a kiln. Often, ceramics are covered in decorative, waterproof, paint-like substances known as glazes (Richerson 2012).

He continued to say that, Ceramics are all around us. This category of materials includes things like tile, bricks, plates, glass, and toilets. Ceramics can be found in products like watches (quartz tuning forks-the timekeeping devices in watches), snow skis (piezoelectric-ceramics that stress when a voltage is applied to them), automobiles (sparkplugs and ceramic engine parts found in racecars) and phone lines. They can also be found on space shuttles, appliances (enamel coatings), and aeroplanes (nose cones). Depending on their method of formation, ceramics can be dense or lightweight”.

Upadhyay (2025), also says ceramic is an inorganic non-metallic solid made up of either metal or non-metal compounds that have been shaped and then hardened by heating to high temperatures. In general, they are hard, corrosion-resistant and brittle. ‘Ceramics once referred purely to pottery and articles made by firing materials extracted from earth. Today, the term has a much broader definition. Ceramics are generally thought of as inorganic and non-metallic solids with a range of useful properties, including very high hardness and strength, extremely high melting points, and good electrical and thermal insulation.

- **Sculpture**

Sculpture is three-dimensional art. Traditionally, there are two main methods: carving materials such as wood or stone, and modelling forms by adding pieces of material such as clay. Modern artists have explored new materials and techniques. (Upadhyay 2025). He further states, ‘the term refers to the three dimensions of space – length, breadth, and depth. It is a useful way of distinguishing between art such as painting, drawing and prints, which are two-dimensional (flat) and three-dimensional sculpture.

Holmes & Tuami (2022) define sculpture as, the art of creating forms in three dimensions either in relief or in the round with a variety of materials such as stone, wood, clay, metal, paper, plastic and ivory. He further pointed out that, the process involves carving, modelling, casting or construction and assemblage.

- **Basketry**

Basketry is the art and craft of making interwoven objects, usually containers, from flexible vegetable fibers, such as twigs, grasses, bamboo and rushes or from plastic or other synthetic materials. The containers made by this method are called baskets (Salts, 2024).

It can be deduced from the above that basketry involve the skill or technique of producing objects, usually containers made from bendy materials such as twigs, bamboo.

McMahon (2015), also defines basketry as a craft which involves weaving or twining flexible materials together to create containers which are known as baskets. All sorts of materials may be used in basket weaving, although plant materials such as wicker, rushes, bark, bamboo and grasses

are probably the most common. Baskets can also be made from thread or wool, strips of hide and metals.

- **Jewelry**

Jewelry are ornaments of precious metal, sometimes set with gems, worn since ancient times by people of all cultures for personal adornment as badges of social or official rank and as emblems of religious, social, or political affiliation. In its widest sense the term jewelry encompasses objects made of many kinds of organic and inorganic materials. However, the term properly refers to mounted precious or semi-precious stones and objects made of valuable or attractive metals such as gold, silver, platinum, copper and brass (Adnan, 2018). He describes jewelry further as personal adornments worn for ornament or utility, to show rank or wealth, or to follow superstitious custom or fashion. It can be deduced from the definitions that jewelry is specially crafted objects made from variety of materials including metals, wood, bones, shells. which are valued and adored and worn by individuals for personal decoration or beautification.

- **Picture Making**

Knapp. (2018) further share that, picture making is the art of making a representation of images such as persons, objects and scenes; for example, painting, collage, mosaic and so on. Elgammal (2018), also says that, picture is a two-dimensional arrangement of elements intended to have aesthetic value. He continues to say that, picture making techniques include; drawing, painting, collage, mosaic.

Studying the above definitions, picture making can be seen as a branch of art that deals with the depiction of images, be it a person, objects, scenes. employing different techniques such as pyrography, painting, mosaic, collage, photomontage. serving either utilitarian or aesthetic purposes. Studying picture making therefore equips the learner with the relevant techniques and skills that are required for the production of works such as painting, collage making and also have the feel of colour and how they are used in various ways with different techniques to produce a person, objects or scenes.

- **Textiles**

Jabbar (2017), textiles as a generic term from Latin *texere*, “to weave”. Originally applied to woven fabrics, but now also applied to natural and synthetic filaments, yarns, and threads as well as to the woven, knitted, felted, tufted, braided, bonded, knotted and embroidered fabrics made from them; and to nonwoven fabrics produced by mechanically or chemically bonding fibres. He adds further that, textiles are the art of processing fibres into fabrics. Hcontinues that the term textiles refer to fabrics either in the piece or garment form; it may be woven or knitted. Textiles is the art of making and decorating fabrics.

It can therefore be seen from these definitions that textiles encompass the art of transforming fibres into yarn and yarns to fabrics using different processes such as weaving, knitting. in of the above, the researcher sees it necessary for the learning of textiles in schools since it will equip learners to explore and produce artefacts that are woven or knitted such as clothes, bags, hats etc. using both hand and machine to useful purpose

- **Graphic Design**

Coeckelbergh (2017) defines graphic design as, works of art that involves drawing, painting, printing, engraving and etching for the purpose of communication and advertising.

Based on the above definition, the researcher sees graphic design as one of the most important art forms used in communication and by learning the processes involved, one would be able to communicate effectively and also exhibit his or her creative skills and aesthetic values.

Perceptions of people on Art

Sigakia, Haroldo and Ribeiroa (2018) opine that, the beliefs people have about art and its value are likely to affect whether it is taught or not. To date, it will suffice to say that very few studies have focused on the meaning, value and purpose of art. They corroborate that, a study of sixth graders in an American school found that 30% of 100 children claimed they never engaged in any form of art project in the home. If these high percentages of children are not engaged in any form of art activity at this level, it is not very likely their interest will change as they get older. With the peers of the child becoming more important, their emotions and realization of their environments increasing in importance, their interest in art will be limited.

Research Design

The researchers employ the quantitative and qualitative research method to interpret, discuss and analyses the data in this study. Both methods were employed because the study concerns human behaviour which can be assessed by descriptive methods and also to have a clear view of analysis. Qualitative research uses naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context of specific setting. The research does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest. Quantitative research on the other hand is broadly defined to mean any kind of research that produces findings arrived at by means of statistical procedure or order of quantification (Nyimbili 2019). He further explains that Quantitative research on the other hand is broadly defined to mean any kind of research that produces findings arrived at by means of statistical procedure or order of quantification.

Qualitative research is designed to reveal a target audiences' range of behaviour and the perceptions that derive it concerning specific topics or issues. It used in-depth studies of small groups of people to guide and support the construction of hypotheses. This research is comprised of finding facts on the significance and benefits of studying Visual Art in Tamale Technical University in Ghana. It is intended to fill the gap of ignorance and lost information on the importance of Visual Art. With this research design, the descriptive types of research were used, since it presents the opportunity to exhaustively research into a specific aspect of a problem within a limited time frame. Responses on the public's perceptions towards Visual Arts programme offered in Tamale Technical University was interpreted and analysed. This method fits best for this research since it relates greatly with society which mostly entails interaction with individuals.

Research Instruments

The researchers employed the following instruments for collection of data;

- Questionnaire
- Interview

Questionnaire is a data collection instrument which is often used in qualitative studies. However, it can also be employed for data collection in quantitative studies. A structured questionnaire contains predetermined standardized items used to collect numerical data subject to statistical analysis. The questions in the schedule are close-ended and answers outlined to give respondents

the opportunity to answer dichotomous questions “Yes or No”. The researcher employed both structured and unstructured questionnaire to seek answers from the public during the research.

Lim (2024) states that interview is an oral questionnaire that provides primary data. He states that people are usually more willing to talk than to write. Moreover, after an interview the researcher gains rapport and establishes relationship with the respondents. The data collected through a semi-structured interview schedule can be subjected to a statistical analysis just like those collected through a structured questionnaire schedule. The instrument, therefore, is often used in survey research and can be carried out either face-to-face or over the telephone.

Population

Army (2023). explains that, population is a group from which the researcher will select a representative sample for the study. A population is the collection of all individuals, families, groups or organizations, communities that we are interested to find out about.

The population of this context of the study was the people around Tamale Technical University. Also, the population will be narrowed down to public. They will be chosen because they have no requisite skill or in-depth knowledge in art.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Simple random sampling was use as the community around Tamale Technical University is big with two polling station. One in the institution and the other in the Wurishe community where the institution in situated. The population is around the institution is about one thousand five hundred (1500) The subject is selected because of some characteristics. Field researchers are often interested in studying extreme or deviant cases that is, cases that do not fit into regular patterns of attitude and behaviours.

Data Collection Instruments

In the search for reliable information related to this project, questionnaires were used. The questionnaires were distributed to a selected sample of populations around Tamale Technical University.

A questionnaire is a means of eliciting the feelings, beliefs, experiences, perceptions, or attitudes of some sample of individuals. As a data collecting instrument, was structured and unstructured. The questionnaire is most frequently a very concise preplanned set of questions designed to yield specific information to meet a particular need for research information about a pertinent topic. The questionnaires are purposely designed for a sample population of the public around Tamale Technical University. It was aimed at collecting reliable information on public's perception towards the Visual Arts programme offered in Tamale Technical University in Ghana. The research questionnaires were designed in such a way that it will whip up the respondent's interest in providing the required information. Closed-ended questions would be asked to save the respondent's precious time in completing the questionnaires.

Data collection and analysis

Data solicited from questionnaire was assembled to get the information that gave answers to the research questions. The data collected was then assembled and analyzed. The data collected from the study was converted into tabular form for summary. They were converted into percentage for

clear distinction and easy analysis. Data was processed using descriptive statistical representations (percentage tables). The analysis was based mainly on the questionnaire administered. In order to organize, summarize and illustrate the data collected, tables and percentages were employed. The data have been qualitatively and quantitatively analyses for a comprehensive and realistic results. In all, hundred (100) questionnaires were administered and ninety (90) was retrieved from the respondents around Tamale Technical University. The items in the questionnaire sought to find out their perception towards Visual Art, its usefulness as a course of study in Tamale Technical University, and its significance to society.

Presentation of Tables

Data collated has been analyses and the outcomes presented in a tabular form to give answers to the research questions

Table 1.0 Have you studied Visual Art before?

Options	Frequency	Total Percentage (%)
Yes	10	11.12%
No	80	88.88%
Total Respondents	90	100%

Source: Field work (2024)

Table 1.0 indicates that majority of the respondents representing 88.88% of the total percentage have not study Visual Art before. The remaining 11.12% are those who have had the opportunity to study Visual Art. They agree to the fact that they did not go far, the opportunity to have formal education only ended at the lower-level primary.

Table 2.0 Are you aware of Visual Art programme in TATU?

Options	Frequency	Total Percentage (%)
Yes	88	97.78%
No	2	2.22%
Total Respondents	90	100%

Source: Field work (2024)

Table 2.0 indicates that majority of the respondents representing 97.78% of the total percentage are aware of the Visual Art programme being ran at Tatu. The remaining 2.22% are those who are not aware of the programme being ran at Tatu.

Table 3.0 Will you allow your ward to study Visual Art at TATU?

Options	Frequency	Total Percentage (%)
Yes	80	88.88%
No	10	11.12%
Total Respondents	90	100%

Source: Field work (2024)

Table 3.0 indicates that majority of the respondents representing 88.88% of the total percentage will allow their ward the study Visual Art at TATU. The remaining 11.12% will not allow their ward to study the Visual Art programme. The researcher also finds out the level respondents have studied Art.

Table 4.0 Do the Visual Art programme offer job opportunity for students?

Options	Frequency	Total Percentage (%)
Yes	90	100%
No	0	0%
Total Respondents	10	100%

Source: Field work (2024)

Table 4.0 indicates that all of the respondents representing 100% of the total percentage agree that Visual Art has greater job opportunity for the students that offer the programme. Student can be self-employed and the skills learned can be used not only in Ghana but outside Ghana. The researchers also wanted to find out how marketable the Visual Art programme is to the community.

What is your perception of the Visual Art programme offered in TATU?

The researchers wanted to know the perception of Visual Art programme offered and if respondents think it is worth studying Visual Art in Tamale Technical University. Out of 90 people who responded to the item, 88 of them representing 97.78% of the respondents have positive perception of the Visual Art programme being offered at TATU. They gave various reasons to support their answers. The following are some of the views of respondents to support their answers; It helps students to develop their creativity. Visual Art portrays the natural environment, it helps promote our culture, and it increases the potentials of students, it makes learning more real. Individuals' talents are different and need to be developed while 2.22% of the respondents were of the view that, it should not be studied in schools and the reason they gave was that, it makes students have little time for other subjects.

Economic Value of Visual Art programme in Ghana?

The researchers wanted to know the economic value of studying Visual Art programme in Ghana. Respondents were asked if there is any economic value that the country is likely to gain by

allowing its citizenry to study the Visual Art programme. Out of 90 people responded to the item, all of the 90 respondents making 100% of the total respondents were fully in agreement that the programme has economic value.

3. CONCLUSION

The purpose of the Visual Art programme in Tamale Technical University in Ghana is to equip individuals with special skills that will enable them to be self-sufficient and fit into the society after they have graduated. Again, the Visual Art programme prepares the individuals with creative abilities that are needed in building a nation. Visual Arts programme is one of the programmes which has gained the interest of the public and as such the programme is run in a number of Senior High schools in the Tamale Metropolis. Visual Art as a course in Tamale Technical University Ghana is as important as any other course being studied.

However, many people, including the elite have negative perceptions about Visual Art and this has negatively affected the development of the course from the secondary to the higher education. This study sought to examine the perception towards Visual Arts programme offered in Tamale Technical University, draw conclusions and make recommendations for improvement in understanding the Visual Art programme.

It was observed that most of the people in the community have positive knowledge of the Visual Art programme being ran at Tamale Technical University. As a result, most of them keep at least an artifact in their homes or work places. They therefore appreciate the economic value and contribution of Visual Art to the development of the country.

The study revealed that most of the people in the community will allow their wards to study Visual Art provided their wards have the talent and interest to pursue the Visual Art programme.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results found in the study, it is recommended that;

1. There should be an increase and intensified public education at National, Regional and at district levels on the importance of Visual Art Education.
2. Lecturers should also vary their teaching methods and make their class interesting in order to attract more students into the Visual Arts programme.
3. The intake of students into the Visual Art department in Tamale Technical University must be based on the interest of the students rather than as is usually the case upon directives of the admission board.
4. Regular exhibitions must be organized by Visual Art teachers and their students inviting the general public to the Centre to observe what they are capable of doing. At the exhibition Centre, opportunity should be taken to educate the public about the visual Art programme, its prospects among others.
5. The Visual Art departments must decorate their environments with some of their Artworks to serve as a way of showcasing the discipline

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