

# Fostering Critical Thinking through Visual Arts in Education

Kizza Lydia H.

Faculty of Business and Management Kampala International University Uganda

## ABSTRACT

This review looks at how visual arts, particularly two-dimensional art forms like drawings and paintings, might help higher education students develop critical thinking skills in fields such as science, accountancy, linguistics, and psychology. Visual arts not only foster creativity, but they also necessitate analysis, interpretation, and problem-solving, all of which are basic components of critical thinking. By adding visual arts into curricula and evaluation procedures, educators can encourage active participation, multidisciplinary cooperation, and a deeper grasp of complicated subjects. This paper addresses the value of critical thinking in education, techniques for incorporating visual arts into other courses, and successful assessment methods for measuring students' critical thinking.

**Keywords:** Visual arts, critical thinking, education, higher education, interdisciplinary learning.

## INTRODUCTION

The potential of visual arts as a medium for education has been acknowledged for some decades and has recently gained renewed interest, especially in higher education. This review focuses on the potential and the experience of fostering critical thinking skills through visual arts in education. Critical thinking is deemed to be a key to successful and meaningful learning, as has been increasingly recognized. Hence, the review aims to illustrate the role of visual arts, in particular two-dimensional arts such as drawings and paintings, in the process of helping students in sciences, accounting, linguistics, and psychology enhance their critical thinking skills. In sum, through the course in Visual Arts for the Brain and the Mind, we aim to train students who can think critically and who display a scientific yet artistic approach to the problems they face [1, 2]. The review is structured as follows. In what follows, the title under which this review falls will be briefly expounded upon, while the relevance of the topic, especially in the context of the times we live in, will be further mentioned. In section two, the term critical thinking will be briefly unfolded, and the necessity of a critical thinker will be underscored, both in the academic world and in life more generally. In the following section, what is meant by arts and education will be spelled out as a prelude to what will be undertaken in the rest of the review: to illustrate our experience in fostering critical thinking skills through the visual arts in university teaching [1, 3].

### The Importance of Critical Thinking in Education

Critical thinking is an essential asset in education. It entails the ability to adequately analyze information that is presented in a given context, assess the reliability of information, labels, and other forms of communication from other people, and make independent, coherent judgments. Furthermore, critical thinking is the ability to rigorously make these judgments via the incorporation of foundational knowledge of specific topics, the interconnectedness of various types of intradisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary knowledge, and an understanding of the various processes that led to the creation and development of seminal ideas in these fields. It also includes an understanding of the various ways in which this knowledge can be creatively applied to new, novel, and controversial scenarios, serving to propose and evaluate potential solutions to optimize these solutions against a range of quantitative and qualitative criteria. The promotion of students' critical thinking skills is increasingly important, as adult success in the technological workforce depends on a heavy reliance on problem-solving and decision-making. These skills develop over time, largely through education, and can be notably assessed in students' analysis of academic data. The inability to think critically about facts, content, and information

often refers to a lack of academic readiness, which is associated with a lesser likelihood of earning a degree. Furthermore, typical of low-income students, critical thinking application skills suffer during their formal education and adulthood, resulting in decreased success in professional settings as a consequence of poor comprehension [4, 5].

### **Visual Arts as A Tool for Developing Critical Thinking Skills**

Visual arts serve as a powerful conduit to develop critical thinking skills among students. Visual arts encourage students from diverse backgrounds to engage with one another to hear and make connections with alternative perspectives. This promotes social and civic engagement, and different forms of visual arts provide a lens for students to interpret, analyze, and make critical observations about how people understand and function in this world. Art has a unique relationship with critical thinking as it encourages observation, interpretation, and self-expression. Visual art is a critical thinking skill because it causes a person to instinctively think in the ways a critical thinker does: analysis, comparison, interpretation, deduction, and problem-solving. Across the curriculum, educators draw upon various visual arts to reinforce the learning of scientific, cultural, and historical concepts. When students create visual art, they apply what they have learned, engaging in a process of critical thinking. Creating art involves solving problems and refining decisions regarding what is appropriate to include or exclude. For example, students need to look at a hieroglyphic image of Egypt to draw what they can infer may have occurred. Drawings often include details of clothing and makeup, architecture, and food. Educators guide students to justify their interpretations based on what they see in the image and what they have learned. Through these experiences, engaging with visual arts is a critical thinking skill because it uses multiple ways of thinking. It enhances the creative and critical thinking skills of the students and makes them future-ready [6, 7].

### **Strategies For Integrating Visual Arts Into The Curriculum**

- Embed the visual focus across the curriculum, not just within the art or art history curriculum. For instance, visual rhetoric and multiple assessments could be used in English and math to have students use visual forms of expression and reasoning.
- Collaborative projects with a team that includes content teachers can support visual expressions of the concepts behind the content.
- Use hands-on activities in combination with multisensory language instruction.
- Use visual images and technology in assessment. Writing prompts that ask students to verbalize what they are visualizing can have them use visual images before they begin an assignment.
- Assign multimedia presentations in which students support the visual images with a discourse that describes the logic, iterations, and resolutions that occurred as they select the images that they will use.
- Use technology to teach design ethics. Resources could be used in conjunction with lessons about the ethical treatment of intellectual property. Sharing the Fair Use Act could give art students insight into how they can legally use trademarks and images in artwork [8, 9]. Professional Development
- Provide resources to faculty. Teaching tips on blending the content with art integration, graphic organizers, and sources of public domain images...
- Hold workshops or conference sessions that make faculty aware of interdisciplinary tools. • Model lessons that use visual thinking exercises and challenge faculty to think about what and how they are teaching.
- Teach creativity, not art. Encourage faculty in subjects outside of art to offer suggestions to art educators on how to teach them how to teach the “perception” portion of the three-part draw-for-life approach, including creative and critical thinking skills [10, 11].

### **Assessment of Critical Thinking in Visual Arts Education**

Within the context of visual arts, where the production of an artwork requires a combination of competencies, is it more relevant to evaluate students according to their problem-solving and creative capacities rather than with a theoretical exam? At present, especially in formative education, it is important to provide effective assessment strategies to measure the analytical and reflective skills, as well as both the technical and creative abilities of the students. Several assessment strategies can be used for evaluating both the process and the product of the students' works in visual arts: the evaluation of a portfolio, evaluating pupils' projects, or completing them, and peer assessment and teamwork [12, 13]. The possibility of inventing a personal language allows students to equally demonstrate creativity through the search for a solution that better meets their expectations. The main obstacle in implementing

this type of assessment concerns the difficulty of defining criteria and performance standards through which to judge extremely subjective activities such as creating. Moreover, evaluating critical thinking does not allow a definitive judgment; students must be accurately monitored over time to gain a complete understanding and confidence in the accuracy of the assessment. For this reason, the monitoring of self-assessment activities is very suitable for formative assessment, because it encourages critical thinking, observation of the works, and discussion, immediately identifying the reasons for the choices made. In fact, formative assessment is especially important in a course of visual arts because it allows the individual student to reflect on the process of developing their work, avoid misunderstandings, and clarify teaching methods. Hence the importance of using clear assessment criteria laid down in the rubrics, as it provides the necessary feedback both to students and teachers that can be used to improve students' artwork. In experiments, differences between male and female students in their self-assessments were found. Girls have more faith in the teachers' evaluation and tend to blindly trust them; they are also less critical of their own work. These insights are also present in the declaration by the Italian National Observatory for School Development, where it is stated that self-monitoring has become very important for students in planning the path of their own production and personal growth because they use knowledge and related information as tools for a continuous process of verification of the quality of the production process via a change needed to continue learning [14, 15].

### CONCLUSION

The integration of visual arts into education offers a dynamic avenue to foster critical thinking skills in students across multiple disciplines. By engaging students in activities that require interpretation, problem-solving, and collaboration, visual arts encourage a deeper understanding of complex concepts and the development of independent, analytical thinking. Moreover, assessment strategies that focus on both the creative process and the final product can provide meaningful feedback, enabling students to reflect on their learning and refine their critical thinking skills. In a rapidly changing world, the promotion of critical thinking through visual arts prepares students for future challenges by equipping them with the ability to approach problems with creativity and rigor.

### REFERENCES

1. Chisolm MS, Kelly-Hedrick M, Wright SM. How visual arts-based education can promote clinical excellence. *Academic Medicine*. 2021 Aug 1;96(8):1100-4.
2. Ludvik MJ, editor. *The neuroscience of learning and development: Enhancing creativity, compassion, critical thinking, and peace in higher education*. Taylor & Francis; 2023 Jul 3.
3. Liang W, Fung D. Fostering critical thinking in English-as-a-second-language classrooms: Challenges and opportunities. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*. 2021 Mar 1;39:100769.
4. Ghanizadeh A, Al-Hoorie AH, Jahedizadeh S. *Higher order thinking skills in the language classroom: A concise guide*. Springer International Publishing; 2020 Sep 11.
5. Benes S, Alperin H. *The essentials of teaching health education: Curriculum, instruction, and assessment*. Human Kinetics; 2022.
6. Stutesman MG, Havens J, Goldstein TR. Developing creativity and other 21st century skills through theater classes. *Translational Issues in Psychological Science*. 2022 Mar;8(1):24. [aep-arts.org](https://aep-arts.org)
7. Schlichter CH. Talents unlimited: Thinking skills instruction for all students. In *Systems and models for developing programs for the gifted and talented* 2023 May 31 (pp. 433-455). Routledge.
8. Halverson ER. *How the arts can save education: Transforming teaching, learning, and instruction*. Teachers College Press; 2021.
9. Smith TJ. Critically reframing post-internet art toward the future of art education curriculum. *Art Education*. 2020 May 3;73(3):38-44.
10. Patston TJ, Kaufman JC, Copley AJ, Marrone R. What is creativity in education? A qualitative study of international curricula. *Journal of Advanced Academics*. 2021 May;32(2):207-30. [HTML]
11. Henriksen D, Creely E, Henderson M, Mishra P. Creativity and technology in teaching and learning: a literature review of the uneasy space of implementation. *Educational Technology Research and Development*. 2021 Aug 1:1-8. [academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu)
12. Colomer J, Serra T, Cañabate D, Bubnys R. Reflective learning in higher education: Active methodologies for transformative practices. *Sustainability*. 2020 May 8;12(9):3827.
13. Meijer H, Hoekstra R, Brouwer J, Strijbos JW. Unfolding collaborative learning assessment literacy: A reflection on current assessment methods in higher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*. 2020 Nov 16;45(8):1222-40. [tandfonline.com](https://www.tandfonline.com)

14. Zhu M, Doo MY. The relationship among motivation, self-monitoring, self-management, and learning strategies of MOOC learners. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education*. 2022 Aug;34(2):321-42.
15. Guo L. The effects of self-monitoring on strategy use and academic performance: A meta-analysis. *International Journal of Educational Research*. 2022 Jan 1;112:101939.

**CITE AS: Kizza Lydia H. (2024). Fostering Critical Thinking through Visual Arts in Education. EURASIAN EXPERIMENT JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES, 5(3):85-88**