

RESEARCH PAPER
**SUBMISSION OF ART STUDIO-BASED ASSIGNMENTS:
STUDENTS EXPERIENCE**

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ABSTRACT

Attitudes toward submission of assignment by students have been a major concern for educationists. On several occasions, authorities have complained about students' lateness or persistent appeals for extension in submitting their assignment. In this study, the reasons why art students are reluctant to complete their studio assignments on time are critically examined. Both quantitative and qualitative data, derived from survey and interviews were used to examine students' attitudes and investigate their experience. The study revealed that although procrastination is a challenge to students as suggested by empirical studies, students procrastinate because they struggle to conceptualize and ideate the concepts. The percentage of females who submit was greater than males although the outcome was not statistically significant ($p=0.50$). Age ($p=0.044$), area of specialization ($p=0.001$) and academic level ($p=0.084$) were found to be statistically significant in terms of submission ratings. Although factors such as too many assignments at a time, access to studio, waiting to use equipment and availability of space were found to be issues delaying assignment submissions, students inability to conceptualize, ideate and gather materials appear to be challenges confronting them. An effective approach to the challenges is the teaching and understanding of art conceptualization, ideation and provision of materials. The increase in student numbers must go with increase in infrastructure and equipment if the best is required from these students.

Keywords: *Studio, Art, Assignment, Late submission*

INTRODUCTION

Art as a subject is undoubtedly a practical one which entails the use of skills in developing designs to produce an artefact. Unlike other subjects that are theoretically inclined, the disciplines under art such as painting, sculpture,

ceramics and the likes require an appreciable amount of time in the studio in order to produce compelling works. The teaching of the subject is therefore exploratory and studio based. It involves active practical demonstrations on the topics for better comprehension by the learners.

Art is traditionally taught using an approach similar to the 3Ps approach of foreign language learning (Gabrielatos, 1994; and Johns *et al.*, 2003). The 3Ps stand for Presentation; where the instructor gives information in a form of lecture; Practice; where the students work with the information they have acquired by doing some few exercises, and Production; where the students consolidate what they have learnt, usually by doing individual assignments or working collaboratively with others and submitting for assessment.

Attitudes toward timelines for submission of assignment by students have been a major concern for educationists. On several occasions, authorities have complained about students' lateness or persistent appeals for extension in submitting their assignments. In view of this, several institutions in Ghana and all over the world have laid down principles on late submission of work. For example, if you submit an assignment late, without an agreed extension, you will incur a penalty. If your assignment is up to a week late, you will incur marks penalty. If it is up to two weeks late, further deductions are made. In few cases, students defer the module and resume their studies when they can devote sufficient time to complete the module successfully. Steel (2007) revealed that procrastination was very universal among university students when issues of assignments submission come to the fore.

Schraw *et al.*, (2007) described it as unnecessarily postponing or avoiding tasks that must be completed. Empirical findings have revealed that procrastination is a reason for delay in submission of assignments (Ferrari *et al.*, 1995). A study revealed that 80 to 95% of students admitted to procrastinating (Ellis and Knaus, 1977) while 50% of students chronically procrastinate (Day *et al.*, 2000) and among chronic procrastination, 15 to 20% were adults (Harriott and Ferrari, 1996). Using factor analysis, Solomon and Rothblum (1984) found that fear of failure and task aversiveness were the primary reasons for procrastinating, with

the former explaining 49% of the variance in why students procrastinate, and the latter accounting for 18% of the variance. The fear of failure factor includes items which relate to evaluation anxiety and overly perfectionistic standards for one's performance, and low self-confidence. In contrast, the task aversiveness factor comprises items which reflect a dislike of engaging in academic activities and a lack of energy. The authors conclude that there are two groups of procrastinators at the undergraduate level: (a) a relatively small but extremely homogenous group of students who report procrastinating as a result of fear of failure, and (b) a relatively heterogeneous group of students who report procrastinating as a result of aversiveness of the task.

The assessment for many university courses includes some form of assignment which students complete individually or as groups, and submit for evaluation. Assignment management involves collection, date stamping, redistribution to tutors for marking, collation of results, and return of assignments to students (Darbyshire, 2000). Tregobov (1998) simplifies it to submission, recording, marking, and return. Assignments play pivotal roles in enabling students to secure higher marks. Empirical findings from Maraseni and Cockfield, (2006) revealed that late submission of assignments were indicators that students are weak in terms of performance. Their findings revealed that the gender type did not play any role in terms of 'on-time' and 'late' assignment submission and the highest group of late submission was from the age group of 20-25 years. Their study could not however establish the reasons behind late submissions. Significantly, at examination board meetings of faculties, it is becoming a common phenomenon when lecturers do not submit marks for some students simply because the students did not submit their assignments for assessment. It is therefore expedient that the various reasons behind students' late submission of their studio assignments be studied to help improve performance and achievements. Two overarching research questions guided this

study; firstly, what reasons do art students cite for not finishing their studio assignment on time and secondly what pedagogical system has been structured by lecturers to motivate students to submit studio assignment on time?.

METHODS

Design, Population and Sampling

The study employed in tandem qualitative and quantitative research approaches to examine the factors that influenced art students' inability to turn in studio assignments on time. A structured questionnaire was used to obtain data from 2nd, 3rd, and 4th years' students of the Faculty of Art, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) offering specialized programmes in Ceramics, Sculpture and Painting. These three specialized courses were purposively chosen because they are heavily loaded with studio-practice. Purposive sampling method is most effective when one needs to study a certain educational domain with knowledgeable experts within (Tongco, 2007). The population size of these specialized programmes was 374 students (Ceramics 96, Sculpture 114 and Painting 164). The study employed the stratified random sampling because the categories of the strata were thought to be distinct and important for the research interest. This random sampling technique was to select 76 students from Ceramics, 97 from Sculpture and 147 specializing in Painting. The method was used to ensure that each specialized programme had equal chance of being represented in the study to play down on bias. In all, 324 students were sampled for the study. It was also expedient that since the study was on a phenomenon that involved teaching and assignment submission, lecturers should be sampled for the study. Out of 24 lecturers, the convenient sampling technique was used to sample 14 lecturers for the study.

Questionnaire design and Case study interview

A structured questionnaire made up of three sections was developed for the study. The first section was developed in order to capture

information of the students. It consisted of seven questions designed to capture the students' age, gender, academic level, area of specialization, residence, amount of time spent in studio, and peer influence. The items on the questionnaire were mostly closed ended ones because statistical validity was a prime objective. However there were some open ended ones meant to capture the qualitative data from the respondents. A three point likert scale consisting of 28 questions was developed based on experts' opinion and from empirical research findings in order to ascertain the various factors that influence students' inability to turn in assignments on time. The 3-point scale was as follows: (3) Never, (2) Sometimes, (1) Always. The questions were positively and negatively worded in order to make up for the respondents' inclination to "agree" with the questions (Tavsancil and Keser, 2002).

The questionnaire was reviewed and validated by three (3) art education experts who had over fifteen years studio-practice experience. Content validity was ensured at the initial phase of validity and reliability studies of the scale before a pilot study was carried out involving 20 students from the various programmes. Construct validity of the scale was done by factor analysis and item analysis. A pilot test was done among 40 randomly selected students in the Department of Industrial Art and Department of Painting and Sculpture at KNUST. The validity and reliability studies enabled the elimination of seven questions leaving 21 item questions that was administered to the respondents. The pilot studies brought to the fore the need to describe studio art concepts on the questionnaire to facilitate the understanding of the questions.

The description was also very important since it allows a stronger cross-disciplinary connection. *Art concept* is the visualizations before the production process begins. It involves a series of sketches and illustrations, which communicates ideas, moods and designs to assist the production purposes; *ideation* is the process of creat-

ing new ideas; *finishing* an art calls for considerable skill. The term "finishing" is used in art to describe a whole series of processes and operations which improve the properties and appearance of the artwork and finally turn it into that exquisite artefact; *access to studio* is the degree of right to entry into the art studio both outside and within the normal school periods; *acquisition of materials* refer to how easily materials are made available to the students by purchasing or school supply; *waiting to use equipment* refers to the amount of time spent while waiting to use a particular equipment or tool because it is being used by other students. The respondents' were informed of the purpose of the study and the process of completing the anonymous questionnaire successfully was explained to them. The respondents were allowed to complete the questionnaire without the researchers' presence.

Furthermore, case study interviews with the students and lecturers assisted in successful completion of the study. Ultimately one is getting into students and teachers thoughts and beliefs, thus, case study interview seem needed. The analysis of lecturers' dissemination of information to students enabled the triangulation of data.

Data Analysis

In order to make meaning out of the responses from the questionnaire, the responses were edited and coded using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 17 to identify related factors. The use of chi-square test enabled the study to assess statistical significance and the association between the various variables. Interview responses were coded based on themes, topics, ideas, concepts, terms, phrases and keywords.

Limitations

The analyses in this study are based on data from the questionnaire and succinct interviews. It is not likely to gain full and direct access to the internal state of these art students through interviews. To address this, the study adopted

Waller (2005) idea of readers making their own understanding and meanings by presenting relevant details of the interview by the various year groups and lecturers. Also the purpose was to show factors that influence students' inability to submit studio assignments on time. A large part involved the study of students' thinking, behaviour, and their internal states (Chin and Brown, 2000).

RESULTS

Students rankings on studio practice processes

In the survey, the students were asked to rank the process of studio practice which they consider to be important variables for the completion of assignments. These processes of studio practice include concept, ideation, finishing, access to studio, acquisition of materials and the waiting time to use the equipment in the studios which were clearly defined to them. The results revealed that 32.42% of the students find difficulty in visualizing concepts for their assignment. Meanwhile 26.24% of the students had difficulties in ideating the concept and 24.07% of them experienced problems of acquisition of material which most times require funds. A sculpture student remarked:

I've never enjoyed rushing to submit my assignment or pleading with the lecturer for extension you know. I have always wanted to begin my assignment early but visualization of what to do takes most of the assignment period. Having struggled to go through my conceptual process, I am confronted with acquisition of the materials which involves some kind of financial footings.

Others also remarked that

...because most of our lecturers stress on creative thinking and originality, and I believe it is crucial in art, I have a challenge developing my concept. I am not a procrastinator. Idea development is my headache. I procrastinate because I am not good at

ideating the concept.

Finishing of the works and access to studio were not found to exert any significant influence on students' inability to submit assignment on time. Fig. 1 provides a summary of the rankings on studio practice processes.

Similarly, students were asked to rank the various factors that affect their late submission of assignment. These factors include understanding of the question, acquisition of materials, time frame, working space, lack of artistic skills and too many assignments at a time. Interestingly working space in the studio received the least rank of 4.94% as a factor militating against their early submission. Also, number of assignments, time allocated for assignment submission and understanding of the question also had 36(14.51%), 44(13.58%) and 36 (11.11%) respectively. Significantly, art skills and gathering of materials for the assignment received a larger endorsement as key factors causing late submissions. Responses from the interviews revealed clearly that some students delay simply because they have challenges that

border on artistic capabilities. They have issues starting the assignment because they struggle through visualization and they face financial challenges that affect materials acquisition. Fig. 2 summarizes the ranking results from the students sampled.

Analysis of submissions ratings

In terms of gender, the proportion of males and females who never submit their assignments on time are almost same, that is, 15.6% and 15.1% respectively. The percentage of males who sometimes submit on time was slightly higher than that of females, that is, 53.3% compared to 47.6%. However, the percentage of females (37.3%) who always submit on time was greater than the percentage of males (31.2). These outcomes are however not statistically significant as they show a large p-value of 0.50. In considering age as a function to submission ratings, 245 of the respondents representing 75.6% fall within the age bracket of 20-23 years, forming a larger share of the total responses. The least response came from those above 31years, which had nine respondents representing a mere 2.8%. The remaining is

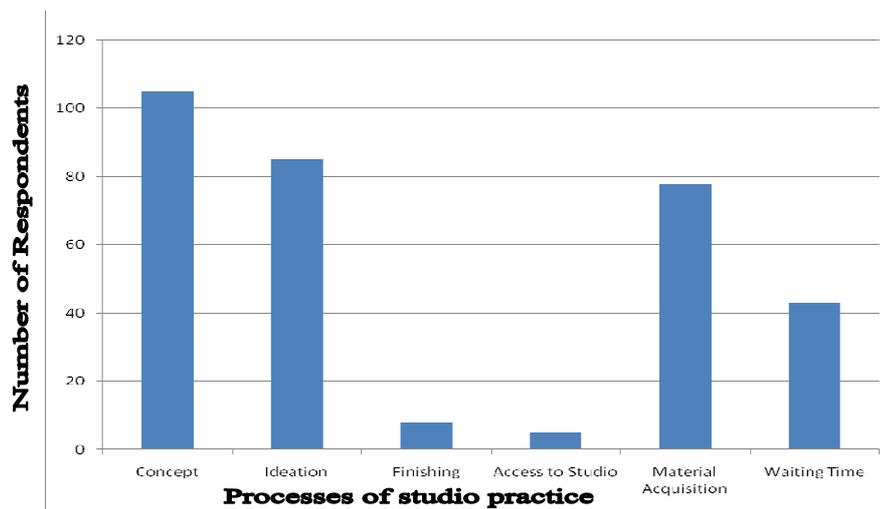


Fig. 1: Students rankings of studio processes that hinder the submission of assignment

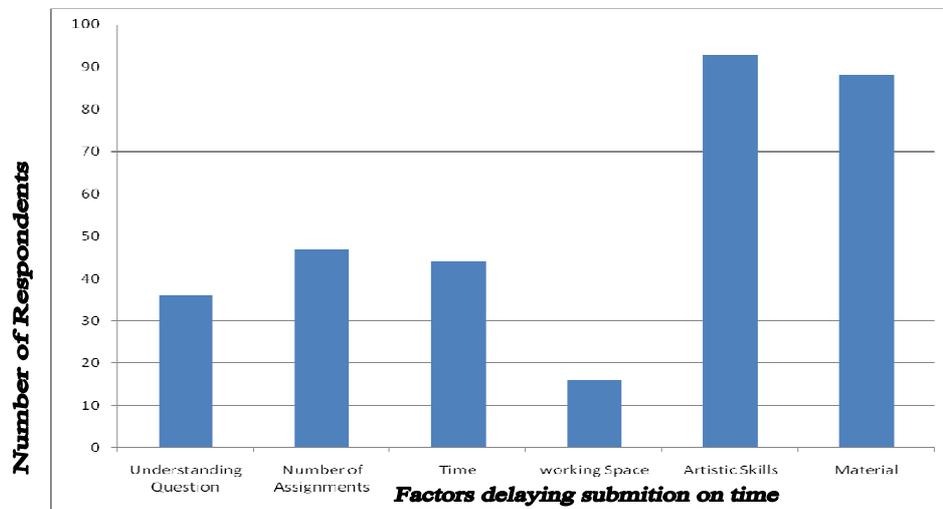


Fig. 2: Observed factors delaying submission of assignment on time

distributed between age groups 16- 19years, 24 -27years and 28-31years respectively as follows: 13 (4.0%), 41(12.7%) and 16 (4.9%).

Notably, majority of the respondents within the various age groups, sometimes submit their assignments on time. These are 61.5% for age group 16-19; 47.8% for age group 20-23; 53.7% for age group 24-27; 62.5% for age group 28-31; and 88.9% for those above 31 years. The proportions that never submit their assignments on time form a considerable minority for all age groups except those between 16-19 years. These responses show a low p-value of 0.044 that makes them statistically significant at 5%.

Table 1 presents the sample characteristics stratified by frequency of assignment submission. Reporting on specialization, 43.4% of ceramics students always submit their assignments on time. Those who sometimes submit form 40.8% while only 15.8% never submit on time. We observed a different outcome with students specializing in painting where only 19.6% submitted their assignments on time with a substantial 22% never submitting on

time and the majority of 57.7% sometimes was submitting on time. For those specializing in sculpture, a greater share (51.7%) sometimes submit on time, a considerable proportion of 19.5% never submit on time while 38.8% always submit their assignments on time. Statistically, these observations were significant at either 1% or 5% level of significance as observed from the very low p-value of 0.001 as evident in Table 1.

In terms of academic level, we observed similar patterns for all the levels. A smaller proportion of the students never submit their assignments on time irrespective of the academic level examined. For instance, only 22.3% of those in year 2 never submit their assignments on time compared to the majority of 48.2% who sometimes submit on time. Similarly, only 9.5% of those in year 3 never submit on time as compared to the larger 50.5% who sometimes submit on time. Again, only 15% of year 4 students never submit on time as compared to 54.2% who sometimes submit on time. In all the levels, those who always submit on time were quite substantial although they do not form the majority. The p-value (0.084) for these outcomes makes them statistically signif-

Table 1: Sample characteristics stratified by frequency of assignment submission

Variable	Frequency of Assignment Submission			Total	P-value
	Never	Sometimes	Always		
Gender					0.507
Male	31 (15.6)	106 (53.3)	62 (31.2)	199	
Female	19 (15.1)	60 (47.6)	47 (37.3)	126	
Age					0.044
16-19	4 (30.8)	8 (61.5)	1 (7.7)	13	
20-23	36 (14.7)	117 (47.8)	92 (37.5)	245	
24-27	8 (19.5)	22 53.7	11 26.8	41	
28-31	2 (12.5)	10 (62.5)	4 (25)	16	
Above 31	0 (0)	8 (88.9)	1 (11.1)	9	
Area of Specialization					0.001
Ceramics	12 (15.8)	31 (40.8)	33 (43.4)	76	
Sculpture	22 (22.7)	56 (57.7)	19 (19.6)	97	
Painting	14 (19.5)	76 (51.7)	57 (38.8)	147	
Academic Level					0.084
Year 2	25 (22.3)	54 (48.2)	33 (29.5)	112	
Year 3	10 (9.5)	53 (50.5)	42 (40)	105	
Year 4	15 (14.0)	58 (54.2)	34 (31.8)	107	
Student Residency					0.874
Campus	14 (15.6)	44 (48.9)	32 (35.6)	90	
Off campus	36 (15.3)	122 (51.9)	77 (32.8)	235	
Amount of Time					0.002
Strongly agree	17 (19.5)	51 (58.6)	19 (21.8)	87	
Agree	10 (10.2)	57 (58.2)	31 (31.6)	98	
Neutral	8 (10.9)	34 46.6	31 (42.5)	73	
Somewhat disagree	11 (20.4)	21 (38.9)	22 (40.7)	54	
Strongly disagree	4 (36.4)	1 (9.1)	6 (54.5)	11	
Peer Influence					0.877
Yes	10 (19.6)	30 (58.8)	18 (35.3)	51	
No	40 (15.0)	136 (51.1)	90 (33.8)	266	

The percentages are shown below the respective frequencies in the parentheses ().

icant only at 10% level of significance.

Larger chunks of the respondents had their residence off campus. For both subgroups, only smaller proportions never submit on time their assignment, i.e. 15.6% and 15.3% for campus and off campus residents respectively. However, the high p-value of 0.874 does not make outcomes in this group statistically significant. Interestingly, only 19.6% of those under peer influence never submit their assignments on time. Those who always submit make up 35.3% of the total while those who sometimes submit form a greater proportion, i.e. 58.8%. We observed a similar pattern for those who were not under peer influence as follows: 15% never submit; 33.8% always submit; and a substantial proportion of 51.1% sometimes submit on time. However, the large p-value does not lend statistical support to these outcomes.

Lecturers dissemination of information perceived by students

Since assignments were given by lecturers, lecturers were taken as an important influential factor of students' ability to submit assignment on time. The various teaching philosophies of the various lecturers were addressed by the students with the following opinions.

"I think in terms of teaching style, some of the lecturers do not provide adequate information to complete the assignment. Some lecturers' inability to communicate to explain the assignment as well as the information foundational to the assignment poses as an influential factor. In most cases, you actually get confused as to what he/she is expecting from us. I think they are very good lecturers, so I did expect them to be exquisite, very clear and supportive. I did not experience that" (2nd year students).

Other views include

"Every lecturer has a different teaching style and philosophies. Some lecturers are supportive and some are not and both ways affect

you differently. Some lecturers are unclear of their expectations of assignments given, they say they want this artistic design with a specific procedure, yet when you submit your work with that specific, they don't appreciate what you have done but rather appreciate using another criterion. They only look at the negatives not the positives. Their teaching-styles and their method of assessment are not very clear. That's really hard, because they say one thing, but mean something quite different. You don't know what to do to please them" (3rd year students)

In addition, most final year students' views touched on

"We have come to understand what they really want or we also don't really care about our grades (those who care are those with borderline CWA). Most of them have taught us in our diagnostic and sophomore years and we have become acquainted with their styles of teaching and assessment. We know what we should really do when working on his or her assignment, choose something he or she has an interest in, not what we really want because he is more likely to favour it and not critique it as much. When we do that we get acceptable grades, even though we don't agree to some of their favourite teaching and assessment methodologies" (4th year students).

Pedagogical methods to remediate late submissions of assignment perceived by lecturers

Based on the students responses, it became expedient that variables such as teacher communication techniques or teacher attitudes be analysed because the teacher is also a variable why students do specific things. Pedagogical strategies employed by lecturers to remediate poor assignment submissions were enormous and very dependent on the individual. Although most lecturers advocate or cite poor planning and procrastination as key issues confronting students' inability to submit assignment on

time, the issue of what pedagogical strategy exists or has been designed by lecturers struck a sensitive nerve and brought out divergent responses from them. The study summarizes some of the guiding ideals of lecturers concerning assignments and methods of remediation.

Students generally procrastinate and love to do things right on the deadline. I always inform them that my studio class is all about artistic thinking and development. All assignment I give should be done strictly according to instructions. Timelines for submissions are not negotiable. Due to increase in class size coupled with limited space and adequate facilities, it is expedient to start assignment early.

Clearly one could see that the lecturer has a well laid down scheme and there is no room for compromise.

Although I celebrate the best work of the assignments submitted by students, I place more emphasis on the negative aspects of the studio practices and works. To me hammering on the negatives enables the student not to repeat the same mistakes in subsequent assignments.

Results from students points to poor conceptualization, ideation and acquisition of materials. Interviews from lecturers on this matter revealed that the teaching of concepts is not part of the course content and that it is a topic taught at the senior high school visual art curriculum. They further remarked:

Teaching and learning of conceptualization and ideation seem a difficult challenge to both the teacher and the learner because one has to go into the student critical thinking process over a specific time frame. In my teaching I try to incorporate my own specific examples of my conceptualization processes to facilitate students understanding.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study vividly demonstrate that there are numerous factors affecting the timely submission of studio art practice assignments. The results indicate that acquisition of materials to complete assignments contribute to procrastinating their working time. This indicates that a huge proportion of the students spend much time on acquiring the needed materials which indeed involves spending some money. The study has revealed that those offering sculpture and painting are the most affected simply because their materials were not provided to them. It is suggested that the issue of acquiring materials for assignment submission should be the prerogative of the department and that it should be captured as part of their fees and materials supplied to students when assignments are given to enhance timely submission.

The study also found out that another key variable militating against the submission of assignment on time is the issue of students understanding of concepts and ideating the concepts. Concepts and ideation are two variables that are based on different issues and therefore cannot be aggregated as one data set. The students' understanding of concepts which slows down their timely submission could not just be related to their ability but also involve teachers' communication to explain the assignment as well as the information foundational to the assignment. The students' delay in turning in assignments could be due to lack of communication to a particular group of students that retain information in a different learning style than the teacher is used to presenting in the studio. We should understand that teachers can best promote students' interest in assignment submission by stimulating their willingness and urging them to start as early as possible when the instructions are very fresh on their minds. Also, lecturers can adopt the mastery goal structure and offer constructive and improvement-based praises and avoid pressuring students with too many assignments. This type of school climate allows students to have more opportunities to feel successful. Mastery goal

structure also provides more opportunities for students to work together rather than compete against each other in order to achieve their own individual goals for improvement (Linnenbrink and Pintrich, 2002; Linnenbrink, 2005; Haggis, 2003, 101). There has been a great deal of research on conceptions of teaching. Prosser and Trigwell (1998) distinguish basically two conceptions: teacher-focused and student-focused. Teacher-focused strategies are transmission theories of teaching; that is knowledge is conceived as being transmitted from expert teacher to inexperienced learner. The focus is on what the teacher does. In this vein, studio art teaching is a practical demonstration of what the learner should know and understand to follow when an assignment is given. Student-focused strategies see the focus as being on bringing about conceptual change in student's understanding of the world, and it is what students do to achieve understanding that is important, not what teachers do.

The creation of art cannot thrive without a good concept of designing. The creation of artefacts begins with the grasping of a concept after which an ideation will lead to stupendous designs. Without these, it is practically impossible to have an acceptable design made by students and if students do not know how to conceptualize and ideate, obviously they will delay in starting their assignment. This could be likened to Long (2009) anecdotal findings of which students struggled painfully to read, stumble over words in order to make effective use of their meaning. The same is evident in art where poor conceptualization and ideation lead to poor results. In order to achieve this, Nortey *et al.* (2013) argued for a more assertive intervention by teaching artists but of a very generative and open kind—a push not toward a specific aesthetics or approach, but a push toward in-depth exploration, analysis, spontaneous play and association, design development and revision.

Results from the sample characteristics of the submission ratings indicate that ceramics stu-

dents statistically are able to submit their assignment on time more than sculpture and painting. This could be attributed to the fact that ceramic materials in completing the assignment are catered for by the department whereas the other disciplines were not. This implies that the giving out of assignment must go with the provision of materials to facilitate students learning and practice. However, another variable such as teacher communication techniques or teacher attitudes towards assignment could be an influencing factor. The teacher is as much a variable in why students do specific things than the student themselves. It is worth noting that most art assignments can only be completed in the art studio and therefore increase in students' number should go with expanding infrastructure. van der Lem (2001) intimated that such academic practice in art and design can only develop if there is adequate infrastructure to support the development.

One key issue to effectively approach this issue of assignment submission is the need for lecturers and professors to examine behaviours both in class and outside class and their relationship with these students. As lecturers, we must be guided to know that our attitudes can push away students from us and obviously cause them to lose interest in the subject(s) we teach. Also, before the course is introduced, lecturers must be able to explain the objectives of the course and the requirement in finishing assignments. Barnett (1997) reiterates that students rarely change their study habits in response to receiving poor grades. In this vein, there must be a conscientious effort by the academic staff of every institution on the need to promote effective study habits which would obviously translate into students meeting submission deadlines.

CONCLUSIONS

It is evident that the challenge of assignment submission is significant and requires an effective approach in developing a course pedagogy which would design multiple reasons for lack of motivation so that we can reach students

who would otherwise remain unprepared (Starcher and Proffitt, 2011). With regards to students delay in starting their assignment, the paper finds expression in Chang (2010) that a self-monitoring strategy on the part of students will help generate improved academic performance and greater student motivation in submitting their assignment on time amid these challenges. The students request for an extension on assignments due date is, most perhaps, attributed to their struggle to conceptualize, ideate rather than poor time management. However, students must first make it a point to shun procrastination and motivate themselves to complete their assignment.

An effective approach will require the teaching of the fundamentals of whatever is being taught and in this vein the understanding of art conceptualization and ideation not neglecting the provision of materials and equipment by authorities. Art lecturers must understand the fact that in the 21st Century, lots of materials and any media can be used for painting and sculpture. It is therefore time for lecturers and students alike to accommodate the injection of new media into Art as in El Anatsui's works which are mostly made from found objects or Romuald Hazoume's paintings and sculptures which are made from earth colours and gallons/jerry cans respectively. Students can therefore find inexpensive mediums in their environments to express themselves in their art assignments/ projects.

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