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## **Performance in Art Nature and Meaning among Fine/Applied Arts and Theatre Arts Undergraduates in Nigeria: A Case of University of Benin**

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### **Abstract**

*The study investigated the difference in performance in Art, Nature and Meaning between Fine/Applied Arts and Theatre Arts undergraduates in the University of Benin. The study was designed to find out if there is a difference in performance between undergraduates of Fine/Applied Arts and Theatre Arts in Art, Nature and Meaning and if the level of difficulty of Art, Nature and meaning has any influence on the students' performance. The study was delimited to undergraduates in Fine/Applied Arts and Theatre Arts who registered for Art, Nature and Meaning in the University of Benin. As a result, two Research Questions were raised. It was discovered that there is no significant difference in performance in Art, Nature and Meaning between undergraduates of Fine/Applied Arts and Theatre Arts in University of Benin. Data for this study were generated from official records of the two departments under investigation. In other words, scores of candidates duly approved by the Departmental Boards of Examiners of the two departments were obtained for the study. The statistical technique adopted for data analysis was the t-test for independence samples and it was found out that there was no significant difference in performance in Art nature and meaning*

*between undergraduates of Fine/Applied Arts and Theatre Arts. Consequently it was concluded that, the performance of the groups was not different.*

### **Introduction**

Art, Nature and Meaning is a foundation course offered by students in Fine/Applied Arts, Theatre Arts and Mass Communication Departments in the University of Benin, Benin City. It is a one hundred level course with the code FAF 113/123 the course designed to acquaint the students with a world-view of the Arts, was taught by the Theatre Arts Department for over a decade but it returned to the Fine/Applied Arts Department a few years ago.

The study will find out if these students with similar background will perform differently in this compulsory course that is closely related to the two departments.

The comparison will reveal if there is a departure from the intended focus of the course while the findings will further clarify the degree of relevance of the course to the two departments.

It is important at this juncture to re-affirm that it is the statutory responsibility of the various departments to clarify in the prospectus areas where students should select their elective courses from. This is usually born out of considerations to the level of difficulty of the suggested elective courses, proximity, and relevance of such courses to the career of the students amongst others. Students have on various occasions made, wrong choices from available options by offering elective courses that take virtually all the time required for their major without recourse to the level of difficulty involved in such courses. Consequently in such situations chances of students performing poorly cannot be ruled out.

This study therefore will reveal the state of affairs in FAF 113/123, while the findings will assist the two departments in adjusting the course to suit the purpose of its selection and Students will be properly re-assigned to the right courses should the need arise.

To provide a theoretical basis for this study a number of related materials have been consulted: The nature of the Arts; the teacher factor in the teaching and learning process; influences of the environment on the teaching and learning process and issues involved in the prescription of compulsory electives and curriculum implication.

Visual Arts often contracted and referred to as Art or Fine Arts is offered in most institutions of Higher learning. It is widely taught at all levels of our education system in Nigeria. The following definitions of art have been noted for this study. National Educational Research Council (NERC) and the Universal Free Primary Education (UPE) document (1977) portrayed art as the visual expression of man's thoughts or feelings directed to his craving for the good. Emokpae (2001:4) similarly defined art as 'the expression of one's inner mind with the use of materials in a visual form' In the same vein, Wangboje (1989) made effort to describe art as both a process and product, stressing that it involves the manipulation of certain materials to produce an end result.

Emokpae (2001) also identified the following areas: Fine Art, which he says are mainly used for decoration purposes e.g. drawing, painting and sculpture, Applied Art, serving the commercial purposes Graphics, Textiles Ceramics, Printing and Performing Art. Others are Art History, Art Education Craft, and Architectural Design.

In summary, Emokpae has been able to identify two major branches which are performing and Visual Arts. (Imonikeke, 2009) went on to clarify the grouping as follows Performing arts are: Music; Dance and Drama, while the Visual Arts are as follows; Drawing, Ceramics, Painting, Sculpture; Textiles; Graphics. Today Metal design and Fashion Design have been identified as major units and areas recognized for undergraduate specialization as obtainable in the University of Benin, Benin City, while Painting, Sculpture and Drawing are referred to as the Fine Arts, Graphics, Textile; Metal Design, and Fashion Design are the Applied Arts.

Today Visual Arts is taught as a double-major subject in schools. It is also no longer combined with other subjects at the tertiary level (Imonikebe, 2005).

By virtue of its recognition as double-major, a double period is expected to be allotted to the subject every week for practical work and a single period for the teaching of art theory in post-primary schools in Nigeria (Imonikebe, 2005)

The nature of the course therefore leaves the artist with a lot of freedom to manipulate his environment as described further by Wangboje. "What is unique about art is that you can create new things and solve artistic problems in an individual way. Art is not mathematics where there is one correct answer to a set of problems" (Wangboje 1982:1). Art therefore is one

sensitive area that should be given attention at the formative levels such as the secondary school, also by virtue of its foundational position to all learning (Imonikebe, 2006). Baïke (1985) noted with delight the uniqueness of art as requiring longer hours of instructions, examination and supervision and its sensitive nature which makes it distinct from other disciplines.

Consequently, the teacher plays an indispensable role in the teaching and learning process. Trained teachers perform better than untrained teachers. (Fagbulu, 1972; Imogie 1999; Urevbu 1997)

The environment has a far reaching effect on the teaching and learning the Visual Arts.

Urevbu (1997) lamented the Chaotic condition of our schools and has doubts about the quality of learning that goes on in such situation. There is no doubt that a good teacher will perform in any condition but he will certainly do better in a situation where facilities are available.

Students' home background has been found to affect their attitudes to Visual Arts teaching and learning. There are conscious and unconscious views held by parents and guardians about art. (Imonikebe, 2009)

The type of influence the school authorities have on the subject-matter would certainly affect the subject either negatively or positively. (NPE, 1989; Aghenta and Arubayi, 1981; Aïgbomien, Iyamu 2001; Bell-Gam, 1998; Nwagwu, 1984, Imonikebe) Osakwe (1995) Observed that selection of learning experiences is not only a significant step in the curriculum process but very important stage in curriculum.

Commenting on criteria for the selection of learning experiences, the curricularist is expected to be familiar with modern principles of learning in order to successfully select the desired learning experiences.

It will be proper to add that modern researches in this area should be sort to improve the quality of curriculum planning in contemporary society. As a matter of fact, selection of learning experiences could be influenced by patterns of organization of curriculum or design of curriculum.

The following criteria have been identified for the selection of learning experiences: Validity, comprehensiveness, relevance to life, suitability, variety, cumulation and relevance to learner's interest (Aïgbomian &Iyamu; 2001; Bellgam; 1994; Onwuka, 1985 and Mkpa 1987).

### **Statement of problem**

Art, Nature and Meaning is one foundational course that has brought together all the three departments of the Faculty of Arts located at the Ekenwan Road Campus of the University of Benin, Benin City. One major factor effecting students learning is that is it becoming increasingly difficult for a single lecturer to cope with the increasing number of students before the information and mass communication, offering the course, a situation that can readily affect the performance of any of the three departments involved. Before the introduction of Mass Communication department, only Theatre Arts students took the course with Fine/Applied Arts students but now an affair of the three departments. It has therefore become imperative to assess the performance of students in order to properly guide the students .It is however sad that from the inception of this course no assessment has been carried out to evaluate products of his course in Fine/ Applied and Theatre Arts departments, University of Benin.

### **Research question**

The question which has prompted this study therefore is:

- Is there a difference in performance in Art Nature and Meaning between Fine/Applied Arts and Theatre Arts undergraduates in the University of Benin?

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is to find out if there is a difference in performance between undergraduates in Fine Applied Arts and Theatre Arts Departments in Art, Nature and Meaning.

Furthermore, the study is expected to identify the implication of the results to the level of difficulty and relevance of the course to the two departments.

### **Hypothesis**

One Hypothesis was formulated to answer the question raised in this study:

- There is no significant difference in performance in Art, Nature and Meaning between undergraduates of Fine/Applied Arts and Theatre Arts in University of Benin.

### **Scope/Delimitation**

All one hundred level students of Fine/Applied Arts and Theatre Arts Departments who registered for Art, Nature and Meaning (FAF 113) were involved in the study.

### **Research design**

The design of this study is ex post facto, since the research did not intend to manipulate any variables. The data were collected after events of interest have occurred. (Badmus, 1974; Ehiamentalor and Nwadiani, 2002)

### **Population of the study**

The population of the study was constituted by all one hundred level students in the Fine/Applied Arts and Theatre Arts Departments, University of Benin, Benin City.

### **Sample and sampling technique**

A target group of all the students who took Art, Nature and Meaning (FAF 113) from Fine/Applied Arts and Theatre Arts were involved in the study.

### **Instrument for data collection**

The examination scores of the two departments in Art, Nature and Meaning were obtained from the examination officers of the two Departments with the permission of their Heads of Departments. The scores obtained had been approved by the various Departmental Boards of Examiners.

### **Method of data analysis**

The statistical technique for the Data Analysis was based on the t-test for independent samples. The t-test statistics is useful in virtually all situations be it large or small samples, independent or correlated (Owie, 2001).

Table I shows that the calculated t-value is 0.443, and since the calculated t value of 0.443 is less than the table value of 1.96, the researcher will fail to reject the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in performance in Art, Nature and Meaning between undergraduates of Fine/Applied Arts and Theatre Arts Departments, University of Benin. This result shows that, there is no significant difference in performance of Fine/Applied Arts and Theatre Arts students in Art, Nature and Meaning.

### **Discussion**

The Hypothesis has revealed that there is no significant difference in performance in Art, Nature and Meaning between undergraduates of Fine/Applied Arts and Theatre Arts.

The calculated of t value 0.445 was less than the table t-value table value of 1.96. It is implied that the performance of the undergraduates in the two departments is related or similar (they did not differ).

This finding is not however surprising considering the fact that a trained teacher would successfully impart knowledge to the learner. The importance of formal training was stressed as well as the place of effective instruction (Nwagwu 1984; Imogie 1999; Badmus and Omoifo, 1998). Incidentally, the lecturer who taught the course holds a Postgraduate Diploma in Education, and a doctorate degree in Art history. There is no doubt that he brought his expertise to bear in delivering the goods to the learners.

The finding also corroborates the assertion of Bruner's theory (1960) when he noted that any subject could be taught to the learner at any level in an intelligible manner. Methods of teaching therefore and who teacher what, and availability of conducive learning environment count in the teaching and learning process (Imonikebe, 2009)

### **Conclusion**

The study was undertaken to find out if there is a difference in performance in Art, Nature and Meaning between, undergraduates of Fine/Applied Arts and Theatre in the University of Benin.

One Hypothesis was formulated:

*There is no significant difference in performance in Art, Nature and Meaning between undergraduates of Fine/Applied Arts and Theatre Arts in the University of Benin.*

The study involved all students in the Fine/Applied Arts Theatre Arts who registered for Art, Nature and Meaning. The design of the study was ex post facto research and the method of data collection was procurement of students scores in Arts Nature and Meaning from the two departments.

The scores were subjected to statistical analysis and the t-test for independent samples was used to analyse the data. All the tests were conducted at the significance level of 0.05.

### **Findings**

Based on the analysis of data, the following finding was made, that there is no significant difference in performance in Art, Nature and Meaning between undergraduates of Fine/Applied Arts and Theatre Arts. The implication is that the performance of students in Fine/Applied Arts Theatre Arts is related.

Based on the finding of this study, the following conclusions have been drawn. The performance of undergraduates of Fine/Applied Arts and Theatre Arts in Art, Nature and Meaning was related, which also goes to suggest that

the level of difficulty or otherwise of the course is the same for both departments.

Furthermore, the teacher and his method of teaching, the learning environment and level of difficulty of the course had no negative effect on the performance of Art, Nature and Meaning, therefore, the course is relevant to the two departments.

### **Recommendation**

The result showed that students in the two departments studied did not perform differently. As a result, there was no departure from the objectives of the course as expected of the teacher and students.

Lecturers with formal training in the art teaching should be encouraged to teach this course more especially as students enrolment in this course is on the increase. Conducive environment for teaching should be created and sustained in order to achieve similar result in subsequent academic sessions.

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**Table I:** t-test summary of Difference in performance of Art Nature and Meaning between Undergraduates of Fine/Applied Arts and Theatre Arts

Group	N	X	SD	DF	Cal. T	Level of Significance
Theatre Arts	43	65.3	8.39	42	0.44	0.05
Fine/Applied Arts	23	67.1	12.65	22		

$p > 0.05$