The Creative Art Teacher as an Agile Facilitator

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Abstract
This paper examined instructional strategies for teaching visual arts in a Basic School in Ghana to ascertain the readiness of teachers for the implementation of the new curriculum. In doing so, the paper examines and discusses some best pedagogical practices in developed countries in a contextual analysis through which suggestions were made to help breed agile arts teachers in Ghanaian basic schools. It situates in a case study inquiry through unobtrusive observation by examining instructional pedagogies of visual arts lessons in a selected basic school. Results indicate that pedagogy was mostly teacher-centred than enacting competencies in learners. Blended learning strategies were scarce whereas a focus-group interview with learners revealed their obsession with smartphones but cannot harmonize it with their learning. It is feared that Ghana will be unable to bridge the gap between visual art education and the industry given the ineffective instructional strategies used by creative art teachers. The paper recommends that creative art teachers join professional associations to indulge in personal continuous professional development. A school-based professional development training for creative art teachers is suggested. Whereas policymakers are entreated to develop regulatory policies that would enable both learners and teachers to explore the use of smartphones to expedite learning.
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1. Introduction
The world of work in this 21-century is speedily becoming robust with technology as a catalyst. This phenomenon has propelled the job market to become exceedingly competitive where the premium is given to individuals with invaluable soft skills and competencies. Commenting on the role of education in preparing individuals for the 21-century job market, Higgins (2014) recounted that critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity and innovation coupled with technology are some cardinal skills for modern curriculum as these competencies are highly needed for the world of work. It is imperative therefore to grow generations fully equipped with soft skills to fill the industry gap through an effective education curriculum (Dean & East, 2019; Higgins, 2014). The quest to attain this milestone called for many education reforms in Ghana (Adu-Gyamfi et. al, 2016) with the most recent one which has to do with the pre-tertiary education curriculum reform that started in 2018. According to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2018), the review of the curriculum from objective-based to standard-based is targeted at leveling the gaps between education and industry by providing the 'Dream Ghanaian Child' with diverse competencies through the four Rs (**R**eading, w**R**iting, a**R**ithmetic and c**R**eativity). This review is set to transcend from early grade to the secondary school levels in Ghana. With the introduction of creativity as part of the four Rs, it is comfortable to establish that art has an equally vital role to perform in the entire standard-based curriculum. However, the crucial question is: Is the education system of Ghana and its key actors like teachers, parents and the Ghana Education Service as well as the Ministry of Education ready for the full implementation of the standard-based curriculum? Earlier studies have recorded that, art education in Ghana is confronted with grave challenges such as a lack of adequate facilities and skilled teachers (Quarshie & Kpogo, 2020; Aidoo, 2018; Artwatch, 2017; Essel et.al 2014; Duku, 2012). The issue of quality art teachers and lack of teaching and learning resources are the major factors affecting the effective implementation of the visual arts curriculum in Ghana. Irrespective of other things, the researchers believe that the teacher factor in curriculum implementation is very paramount. To fully implement the creative arts curriculum, which seeks to raise generations of versatile, skilled, innovative, problem-solving and critical thinkers, the visual art teacher has to be an agile facilitator, flexible and own the perspicacity to deploy diverse integrated teaching and learning strategies. The study, therefore, examined instructional strategies for teaching visual arts in a selected Basic School to ascertain the readiness of teachers for the implementation of the new curriculum.

2. Review of related literature
2.1 The age of agility and the visual art teacher
With the advent of digital technology, business and industries are becoming more robust and flexible in

satisfying the needs of customers and daily life problems. Meeting the demands of customers in recent times has marshalled the 21-century job market into a dynamic complex of agility. The age of agile is therefore grounded deeply in the philosophies of innovativeness, finding solutions through experimentation, adaptability and sensitivity towards customer needs (Denning, 2017). This form of entrepreneurship uses simple methods thereby unlocking the puzzles of rigidity to pave way for customer-centred marketing approaches. Therefore, industries are forced towards employing individuals with invaluable soft skills such as critical thinking, creativity and innovation, problem-solving and possessing technological abilities. Higgins (2014) recounted one practical way of filling the world of work with individuals who possess such soft skills and competencies is through a well-defined education curriculum. According to him, the school curriculum must be tuned towards impacting such competencies in students to prepare them for the world of work.

Agreeably, creativity and innovation are also highly associated with visual arts (Sandberg, 2019). This means that visual arts teachers must themselves acquire the requisite skills to be able to prepare their students for the job market. Denning (2017) explained that the age of agility perceives every individual as an entrepreneur – creative and innovative personalities with enthusiasm towards generosity. In this regard, the researchers argue that visual art teachers should maintain a high level of entrepreneurial acumen to transfer such competencies to learners. This requires flexibility, readiness to learn and frequent engagement in modern instructional pedagogies and assessment practices which can be achieved through personal professional development programmes (Kennedy, 2016).

In another study by Hall and Rowland (2016), they found that the hallmark of excellent leaders is their ability to inspire team members to willfully follow than to use forceful approaches. They explained further that an agile leader is a facilitator who works with the team and gives equal opportunity to members to express their abilities under their guidance and coordination to attain results. Agreeably, teachers are leaders (Lieberman & Miller, 2005) in the learning environment. As agile leaders, teachers must be swift in using a variety of teaching and learning strategies to impart knowledge and skills to their learners.

2.2 Modern Strategies of Teaching Art
In this technological age, modern teaching technique is imperative and most preferred. This is because analyses of the traditional method of teaching by Namitha (2018) found that the traditional method of teaching results in passive learning as teachers are seen as the centre of learning whereas learners do little. Information from teachers to learners is often direct and one-way flow when using *chalk and talk*.

Interestingly, this type of teaching and learning as observed by Namitha is very common in the Ghanaian classrooms with which teachers are perceived as a reservoir of knowledge – a phenomenon which Namitha (2018) described as the sender (teacher) and receiver (student) relationship. This is tantamount to the mismatch between what students are taught and what the industry needs. It is, for this reason, many advanced countries have adopted problem-based learning and embraced the use of technology in teaching and learning. Even as there are numerous strategies of teaching, the researchers focused on five of them for review in this paper which can be practically applied to teaching and learning of art which are; the use of multi-media technology, team teaching, activity and project-based, differentiated method and plenary teaching strategies.

2.2.1 Multi-media technology for teaching and learning
The use of multi-media to modify the content of learning materials (Namitha, 2018) is common in advanced countries. Studies have proven that using multi-media in teaching enhances learner participation in classroom activities (Xu, 2017; Namitha, 2018: Quarshie et.al, 2022) as learners are engaged with a variety of interactions. Such multi-media engagements are perfect for teaching visual arts because learners in the visual art class are mostly talented individuals with different learning styles such as kinesthetic, visual, auditory and tactile (Hamdani, 2015). Admittedly, public schools in Ghana do not have projectors and computers to be used by teachers. However, there are other technological devices such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops. In villages where learners may find it difficult to acquire their smartphones, teachers could use their phones to aid teaching in learning in the classroom. But the contradictory controversies hovering around the use of mobile devices in Ghanaian schools have placed teachers in a dilemma. Whereas the curriculum emphasizes the use of technology in teaching and encourages teachers to use them, the Ghana Education Service (GES) had restricted the use of the phone in schools (Kaledzi, 2016; GhanaWeb, 2020) claiming that students will abuse its use. Meanwhile, there are no technological devices in schools to aid teaching and learning. The researchers argue that the entire education system in Ghana has done little to teach learners at all levels the use of smartphones in particular for academic purposes therefore, even most teachers have little knowledge on how to incorporate it in their teaching. Learners should be tolerable to use mobile devices for learning since the government is incapable of providing adequate technological devices in schools. In this regard, teachers can easily engage the learners in exploring Open Educational Resources (OERs) available online for deep learning of artistic processes. With this, learners have opportunities to watch videos or view images or even listen to the audio to enhance their understanding and acquisition of artistic skills and knowledge.

2.2.2 Team teaching

Team teaching has been one of the old methods of teaching but has been recently exhorted as a paradigm for effective teaching. Goetz (2000) explained team teaching as a group of two or more teachers working together to plan, conduct and evaluate the learning activities for the same group of learners. It is a collaborative work between two qualified instructors who facilitate learning activities for the same audience. Goetz proposes two categories of team teaching as; (1), two or more instructors teaching the same students at the same time within the same classroom and (2), instructors who work together but do not necessarily teach the same group of students nor necessarily teach them at the same time. This form of collaboration in both categories proposed by Goetz is uncommon, especially among visual art teachers in Ghana. However, the inter-relatedness of the visual subjects requires that teachers collaborate to plan instructional activities and projects for their students. This collaboration will help learners develop a spirit of teamwork as they observe their teachers do the same. Again, learners will be able to appreciate the inter-disciplinary links between the various arts subjects such as ceramics, sculpture, graphic design, and picture making among others. Maroney (1995, as cited in Goetz, 2000) admitted that team teaching strengthens teacher personalities and improves the strengths of learners. It is practically applicable to adopt team teaching in the Ghanaian pre-tertiary school system by visual art teachers. This is because, most visual art classrooms are flooded with high numbers of learners (Quarshie & Kpogo, 2020) which makes it difficult to manage and monitor learner behaviours and practice differentiated teaching. Therefore, with the assistance of a co-teacher, the large class sizes can be easily handled by both teachers for effective teaching and learning.

2.2.3 Activity and project-based learning

Research has proven that experiential learning such as the one propounded by David Kolb is one of the effective ways of teaching (Zhou & Brown, 2015) based on learner's experiences. For most creative learners like visual arts students, frequent engagement in practical activities helps to hasten absorption and acquisition of skills. In this regard, the new curriculum for Creative Arts (CA) has been structured to be practically intensive. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2018) stressed in the front matter of the CA curriculum that learners are expected to acquire valuable basic practical skills to serve as a foundation for further skills development. The teaching and assessment of practical skills should involve projects, case studies and creative practical tasks. This means that teachers have to adopt learner-centred strategies, engaging students to explore materials and techniques for skill development and artistic creations. In another study, the findings of Rofieq et.al (2019) indicated that project-based learning is considered an effective way to improve the students' learning quality which is in agreement with the disposition of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA). One strong means of bridging the gaps between the industry and education in Ghana is through the activity and project-based instructional strategy hence, creative art teachers must consider adopting it for effective teaching.

2.2.4 Differentiated instructional method

This strategy of teaching involves modifying instructional activities to cater for the inclusivity of individual learner needs in the classroom. As students with diverse learning styles fill the classroom, many teachers do not always have the time to plan lessons that use Differentiated Instruction (DI) to suit their distinct aptitudes (Guido, 2016). The assertion of Guido is common in Ghanaian schools. Most pre-tertiary teachers teach generally without considering the individual education needs of the learner. For this reason, NaCCA emphasised the inclusion and Special Education Needs (SEN) in the new curriculum so that no learner will be left out in the classroom. With the principal goal of raising a 'dream Ghanaian child' who can demonstrate competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, innovation and problem-solving, there is a need for teachers to adopt differentiated teaching strategies. This approach enables teachers to give learners different tasks and assessments according to their abilities (Guido, 2016) and can be done effectively when teachers interview and get to know their learners personally. Admittedly, the large class sizes in Ghanaian pre-tertiary schools (Quarshie & Kpogo, 2020) will be challenging for practical application of this approach however, the researchers opine that adopting the team-teaching strategy as expressed earlier in this article, would minimize the challenge towards its success of implementation.

2.2.5 Plenary teaching

Plenaries are interactive discussions initiated by teachers which enable learners to express their views and understanding of lessons. Commenting on the importance of plenaries, Beadle (2013) as cited in (Hartwell, 2019) posited that plenaries are planned into lessons to summarise learning and not necessarily at the end. Beadle explained further that, mini plenaries can be used as an effective form of assessment at transition points within a lesson. Plenary allows the teacher to assess the understanding of the entire class at once (Hartwell, 2019). The CA curriculum places a premium on this strategy, stating that teachers should use plenaries in the delivery and formative assessment of learners (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2011). Creative arts teachers must use effective questioning to enable learners to express their views about artistic processes and techniques they use, how they use them as well as their choice of materials and final products. Plenaries are more

effective when teachers engage learners in practical classroom activities for learning as well as project-based activities. Whereas plenaries may involve think-pair-share or large-group strategies, teachers are mindful of sustaining the interests of learners by giving encouraging feedback to commend learners' abilities and efforts. Again, the visual arts classroom teachers must engage learners in a jury or appreciation of their works to elicit understanding and appraisal of artworks.

3. Methodology

The study explored the illustrative case study in mixed methods research. This nature of inquiry requires rigorous descriptive analysis and narrative of events and behaviours of individuals (Saunders et al., 2012; Souto-Manning, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Mohajan, 2018) in order to help others to understand it. With the advent of the new standard-based creative arts curriculum, the researchers were poised to examine the readiness of visual arts teachers in implementing the curriculum. The researchers selected two classes in a basic school in the Effutu Municipality as a case study for observation. The team monitored the teaching and learning activities of the visual arts lessons in the classroom for a term. A total sample of 68 respondents comprising two teachers and 66 students were involved in the study (see table 1) using purposive total population sampling. The unobtrusive observation tool was used, aided by an observation guide in order not to interfere with the classroom learning proceedings. Having monitored the teaching and learning activities and behaviours of learners for a while after securing a permit from authorities to do so, the research team scheduled six different focused groups constituting 11 learners each for interviews to obtain further qualitative data. The field data led to a content analytical study of the proposed instructional strategies in the CA curriculum for comparative analysis.

Table 1: Breakdown of the Sample Size

Class	Number of teachers	Number of students
Basic 5	1	36
Basic 6	1	30
TOTAL	2	66
GRAND TOTAL		**68**

(Source: Fieldwork, 2021)

Data were also collected through fieldnote, photographs and video recordings using digital cameras and smartphones. Due to the term-long data collection, the team designed a rotational data collection schedule where each member of the team had a turn to visit the school for data collection. However, the observation and interview guides aided in obtaining uniform and quality data. Whereas the rotational schedule also aided in data triangulations for credibility and trustworthiness. An instructional observation checklist was designed using the lesson delivery module suggested in the CA curriculum and other contemporary teaching and learning modules of some advanced countries found in online literature. A total of 12 visits were made to the school, and six different lessons were observed in each of the classes. Data obtained were organised into text, tables and figures. Analysis of field data commenced with data collection by sorting and configuring subjects using the descriptive basic statistics, content analytic and thematic procedures.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Teacher related issues

The series of field lesson observations of both teachers revealed that the teachers demonstrated appreciable content knowledge in the strands taught. The teachers were mostly prepared for their lessons and were punctual. However, it was observed that their preparedness was towards lecturing learners about the knowledge they possess rather than guiding learners to acquire knowledge through experimentation or exploration. This finding typically reflects what Namitha (2018) posited as a sender-receiver phenomenon. Teachers were seen at the centre of every lesson, doing much of the talking while learners do the listening. Lessons mostly commenced with teachers introducing the topic or writing the topic on the marker board and then proceeding to explaining concepts and giving out definitions of terms whereas students listen and write notes. On a few occasions teachers engage learners in questions and answers and also learners were tasked to copy notes either written on board or dictated by teachers. Also, teachers gave homework or practical assignments to learners with dates of submission to conclude their lessons. In some cases, teachers demonstrated the technique in class during practical lessons without allowing the learners to explore those techniques under their supervision. The researchers found these routines of teaching and learning to be teacher-centred and contrary to suggestions provided in the new CA curriculum in the teams' content analytic study of the curriculum and its auxiliary – the Teacher Resource Pack (TRP), designed by NaCCA to guide teachers in planning and delivering their lessons.

Even though in the TRP, NaCCA proposes that teachers "create a learner-centred classroom" environment to enact lesson delivery which is focused on a "learner-centred approach" (NaCCA, 2019, p. 24), the reality is that such a proposal is not being implemented. Asked why the teachers were not making the learners the centre of the study, Teacher 'A' responded that *"the time allocated for the lesson and the amount of information to be given to*

the learners, if I allow the learners to lead the discussion, I will not finish the syllabus".

Again, the document suggests that "lesson delivery should be in three phases" (p. 38). *Phase One* should be a Starter which is targeted at preparing the brain for learning and this can be done by beginning the lesson with a song, poem, story, dance, effective questioning or any activity that would engage and prepare the learners' mindset for new learning. *Phase Two*, which is the *main*, should aim at new learning including formative *assessment as* and *for* learning. During the *main*, teachers are to engage learners in group activities, think-pair-share and work with resources or explore their environment and technological devices for discovery learning. *Phase Three,* on the other hand, is the plenary or reflection session for both learners and teachers. It is targeted at helping both teachers and learners to "recap and consolidate what happened during the lesson and prepare for the next lessons" (NaCCA, 2019, p. 39). Figure 1 (a & b) presents a summary chart on the mode of lesson delivery by the visual art teachers from the field observation and that of the standard-based module prescribed by NaCCA in the TRP respectively.
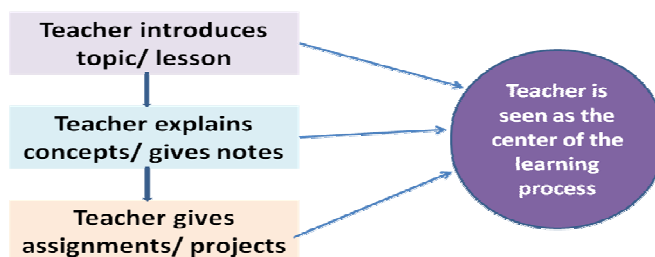

Figure 1a: Summary diagram of lesson delivery approach used by
basic school teachers during the field observation
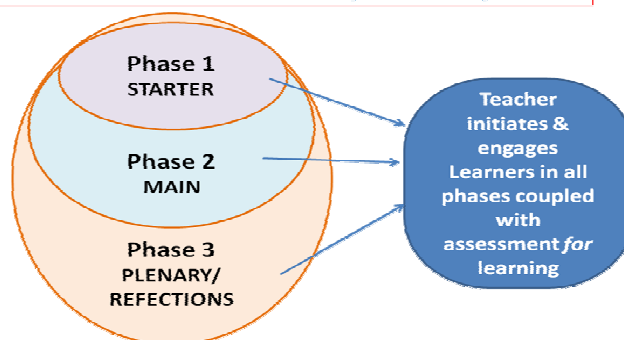(Source: Fieldwork, 2020)

Figure 1b: Visualised diagram of lesson delivery,
Adapted from module proposed by NaCCA
(Source: NaCCA Teacher Resource Pack, Fieldwork, 2020)

In figure 1a, it can be observed that teachers delivered their lesson in a vertical approach with the stages of the lesson distinct from the teacher as the principal actor doing most of the activities in the classroom. Whereas in figure 1b, the proposed lesson delivery process by NaCCA is adapted and visually presented as cyclical. In the diagram, the lesson phases are integrated as the learners get an opportunity to be actively involved from the start to the end of the lesson. In this approach, the teachers would use assessment *for* and *as* learning through effective questioning at all phases of learning to expedite deep learning.

Another issue observed from the field regarding teaching and learning was that teachers did not incorporate technology and blended methods in their teaching. Moreso, the classroom settings for learning were generally traditional and inflexible. The results from the interview with the teachers revealed that there are no studios and materials in the schools for practical works. Teacher 'B' indicated *I am willing to engage the learners in the practical activities but I have been constrained by the lack of materials'.* This notwithstanding, ideally, some visual arts lessons in the creative art curriculum such as colour work and design elements could be held outside the classroom environment where learners would have first-hand information, collect a sample of objects, describe

their experiences and write reports for class discussions. Obstinately, teachers were found teaching such lessons in abstraction thereby decelerating the understanding of some learners due to a lack of differentiated approach to teaching. Interestingly, both teachers observed on the field had their personal smartphones, however, none of them tried to use them as an aid to teaching. In the absence of projectors and computers available in the classroom, the teachers could have downloaded short videos or pictures on their mobile phones to show to their learners. This the team believes will unconsciously direct the minds of learners to the use of their mobile devices for academic purposes. A summary of the key findings of teacher-related issues has been represented visually in figure 2. The diagram shows seven main knotty themes which undermine the efficacy of the classroom teachers in the course of their lesson delivery.

Ideally, for a visual art classroom where lessons are mainly practical activities, it is expected that the classroom setting is organised to suit lessons. However, field observations revealed that teachers were not flexible in organising learning environments. The classroom settings were always tuned to the traditional orientation with the tables and chairs arranged in parallel or rows even for practical lessons like drawing and colour work. For such lessons, a better option could have been that the teacher reorganises the classroom orientation in a format that could enable learners to be more comfortable.
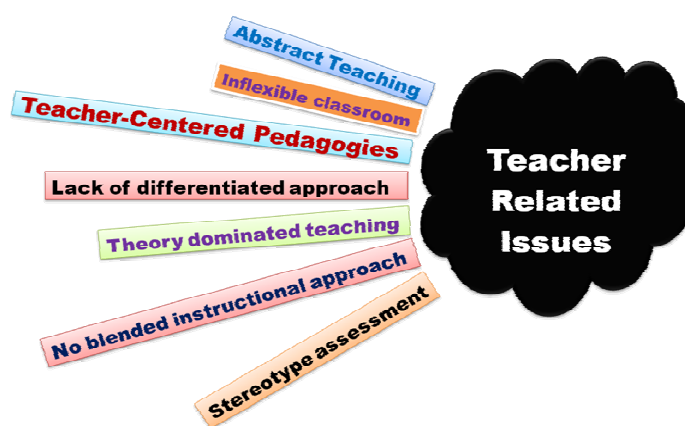

Figure 2: Summary of key findings relating to teachers
(Source: Fieldwork, 2020)

4.2 Concerns of learners

During the field observation, some learners were spotted taking photographs with their smartphones at lunchtime. This directed the curiosity of the research team towards a probing interaction with the learners. In a scheduled focus group interview, the students disclosed that "*they are very obsessed with their mobile devices and mostly carry them to class even though authorities frown on that act.*" According to them, their reason for carrying the mobile phone with them is that they "*frequently update their social media status and engage in discussions of trending issues on social media.*" However, a further probing interview with the learners revealed that they have little knowledge of how the smartphone can be used to enhance their learning. After a short demonstration to the learners on how to watch video tutorials on drawing and other artistic processes on YouTube by the research team, the learners were amazed and wished to explore more. One of the female learners expressed the view that "*government should allow teachers to teach them how to use their smartphones to enhance their learning rather than banning students from using them.*" She added that "*the ban will not stop them from bringing their phones to school anyways*."

Objectively, Ghana as a nation has not made much effort towards empowering teachers enough to use mobile devices in their teaching. This had left the entire nation with a biased ideology that students would use mobile phones for negative purposes only when permitted to use them in school. The researchers argue here that, students will always use the smartphone for what they want to however if conscious steps are taken to teach them how to use it to enhance their learning, the smartphone will serve as an enhancement for blended learning in the absence of adequate computers and projectors in Ghanaian schools. Again, some learners expressed that they wish to visit art studios to learn how artworks are made and learn about the technological devices that are used in the industries. However, teachers do not take them out of the classroom for such trips. An inquiry through face-to-face exclusive interviews of the teachers regarding taking learners on field trips revealed that "*the bureaucratic process of taking students on a field trip is frustrating thereby not daring to pursue.*" Aside from the challenges confronting visual arts education in Ghana identified by earlier researchers (Quarshie & Kpogo, 2020; Aidoo, 2018; Artwatch, 2017; Essel et al., 2014; Duku, 2012), this study reveals another crucial challenge which has to do with policy direction for flexible pedagogies in Ghanaian pre-tertiary schools. But disparagingly, if teachers find it difficult to take students out on such trips, teachers could viably explore inviting industry practitioners to visit the classroom as

resource persons to enhance teaching as another option, which was also found missing throughout the observation.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The instructional strategies of visual art teachers in the case study were found to be less than the standards prescribed in the new curriculum and could lead to serious repercussions. As the ultimate goal of education is to provide competencies and skills for individuals to fit the world of work, it is feared that the widening gaps between visual arts education and the art industry in Ghana cannot be bridged given the lapses in effective teaching and learning pedagogies used by basic school art teachers. Learners will be unable to acquire the requisite competencies to render them employable in future arts industries. Teachers must explore and practice learner-centred instructional strategies, and engage learners in technology-driven learning activities, inter-disciplinary and project-base or practical activities.

Regarding the stereotyped classroom setting, it is recommended that teachers plan and deliver some lessons outside the traditional classroom orientation to engage learners in exploring their environment for effective learning. Lessons can be conducted at studios of nearby artists to help deepen the understanding and skill acquisition of learners. It is also recommended teachers join professional associations such as the Art Teachers' Association of Ghana (ATAG), International Association of Art (IAA), National Art Education Association (NAEA) and others to frequently engage in personal professional development programmes to improve their teaching.

Also, the Art Teachers' Association of Ghana in collaboration with Ghana Education Service and NaCCA should embark on school-based and district-based in-service training for visual arts teachers on flexible and effective instructional strategies whereas Ghana Education Service and the National Teaching Council should emphasise evidence of professional development of teachers through practical demonstrated lessons be adopted as key factors to consider for teacher promotions through the ranks.

Finally, Learners will continue to carry smartphones to school irrespective of the ban on their usage. It is recommended that teachers take advantage of that to guide learners to use them for learning whereas government and education policymakers review the current position of the ban on the usage to empower teachers to use the smartphones and other mobile devices for teaching and learning. Teachers should also be empowered with flexible policy directions to explore field trips and other viable pedagogical strategies including the provision of adequate teaching and learning resources for effective visual art teaching and learning.

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