

Relative Contributions of Talent, Interest and Exposure to Artistry

Akande A. O. Salawu, I. K.

Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Emmanuel Alayande, College of Education, Oyo, Oyo State, Nigeria

Abstract

This research sets out to find the relative contributions of Talent, Interest and Exposure, three important artistic factors, to artistry. The experiment was applied to students of Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo, Nigeria who did not have prior knowledge of Fine and Applied Arts but were offered admission to study the course as a beginners-course in the college. 20 students were randomly selected from the 2007/2008 set. Five drawings and five paintings of each student were chronologically selected from their first semester. Another set of five drawing and painting was selected at the end of their course in 2009/2010. Standard coefficient was used to, first, weigh the composite contributions of the independent variables (talent, interest and exposure) to the dependent variable (artistry). A sociometric marking of the works were done by 3 teachers of art. The result showed that the joint contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable was significant and that other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance. The result of the sociometric marking showed that the students have developed almost professional artistic skills compared to when they were admitted. The standard regression coefficients was used to determine the relative contributions of the independent variables for the explanation of the dependent variable, Interest, ($B=0.446$, $t=4.064$, $P<0.05$) is the most potent contribution to the prediction, followed by Talent ($B=0.373$, $t=2.718$, $P<0.05$) and Exposure ($B=0.0397$, $t=0.436$, $P>0.05$) in that order.

Keywords: Fine and Applied Arts, Talent, Interest, Exposure, Artistry

Introduction

This research sets out to find the relative contributions of three (Talent, Interest and Exposure) important factors that contribute to artistry. However, out of the three factors, much space is used to dwell on the definition and clarification of the word and concept 'Talent'. This is because it is the most debated, ambiguous and misconstrued of the three. Other factors (Interest and Exposure) are also defined and explained. A part of this experiment is also used to check the strength of the three factors as substantial contributors to artistry.

The contention of this paper is to find out the largest contributor of the three important factors of artistry and to further corroborate or debunk the idea that talent is a prerequisite for art. Talent is a common word in our everyday life. However, the concept to which the word refers remains elusive, it lacks substance, specificity and, as earlier said, can sometimes be ambiguous. This word has been, for ages, used for people with artistic skills. Such people are said to be talented in art. Indeed, it is widely held conviction that artist are born and not made. This position implies that art is an in-born talent and cannot be learnt. We may here refer to the Webster's definition of talent as "any natural ability or power." In the light of deeper understanding of human nature and the strength of the brain, such a broad description can be misleading. The definition also includes the word 'natural', a word that can be contended. It is difficult to differentiate between natural or acquired skills in human.

It is important to mention that scholars, Sorensen K. (2000), Crabtree S. (2000), EMay, M. (2013) and Fresia J. (2015), have called to question the erroneous opinion that talent is a prerequisite to art and that art cannot be learnt. Sorensen and Crabtree (2000) submit that by the implication of the several definitions of talent in books and dictionaries, talent, at best, only reflects 'how you're 'hard-wired?'. They observed that, that is what sets the concept apart from that of knowledge or skills. Talent dictates your moment-by-moment reactions to your environment there's an instinctiveness, an immediacy implied. Talent results in consistently recurring patterns of thought or behaviour. To deviate from those patterns requires conscious effort, and such deviations are difficult to sustain. The authors conclude that knowledge and skills can be learned and that talent is only a word used to describe the ability of person to endure in a skill. In her own publication, EMay (2013) pointed out that no two people share the same gifts, so others often have a good view of our talents because they're in a better position to observe something they don't possess. Fresia (2015) who is an art teacher insisted that art can be taught and that art is about creativity. Stressing this further, she pointed out that each of us is creative in some way, in some area. How then do we consider particular beings more talented, when all are actually talented? Therefore in the real sense of it we are all artistically talented in different areas. According to her, the making of art has less to do with a natural gift (and some people are very gifted to be sure) than it does with being in a situation that encourages creativity. These authors are of the opinion that talent is although an essential ingredient for artistry, but there are other factors that are equally if not stronger than talent.

This section will address the definitions of Interest and exposure. The Wikipedia free Encyclopaedia defines Interest as a feeling or emotion that causes attention to focus on an object, event or process. Silvia, P (2006) wrote that Psychologists have always been interested in interest, and so modern research on interest can be found in nearly every area of the field: Researchers studying emotions, cognition, development, education, aesthetics, personality, motivation, and vocations have developed intriguing ideas about what interest is and how it works. Exploring the Psychology of Interest presents an integrated picture of how interest has been studied in all the wide-ranging areas of psychology. Using modern theories of cognition and emotion as an integrative framework, Paul Silvia examines the nature of interest, what makes things interesting, the role of interest in personality, and the development of peoples idiosyncratic interests, hobbies, and avocations. His examination reveals deep similarities between seemingly different fields of psychology and illustrates the profound importance of interest, curiosity, and intrinsic motivation for understanding why people do what they do. The findings of Silvia is a strong indication that interest can also be a contributor to artistry, because interest inspires, focus, attention and dedication, all of which are important factors to the practice of art.

Exposure, the third factor under consideration by this experiment is defined in Encarta Dictionaries (2008) as the experience of coming into contact with and environmental condition or social influence, which may be an art or a culture that has harmful or beneficial effects. This implies that exposure can have positive or negative influence on people. Anderson (2009), from the result of experiment carried out in New York on the role of 'exposure' to the study of art, concluded that exposure is a very strong factor in the acquisition of artistry, especially among art students in New York.

It must be noted that there are other factors that can contribute to artistry, they include; Motivation, Prior Experience, Intelligence and others. This paper focuses on Talent, Interest and Exposure basically because these factors were observed prominent within the population used for this experiment.

Background to the Study/ Statement of the Problem

The concern to find the relative contributions of Talent, Interest and Exposure to artistry was borne out of the researcher's teaching experience with Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Nigeria where I have served as an art teacher for about 15 years. It is observed that because of one admission problem or the other, applicant students who did not apply for Fine and Applied Arts nor have prior knowledge in Fine and Applied Arts were offered admission to study Fine and Applied Art as a beginners course in the college where I serve. Years later, when such students graduate, it was observed that some of them became somewhat accomplished artists. This result made the researcher to put in doubt the widely held assumption that art is a natural gift. Questions that arose were that; If art was a natural gift, how then did many of the students who never had prior knowledge nor claimed to be gifted in Fine and Applied Arts did so well in the course? or could it be that the students have been ignorant about their artistic talent before then? Consequently, there must be other strong factors, apart from talent, that contributes largely to artistry. To this end, the researcher had to look keenly for other factors that may contribute to artistry among these students; as a result, interest and exposure were identified. On the identification of the two other factors, further contention arose as to which is the largest contributor of the three factors. The purpose of this research is then to test the strength of each of this independent variable as against the dependent variable, artistry.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of the study is to quantify the relative contributions of Talent, Interest and Exposure, the three independent variables, to artistry, the dependent variable. A very important issue was first addressed, that is to check if the three independent variables are part of the largest contributors to artistry. Also important was the capability of the independent variables for the interrogation and eliciting of authentic data.

Two corresponding research questions were set to match-up with the research objective. The questions are:

- a. To what extent can artistry predicted by exposure, talent and interest?
- b. What are the relative contributions of exposure, talent and interest to artistry?

Methodology

Experimental design was adopted for the study. 20 students of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts of Emmanuel Alayande were randomly selected in 2007/2008. The students selected, had no prior formal knowledge in Fine and Applied Arts and confessed that they were not talented in Art. In fact, they only took the course because there was no alternative for them. Five drawings and five paintings of each student were chronologically selected from their works in their first semester. At the end of their third session (sixth semester), in 2009/2010 another set of five drawings and five paintings of the same set of students were selected to find if there has been remarkable improvement in their works.

Data Analysis

Two types of analyses were employed; the first was sociometric, where the drawings and paintings of the students were graded to check if there were marked improvements in their later drawings and paintings.

The two sets of drawings and paintings (2007/2008 and 2009/2010) were subjected to sociometric grading by five art teachers. It was observed that there is marked difference between the two sets. The drawings and paintings done by the students have improved a whole lot and there are no evidences to show that they were not talented. Indeed, they displayed expected mastery of their media and theme, at least for their level. Yet the students at the outset in 2007/2008 confessed that they were not talented in art.

In the second analysis, the standard coefficient was used to analyse;

- a. the composite contribution of the independent variables (talent, interest and exposure) to the dependent variable (artistry).
- b. the relative contributions of talent, interest and exposure to artistry.

Results and Discussions

Research question one says: To what extent can Artistry be predicted by exposure, talent and interest?

Table 1, shows that artistry correlated positively with the three predictor variable. The table also shows a coefficient of multiple correlation (R) of 0.956, very strong correlation and a multiple R² of 0.914. This means that 91.4% of the variance in artistry is accounted for by all the three predictor variables, when taken together.

Table 1: Composite Contribution of the Independent Variables (Talent, Interest and Exposure) to the Dependent Variable (Artistry).

Multiple R	R-Square	Adjusted R2	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.956	0.914	0.904	0.4923

ANOVA

Source of Variation	DF	Sum of Square	Mean Square	F	P	Remarks
Regression	3	66.665	22.222	91.678	0.00	Significant
Residual	26	6.302	0.242			
Total	29	72.967				

The significance of the composite contribution was tested at P<0.05 using the F-ratio at the degree of freedom (df=26). The table also shows that the analysis of the variance for the regression yielded an F-ratio of 91.678 (significant at 0.05) ($F_{(3,26)} = 91.678$; P<0.05). This implies that the joint contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable was significant and that other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance.

Research Question Two: What are the relative contributions of Talent, Interest and Exposure to Artistry?

Table 2 reveals the relative contributions of the three independent variables to the dependent variable, expressed as beta weights. The partial correlation coefficients of Talent, Interest and Exposure have positive correlation/relationship with Artistry. The positive value of the effect of Talent, Interest and Exposure implies that artistry within an individual can be enhanced.

Table 2: Relative Contribution of the Independent Variables to the Dependent Variable

Variables	\hat{A}	SE (B)	Beta	T	P	Remark
Talent	0.373	0.137	0.451	2.718	0.012	S
Interest	0.446	0.110	0.494	4.064	0.00	S
Exposure	0.0396	0.091	0.050	0.436	0.666	NS

Findings

Using the standard regression coefficients to determine the relative contributions of the independent variables for the explanation of the dependent variable, Interest, (B=0.446, t=4.064, P<0.05) is the most potent contribution to the prediction, followed by Talent (B=0.373, t=2.718, P<0.05) and Exposure (B=0.0397, t=0.436, P>0.05) in that order.

Conclusions

From the foregoing, it is clear that Interest is more important than Talent in the acquisition of artistic skill. As a matter of fact, a person with talent but without interest in the skill will not develop such Talent to its zenith. This is not to say that Talent can be totally absent as a factor in the acquisition of skill, but it merely shows that Talent without interest cannot deliver the very best of an artist.

When the students used for the experiment got admission to study Fine and Applied Arts, a course for which they were not lavishly endowed, they had no choice but to be acquainted with the course, and naturally

got fascinated along the line and eventually picked interest (definitely not all of them). Fresia (2015) has pointed out that everybody has a level of artistic skill in him or her, therefore, the interest of the students, coupled with whatever level of their in-born talent, out of others, can be said to have accounted for the eventual good performances of the students.

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