

# Competencies of Higher Education Art Instructors: Its Implications to College Teaching and Learning

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## ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to describe the competencies of sample higher education instructors who were teaching visual arts either as a single subject area or as the component subject of the Humanities and identifying the challenges they have experienced in teaching art lessons. It utilized the descriptive research design in gathering and interpreting data. The main instrument of the study was a survey questionnaire that was adopted from NASAD standard competencies for art teachers, as categorized into: art and design competencies, teaching competencies, general competencies, and desirable personal qualities. Interview with sample participants was also conducted to supplement and validate the results. The responses of art instructors were guided and interpreted using a 5-point scale. The mean and standard deviation results revealed that the instructor-participants were either highly or very highly competent in all four areas. The lack of materials and the lack of experiential learning in 3-dimensional art forms were the major challenges art instructors had been facing. Implications of the results toward the implementation of the art curriculum were presented.

**Keywords:** competencies, higher education, art instructors, curriculum implementation

## INTRODUCTION

Art has long been given an important place in both basic and tertiary education curriculum. As one form of self-expression, it is considered an integral component of holistic education. Accordingly, art education is considered as a vital medium in developing skills critical for innovation: motivation, ability to communicate and cooperate effectively, self-confidence, critical and creative thinking, and skills in non-arts academic subjects such as reading and writing, mathematics, and science (OECD, 2013). Effective art instruction provides students with opportunities to expand their imagination, which is one of the significant cognitive functions of the brain (Fukumoto, 2010). Results from studies also revealed that art education does not only teach students technical knowledge and skills in the specific art form of study but also develop among them a heightened sense of enjoyment, fulfillment, stress relief, and an increased knowledge on social and cultural issues that contribute to the health of civil society, such as increased civic engagement and greater social tolerance (Kisida & Bowen, 2019).

To ensure effective teaching even in a constantly changing instructional context, instructors use various competencies, which include their skills, knowledge, behavior, and attributes (SEA-ICF, 2018). In this connection, the National Association for Schools for Arts and Design (2013) identified a set of competency standards for prospective art teachers, arts, and design, teaching, general, and personal qualities. Hence, prospective art instructors in some countries are required to pass different tests to earn their licenses. In Oklahoma, for example, they are given a general education test to assess their critical thinking and knowledge, another test for their art-related knowledge, and a test that measures their professional knowledge and skills.

Borrowing the principles of the Philippine K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum, the role of art teachers is focused on providing the students with knowledge, skills, and values necessary for artistic expression and cultural literacy. They are also expected to empower the students through their active involvement and participation in art and to effectively correlate it to the development of their cultural identity and the expansion of their vision of the world (K to 12 Curriculum Guide, 2016). As art is a student-centered and performance-based discipline, teachers need to teach it through active experience, performance, creative expression, aesthetic evaluation, critical response, and interpretation of

artistic creation.

In Philippine colleges and universities, creative and artistic skills in drawing or painting are important considerations in choosing art instructors. However, public colleges and universities cannot hire practicing artists because they are mostly not professional teachers. Instead, the college deans or department heads usually assign any available and willing faculty to teach arts and humanities subjects. Because of this situation, it may be difficult for students to gain optimal skills in creating and appreciating the arts.

To equip college instructors with relevant competencies and to help them address possible instructional difficulties, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have been conducting in-house seminars and training for their faculty. There are also HEIs that have sent faculty to capability-building seminars sponsored or organized by other institutions. However, most of these enhancement activities were about the teaching of academic subject areas such as English, Math, and Science. Only very few were about the performing arts, specifically, the Visual Arts. Hence, art instructors were left on their own to upgrade their conceptual, practical, and pedagogical knowledge in college art teaching.

The present focus of education and its curriculum is the development of the academic aspects and the expansion of standardized test-based accountability (Kisida & Bowen, 2013). In other words, while schools give more emphasis on subjects that can be measured through standard paper-and-pen tests, the teaching of various art forms is usually overlooked because these subjects are based on students' actual performance of skills. Also, the teaching and learning about the arts are not given much attention in educational research, as can be seen from a very limited list of experimental studies investigating the educational impact of the arts.

If higher education institutions remain to underestimate the role of art in preparing future professionals and toward holistic development of college students and if they fail to enhance the competencies of their art instructors. Consistently, it will be difficult for them to achieve their vision to create well-rounded professionals. In view of this issue, there was a felt need to conduct a study about the competencies and challenges of higher education art instructors and its implication to implementing of the Arts curriculum. The findings of this study would provide useful data for concerned individuals and agencies in planning feasible interventions that will help upgrade and enhance the competencies of instructors in the field of art.

## FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on Piaget's classical Constructivist Learning Theory which emphasized that the role of teachers is to help their respective students construct their own knowledge. According to the theory, learning is an active process in which learners use sensory input and constructs meaning out of it. This theory became the basis of the latest educational renovation- the Competency-Based Education framework (CBE), specifically, the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework. UbD is a CBE framework for teaching and assessing for understanding and learning transfer and designing curriculum 'backward' from the end goal. Moreover, CBE requires that teachers personalize learning opportunities to meet the needs of diverse student groups. Individualized and differentiated instruction are the common ways to provide personalized instruction in mixed ability groupings.

This study is also anchored on the National Association of Schools for Arts and Design (NASAD), which categorized art teachers' competencies into arts and design, teaching, general, and desirable personal qualities. It is also a relevant study supporting The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), specifically in Domain 3, which states that competent teachers can handle a diverse group of learners in terms of their interests and talents.

Art instructors, specifically in higher education, need to possess not only a set of generic teacher competencies but more importantly, those art and design competencies that are indispensable for artists. Accordingly, teachers cannot teach what they do not know (Teachers' Council of Thailand, 2018). Hence, art instructors are encouraged to be doing art projects themselves, in their homes, and if possible, participate in art exhibits. They must be familiar with the basic expressive, technical, procedural, and organizational skills and conceptual insights developed through studio art and design experiences (NASAD, 2013). Also, art teachers need to be aware of the various aspects of art: the history, the past and contemporary forms, the philosophies, and the relationships of all these to the making of art. Moreover, art teachers should have functional knowledge in colors and shapes, the processes and principles of shaping materials, and the basic technologies involved in making two-dimensional and three-dimensional art projects. These art and design competencies help teachers experience professional growth and enrich their lives (Lim, 2006).

In both the basic and tertiary levels of education, art lessons are taught using the same procedure and processes with other subject areas. Hence, the teaching competencies of elementary teachers are vital for effective art instruction. Under this standard, sample-specific competencies include an understanding of child development and the identification and understanding of psychological principles of learning related to art education. Accordingly, teachers require knowledge of the unique skills that each child brings to the classroom in order to effectively target instruction towards students' learning needs and positively impact their performance (York, 2014). This particular competency will influence teachers' ability to devise learning experiences to meet such needs and to assess the aptitudes and interests of individual learners. Also, they must be knowledgeable about current methods, appropriate instructional materials, and the various assessment techniques.

Art instructors need to develop a set of general studies competencies, too. These competencies include effective communication skills, which help improve students' enthusiasm (Diloyan, 2017), and awareness of culture, history, and ethics. Accordingly, integrating ethics in education helps students develop a deeper knowledge and awareness of their own and other cultures (Gluchmanova, 2015). Also, since music is closely related to visual arts in terms of purpose and elements (Music Curriculum Guide, 2015), it is helpful for art teachers to experience other forms of artistic expressions, such as music and dance.

Further, effective art instructors possess desirable personal qualities, such as the ability to inspire and excite the imagination of students, which develops their ability to focus (Bartel, 2010), and the ability to maintain a positive relationship with various students of differing backgrounds that is also important for students' academic achievement and behavioral success (Camp, 2011). Also, art teachers need to have the ability and desire to seek and apply new ideas in both art and in general education.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study was conducted to describe the competencies of higher education art instructors. Specifically, it sought to: a) Describe the level of the competencies of art instructors in terms of arts and design, teaching, general studies, and desirable personal qualities; b) Identify some competency-related challenges that art instructors experience; and c) Discuss the implications of results to the implementation of higher education Humanities curriculum.

## METHODS

This study used a mixture of descriptive and qualitative methods of research. In the descriptive aspect, the study utilized a survey questionnaire to obtain data on the competencies of higher education art instructors. The said research instrument was adopted from NASAD's (2015) competencies framework for prospective art teachers. The indicators in the questionnaire were categorized as: arts and design, teaching, general, and desirable personal qualities.

The purposively chosen participants of the study were both basic education or college art instructors in two local colleges and a university. They were made to self-assess their competencies using a scale of 5 down to 1, with five as the highest and one as the lowest level. The mean of each item was computed and discussed as to its qualitative description. The data on the challenges experienced by art instructors were taken from the responses of the participants in the open-ended questions in the same set of questionnaires. The data from an interview with ten instructor-participants were used to support the quantitative results. In addition, concepts from related literature also provided support to the findings.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Generally, art instructors (n=90) were moderately competent in terms of their conceptual awareness and practical skills in art and design. They possess skills necessary in teaching basic art concepts, as can be seen in Table 1. This particular set of art-related competencies may have been developed by the teachers themselves through years of experience as classroom teachers and coaches during art contests.

Nowadays, art instructors, specifically in many schools, are expected to be highly competent in terms of their knowledge in both traditional and contemporary art. Data from interviews revealed that they constantly draw or paint pictures and manually print visual aids for their daily teaching and structuring classroom bulletin boards. With Internet access in the school and at home, upgrading art-related competencies becomes easy and quick for them. Hence, when teachers have doubts and need to gain additional information about certain art concepts or activities, like computer-aided art projects, they just select, watch, and learn from numerous online lectures and tutorial videos. In this connection, having the confidence in terms of their content knowledge in

arts and design, teachers are also highly competent in teaching their students the various concepts, skills, and processes involved in creating artistic projects from start to finish.

According to the curriculum, students will be taught how to make art projects in 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional forms. However, teachers admit they have difficulty in teaching the principles and processes involved in making 3-dimensional projects because they themselves are not very capable of creating them. Unlike drawing and painting that use only plain paper, sculpture and handicrafts need other materials and tools and undergo more complicated processes. Creating sculpture, for example, may require a piece of wood, metal, clay, and other hard materials. Finding said objects and turning them into presentable art projects may be very challenging for non-artist teachers. The lack of art materials is a perennial problem for both teachers and students because of budgetary constraints.

As the results show, only few art instructors are very highly competent in arts and design. Hence, they still need more training in various concepts, elements, and processes involved in art creation. If not addressed accordingly, these inadequacies may hamper the teaching implication.

Table 1

*Level of Art and Design Competencies of Art instructors*

Competencies	Mean	QD
Developed basic technical, procedural and organizational skills, and insights through actual art and design experiences	3.3	Moderate
Knowledgeable in traditional processes as well as newer technological developments in visual arts	3.9	High
Able to make students aware of important process of artistic creation from conceptualized image to finished art work	3.83	High

Table 1 continued.

Competencies	Mean	QD
Have an understanding of the major styles and periods of art history, analytical methods, and theories of criticism	3.33	Moderate
Have an understanding of past and contemporary art forms	3.13	Moderate
Aware of contending philosophies of art	3.17	Moderate
Participate in at least one or more art-making activities	3.8	High
Have functional knowledge on the mixing of pigments	3.37	Moderate
Knowledgeable in shaping and organizing art materials	3.5	High
Knowledgeable in both 2D and 3D basic visual arts technologies	2.64	Moderate
Overall	3.40	Moderate

Table 2 shows that art instructors are highly competent in all identified teaching competencies. It implies that they are more than capable of teaching any subject area in basic education and that they possess the skills for teachers. This may be evidence that various enhancement seminars and training that Higher Education has been conducting were effective in enhancing both the content and pedagogical skills of teachers. These initiatives, identifying lesson objectives, planning appropriate methods and learning activities, and designing assessment tools become easier for teachers today than before.

Specifically, many art instructors are knowledgeable about the psychological, sociological, and philosophical principles of teaching and learning. They have learned about these three foundations of education during their baccalaureate classes, and some upgraded such knowledge during their advanced studies. The actual classroom experiences of teachers also provided them with firsthand knowledge about various aspects of students’ development, i.e, cognitive, physical, and emotional.

According to the teacher participants, the use of teacher’s guides and curriculum guide help them become highly competent in terms of their instructional materials and assessment tools because, unlike before, teachers today are provided with said references to make lesson planning easier and faster.



Hence, they find more time in preparing teaching materials and in setting up a conducive classroom. To further assist teachers in higher education schools, their administrators are encouraged to meet with them at least once a month and brainstorm about their teaching-related problems and possible school-based solutions. School administrators are also conducting classroom observations to ensure that the standards of the curricula are implemented.

Table 2

*Level of Teaching Competencies of Art Instructors*

Competencies	Mean	QD
Knowledgeable in human development and learning	4.13	High
Possesses an understanding of sociological-philosophical foundations of learning	3.83	high
Have the ability to create instructional materials	3.8	High
Knowledgeable in current methods of teaching	3.67	High
Aware of various assessment tools or techniques	3.77	High
Overall	3.84	High

Higher Education art instructors possess high level of general competencies that are necessary for successful instruction even during their practice teaching (Tantoy & Gemota, 2017). These competencies include but are not limited to good communication skills (Khan, 2017), ethical awareness (Gluchmanova, 2015).

Table 3 reveals that art instructors in Higher Education are highly of moral and ethical issues in their immediate society, especially those that may influence their decision-making. This particular competency is critical for teachers because the acceptability of their decisions and actions depends on prevalent social norms and values and on existing laws of the state. Nowadays, teachers become more careful with their words, attitude, and behavior especially toward their students because any violation of the teachers' code of ethics, child-friendly policies, and gender-sensitive circulars may entail serious civil or legal implications.

Additionally, art instructors are highly competent and are very effective communicators. In other words, they can to explain concepts clearly and

concisely, with confidence, and permanently adapting their teaching styles to the characteristics of students (Muste, 2016). According to them, their mastery of teaching various subject areas is the outcome of teaching the same lessons every year and because they are trained to speak both Filipino and English languages aside from their respective mother tongues. Also, the learning competencies and the content standards that teachers need to develop among their students are simplified in the latest curriculum guide.

In the curriculum, art is integrated with music, physical education, and health to compose the MAPEH subject area. However, teachers are found to be more competent in music and dance than in visual art. This is obviously because singing and dancing are more fun and are more popular than drawing and painting, both in the school and outside. During big events in the community, school, or family, for example, the most common activities that people do are singing and dancing. In contrast, drawing and other art activities are less frequent and are only considered during poster-making contests. However, despite their limited personal engagement with visual arts, art teachers are still highly competent in terms of their art awareness and appreciation, and evaluation of students' art projects. During the interview, teachers commented that they find art lessons easier to teach and evaluate because they are guided by spirally programmed learning standards and competencies in curriculum manual.

Table 3

*Level of General Competencies of Art Instructors*

Competencies	Mean	QD
Have the ability to communicate clearly and effectively	4.1	High
Aware of present moral and ethical problems or issues in the society	4.2	High
Capable of doing other forms of art expression like music and dance	3.67	High
Capable of explaining personal views rationally	3.93	High
Able to understand, appreciate and evaluate art projects of other people	3.87	High
Overall	3.84	High

Accordingly, the personal characteristics of teachers determine their effectiveness in the classroom, and ultimately, on their student achievement (Stronge, 2017). The data in Table 4 show that art instructors are generally very highly competent, specifically in terms of maintaining a good reputation, creating positive relationships, and inspiring young artists. These desirable personal qualities are inherent in the teachers' role as second parents of students.

There were many things art teachers did to gain respect from their students. Often they provided art materials for students who did not have. They also assisted those who show difficulty in doing art projects, often encouraging them to create original, beautiful artworks. As observed, young learners easily like teachers who show concern for them, praise them for good outputs, and display patience when committing mistakes. This is why teachers who have 'caring' attitudes are dearly loved and trusted and enjoy a very strong relationship with their students. Also, because of this bond, teachers can easily inspire their art students to do creative projects. This finding supports the concept of Narinasamy and Logeswaran (2015) that teacher modeling, as part of Ethics of Care, plays a vital role in developing positive relationships between teachers and students.

Moreover, art instructors are highly competent in terms of applying new ideas in lessons and in making their students aware of the benefits of creating art projects. These findings result from teachers' exposure to various Internet sites, online research-based articles, journals, and tutorial videos on effective teaching pedagogies, specifically, those that are learner-centered and child-friendly. Also, the Department of Education is continuously monitoring public school teachers whether or not they are applying new instructional concepts and technologies they get from the seminars, workshops, and training that were conducted by the department.

Table 4

*Level of Desirable Personal Qualities of y Art Instructors*

Competencies	Mean	QD
Able to inspire young learners to create art projects	4.33	Very High
Able to apply new ideas in art and education	4.2	High
Have positive relationship with learners and fellow teachers	4.63	Very High
Able to communicate the goals of art	3.83	High
Possess a respectable image as a teacher	4.7	Very High
Overall	4.34	Very High

As revealed in Table 5, the overall level of competencies of art instructors is high. Looking closely at their respective means, the competencies on art and design got the lowest, while their desirable personal qualities obtained the highest. Having a range of moderate to very high levels of competencies, the overall result has positive implications on the capability of higher education art instructors in implementing the minimum learning standards stipulated in the curriculum. However, art instructors still need to improve on all areas considered in this study, especially on their art and design competencies. The findings further imply that instructional experts in Higher Education need to plan out and conduct more training-workshops and capability-building programs for art instructors, both in the local and national settings.

Table 5

*Summary Table on the Level of Competencies of Art Instructors*

Competency Areas	Mean	QD
Arts and Design Competencies	3.40	Moderate
Teaching Competencies	3.84	High
General Competencies	3.95	High
Desirable Personal Qualities	4.34	Very High
Overall	3.88	High

### Challenges Experienced by Art Instructors

Although the quantitative data in this study revealed that art instructors possess most of the content and pedagogical competencies in teaching art, they are also facing two big challenges, namely: their lack of art materials for students’ use and their lack of experiential learning on 3-dimensional art forms. Excerpts from actual sample responses of the teacher participants during the interview are presented in Frame 1 and Frame 2, respectively.

## Frame 1

*Lack of Materials*

“...we cannot give art materials to all our students because they are intended for our visual aids, reports, and test papers...”

“...many of my students did not have their art materials even if I told them to bring...”

“...my students say they don't have enough money to buy art materials...”

“...they always forget to buy...”

As shown, the inadequacy of art materials is due to schools' insufficient funds, low parental income, and the care free attitude of students towards school projects. In most higher education institutions, their Maintenance and Other Operating Expenditures funds are not enough to buy all the necessary materials that students need for the entire school year because their main purpose is to finance major school projects and programs. Hence, teachers could not always provide their students with bond paper and other art materials, such as paint, wood, glue, etc. Also, even if they have sent a notice to parents to secure these materials for their children's art activities, many fail because of financial, time, and other constraints. These concerns are common in communities that are far from school supply stores. Moreover, many children usually forget to tell their parents about the materials their teachers tell them to bring. Sometimes, art teachers tried to address this problem by using alternative and recyclable materials instead.

Kisida and Bowen (2019) confirm that engaging with art is essential to the human experience. Almost as soon as motor skills are developed, children communicate through artistic expression. The arts challenge us with different points of view, compel us to empathize with “others,” and allow us to reflect on the human condition.

Frame 2

*Lack of Experience in 3-Dimensional Art*

“...I don’t have skills or talent in art...”

“...I have never tried making any kind of sculpture...”

“...the training I attended four years ago was about teaching MAPE in general...not really focusing about the actual creation of art projects...”

“...I tried watching T-shirt printing on the Internet, but I did not have materials...”

“...I only know about encoding...I do not know about using a computer in doing art projects...”

“...our school does not have materials for making sculpture...”

“...I remember we were not taught how to make crafts and other 3-D art in my college art subject...”

“...I am very busy with teaching-related work...I have no time to make art...”

Additionally, teachers acknowledged that they still lack experiential knowledge in both creating and teaching 3-Dimensional art projects. Examples of these projects include but are not limited to mat weaving, tie-dying, clay sculpture, paper maché, T-shirt printing, and computer-assisted projects. According to the humanities curriculum guide, these topics are taught during the second semester of the school year. However, many instructors do not engage in 3-Dimensional art projects because they require a more complicated procedure and take time for students to finish. These are the kind of art projects that need special materials that are not found anywhere and cannot be bought in any store. Moreover, teachers admit they have difficulty in teaching animation and other computer-assisted art projects. Teachers and school heads alike are hesitant to use school computers for students’ hands-on art experiences because they fear these facilities might break down. These aforementioned scenarios may appear to be why many art teachers do not teach 3-dimensional art, especially in the latter part of the school year, when schools become busy preparing for various year-end programs.

Buckman (2013) confirm that art teachers need to be aware of the various aspects of art: the history, the past and contemporary forms, the philosophies, and the relationships of all these to the making of art. Moreover, art teachers should have functional knowledge in colors and shapes, the processes and

principles of shaping materials, and the basic technologies involved in making two-dimensional and three-dimensional art projects. These aforementioned art and design competencies help teachers experience professional growth.

## CONCLUSIONS

Implications of the Results toward college teaching and learning

Learning the concepts and practical uses of Art (also known as visual or fine art) is very important to both the teachers and students. According to the Liberty Classical Academy (2018), engaging in Art develops positive habits, attitudes, and behavior among students. It also enhances their creativity and critical thinking skills, including language and numerical skills. Moreover, meaningful art experience was found to have a positive impact on students' academic performance, attitudes to school, and perceptions of learning (Mahgoub, 2015). Hence, the revitalization of art education in basic education is deemed important to achieve or even surpass the minimum learning standards of the K-12 curriculum.

The future of the Philippine Higher Education art teaching and learning depends on a carefully planned, well-implemented, and consistently monitored art program and the full participation of higher education planners, school heads, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. Although the curriculum is already in place, there is an obvious problem in terms of the level of readiness among the teachers. Most teachers believe they need to become artists before they can effectively teach art in the classroom. Hence, a top-to-bottom cascading of expertise from art practitioners to elementary teachers will help bridge their respective competency gaps and transform them to become artist-teachers. Even if they were be either highly or very highly competent in various indicators, they agree that they still have a lot to learn about art and art education. In connection with the findings, there is a felt need for district or division administrators to conduct more training and workshops on actual 3-D art creation, especially those that make use of computer applications. For better impact, the resource persons of these enhancement activities should not just education experts but also art practitioners.

The emphasis of college teaching and learning is the development of artistic expression and cultural literacy among students through student-centered, and performance-based learning poses a great challenge to the whole educational system. This entails great preparation on the administrators, teachers, parents,

and the students, especially in creating 3-dimensional art projects. To help address this particular challenge, the school administration needs to strengthen its community relations to tap alternative human and material resources in the immediate environment. Even in these modern times, the 'Bayanihan' value of Filipinos is still evident among school and community officials and private individuals. The collaborative potentials of these human resources are vital for establishing a meaningful and sustainable art program in public basic education schools.

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