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Motivation: A Viable Tool for Boosting the Performance of Female Students in Visual Art Practical Lessons

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Abstract: ***It is worth noting that the subjects' students choose to study in the Senior High Schools' impact on their educational and career options in the future. However, single sex schools are seen as offering sex biased Visual Arts elective subjects whiles the choice of electives for mixed schools are normally male driven in Ghanaian Senior High Schools. Female students who are not fortunate to find themselves in schools which offer more 'male friendly' electives are seriously disadvantaged at the tertiary level. To unearth the reasons why the gender disparity among elective Visual Arts subjects persist and to verify if the motivation has an effect on female student performance in the practical component of Visual Arts, a qualitative research that administered questionnaire and observation was undertaken to solicit data from 180 respondents in four selected Senior High Schools in Ashanti Region of Ghana. The findings revealed that the Visual Arts subjects, male students showed interests were frowned upon by female students because they felt incapacitated to pursue them. Yet, the study shows that if female students are motivated, there is a high possibility of recording high performances in their Visual Arts practical examinations. Therefore, the study recommends that female students who pursue Visual Arts must be motivated. The study concludes that Visual Arts female teachers must practice the visual arts to serve as a potent motivational tool for Visual Arts female students.***

Keywords: Female Students, Visual Art lessons, Motivation, Gender Disparity

1. Introduction

On several platforms, statements made by government communicators, heads of schools and other government officials, indicate that the standard of education in Ghana is improving [1], [2].This, they claim, is seen in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and the West African Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSSCE) results released by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) in respect of final year Junior and Senior High School (JHS and SHS) students respectively. Contrary to these public statements, other individuals also claim that students' performance are not encouraging and attribute this to several factors which either influence JHS and SHS students' or their learning environment such as lack of facilities, qualified and experienced teachers [3], [4]. These perceptions are in parallel with the exact issues influencing the performance of female students in Visual Arts subjects in Ghana's educational system. While women's advocacy groups are preaching that what men can do, women can equally do [5], the reality in SHS's is that girls can hardly compete with the boys in majority of Visual Arts practical lessons.

The study of Visual Arts comprises subjects in two-dimensional and three-dimensional (2-D and 3-D) art forms. The 2-Ds include Graphic Design, Textiles and Picture Making. On the other hand, the 3-Ds comprise of Basketry, Leatherwork, Sculpture, Ceramics and Jewelry. The teaching syllabus for Visual Arts reports that each student is expected to offer three arts subjects: General Knowledge in Art which is compulsory and two other art subjects; one from the 2-D and the other from the 3-D groups [6]. Fulfillment of this requirement depends largely on the availability of specialist teachers, requisite studio facilities, tools, equipment and relevant raw materials [7].

However, the selection or choice of electives is always limited by the range of elective subjects offered in a school and this hinders the scope of what technical and creative skills students opting for Visual Arts can attain. However, personal observation as a Senior High School Visual Arts teacher for ten years reveals that students of particular gender show more interest in some elective subjects than others. Empirical evidence is the study conducted by [8], which revealed that sculpture was the least preferred elective subject by girls in four schools they studied because it demands much energy and effort, involves using sharp tools and most at times carving of heavy materials. Other subjects like ceramics and textiles are regarded as girls friendly because they have need of less energy. As a result, most single sex schools are seen as offering sex biased Visual Arts elective subjects whiles the choice of electives for mixed schools are normally male driven. This shows a clear gender discrepancy between girls and boys enrolled in Visual Arts education in Senior High Schools.

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1.1 Gender, Gender Equity and Gender Inequity

Gender as explained by [9] is the perception of maleness or femaleness related to our membership in a given society. Therefore, one's sex determines his/her gender in the society and further directs him or her to assume his/her roles and responsibilities. This accession is also supported by [10] who argues that society assigns roles based on a person's sex. According to [10], some of the roles are assigned while some are shaped by ideology, culture, religion and economic development. In spite of one's ascribed duty by virtue of his or her sex, issues of gender equity are gradually eroding this notion. According to [11], gender equity is whereby both males and females are given equal opportunity either in school, workplace or the society in which they live. Gender equity is also seen as a fair and reasonable way of behaving towards males and females so that both are treated equally without any discrimination in all sectors of the economy to bring about economic growth [12] whereas the vice versa represents gender inequity. However, ascribed differences such as gender, matter in schools if they affect the distribution of opportunities and goals and are de-humanizing for those who are devalued by them. Female education is believed to promote the quantity and quality of education of children through the support and the general environment, educated mothers can provide their children as well as their increased bargaining power which tends to ensure a larger share of resources devoted to the education of children [13]. Unfortunately, gender inequity which might erupt as a result of ideology, culture, religion and economic development in Education, has resulted in the de-motivation of most girls to pursue certain courses or engage in certain activities or programmes.

1.2 Motivation

Motivation is the inner strength or the inspiration behind all actions. It is the most naked answer to why we do what we do [14]. [15] asserts that motivation is a motive, an impulse that causes a person to act or an internal process that makes a person move towards a goal. However, one's source of motivation could be influenced by another [17]. The classroom environment is a dynamic and influential context that is created both by teachers and students. As a result, student-student and student-teacher interactions establish a social dynamic, reflecting respect for intellectual achievement and curiosity. Moreover, the effectiveness of a particular motivational strategy is reflected in the self-regulated behaviour of students and results from their experiences, coupled with their proximal and future goals [18]. As such, when students are properly and adequately motivated, it is believed that they could be easily influenced to perform better in their respective disciplines just as individuals are capable of modifying their behavior based on their calculation of anticipated outcomes [19]. Unfortunately, there is no single magical formula for motivating students [20]. Factors like interest in the subject matter, perception of its usefulness, general desire to achieve, self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as patience and persistence affect students' motivation to work and to learn [21].

Also, [20] explains motivation as "what directs the energy of an alert group into constructive channels and keeping it there. It means inculcating and stimulating interest in a particular topic at the moment". The author suggests that it is necessary for a teacher to understand and use the natural urges of the child to assist him in acquiring new and desirable motives [20]. This is so because student motivation is essential for school performance. Motivation helps students to accomplish academic goals by generating interest and effort in academic work, perseverance in doing class work or homework, completion of difficult tasks, self-regulation, risk taking, and independent learning, among others [22]. Though experienced teachers have an array of instructional methods and materials to motivate and encourage students, they still would need to apply some stimulation or encouragement for some of their students to be able to perform better [23].

1.3 Concept of Academic Performance

[24] describe academic performance as how well a school, college, university, an individual or a group is able to perform when given a learning task or activity or one's achievement in standardized tests in academic pursuit. [25] shares a similar view that academic performance is the capacity to achieve when one is tested on what one has been taught. Academic performance is related to content and intellect, meaning it depends on many factors such as the learner's competence, time/period allocation [26], teacher competency [27], classroom management [28], students' entry grade [6], human Resource [29], Leadership/Supervision [30], Teacher Motivation and Teaching, Students' Motivation and Learning [31].

2. Methodology

The researchers utilized the qualitative research design approach to find out issues concerning Gender, Motivation and the use of motivation to help improve female student's performance in practical Visual Art lessons in four Senior High Schools in Ashanti Region. [32] avows that qualitative research explores attitudes, behaviour and experiences through such methods as interviews or focus groups. This research method investigates the why and how of decision making, not just what, where, and when. Hence, smaller but focused samples are most often needed, rather than large samples.

A combination of descriptive, case study and action research methods of the qualitative research design was used for driving the study. [33] explains that the descriptive research systematically documents current events, lasting products or other phenomena that can be measured directly by researchers today. The descriptive research method was found appropriate because it provided systematic information about a phenomenon and allows for the quantification of variables to provide answers to the research questions. [34] sees the case study as a 'careful and critical inquiry and examination seeking the facts of a case, a problem, an issue, a community and following events from the beginning through to the end.' On the other hand, Action research is a research based on the researcher's working environment

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aimed ultimately at impacting change to improve working conditions for the better [35]. [36] writes that an action research strategy's purpose is to solve a particular problem and to produce guidelines for best practice. The researchers adopted this research method because they wanted to help find the appropriate means through which motivation could be used to improve female student's performance in the practical Visual Art lessons.

Direct and close observation in the classroom/studio was used to supplement the information gathered from the questionnaire and interviews. Observing natural phenomena, aided by systematic classification and measurement, led to the acquisition of correct and firsthand information and helped to clear certain doubts and inaccurate information given by the Visual Arts teachers and students. To determine the validity, reliability and usability of data gathered via observation and questionnaire, five copies each of the checklist, interview guide and questionnaire were given to colleagues for study, correction and suggestions for improvement. These data collecting procedures used together with the observation formed a form of triangulation that increased the validity, improved the data generated and yielded thick data about the phenomenon studied by the researchers [37].

Respondents in four selected SHS which consist of two single sex and two co-educational Senior High Schools in Ashanti Region formed the population of the study. This selection was based on a fair representation of the type of Senior High Schools and gender of students in the Ashanti Region. For ethical reasons and in line with much qualitative inquiry, the sampled schools are not named, but only identified here as Schools A, B, C and D. The accessible population for this study was 180, consisting of 170 students and 10 teachers in the four schools.

3. Discussion of Findings

Table 1: Distribution of Student Respondents on the Various Visual Arts Disciplines offered in the selected schools.

School	Two Dimensional Art						Three Dimensional Art					
	Picture Making		Graphics		Textiles		Ceramics		Leather Works		Sculpture	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
A	0	0	0	12	0	27	0	22	0	17	0	0
B	21	0	18	0	0	0	0	0	16	0	23	0
C	21	7	0	0	13	6	12	9	0	0	22	4
D	14	4	0	0	16	11	13	10	0	0	17	5
Total	56	11	18	12	29	44	55	41	16	17	62	9

Source: Survey Data, 2014/2015

Table1 shows the spread of students on the various Visual Arts Elective subjects offered in the four schools. It is evident that students in School A specialize in Graphic Design, Textiles, Ceramics and Leather works. Students in school B also specialize in Picture Making, Graphics, Leather and Sculpture, whereas School C and D specialization in Picture Making, Textiles, Ceramics and Sculpture. The figures in Table 1 also show that subject areas where boys showed interest in pursuing were the very subjects where most girls also frowned upon. For instance, in areas such as Sculpture, there were 62 boys (representing 87%) as against 9 girls (representing 13%). Other include Picture Making (84% boys as against 16% girls), graphics (60% boys as against 40% girls) and ceramics (57% boys as against 43% girls). This presupposes that these subject areas are more male friendlier than female simply because they involve a lot of risk by the use of sharp tools and lifting of heavy materials and tools, more skills, energy and effort and are also dirt related.

On the other hand, Table 3 also shows that more girls offer Textiles and Leather works. Out of the total of 73 students offering Textiles, 60% are females and 51% of the 33 Leather work respondents were females. Textiles emerged the most preferred elective subject by the girls because it involves "girl-friendly" skills and offers "female-appropriate" occupations. This affirms [9] that women in Ghana prefer work which is respected and valued by the community as women's work, most of which are, extensions of female domestic activities. Textiles-with-Graphic Design elective combination facilitates access into the fashion industry, but many girls shun Picture-Making because girls generally lack the level of drawing skills required; Ceramics is "girl-friendly" except that the girls felt clay was dirty to touch and could easily dirty their clothes [8].

Table 2: Respondents' sources of motivation to study Visual Arts

Choice of Programme	No. Of Respondents					Percentage
	A	B	C	D	Total	
Myself	9	12	15	6	42	25
Persuaded or inspired by somebody	24	19	29	32	104	61
Compelled by the school	6	8	3	7	24	14
TOTAL	39	39	47	45	170	100

Source: Survey Data, 2014/2015

It is evident from Table 2 that 42 students representing 25% of 170 respondents made a personal decision to study Visual Arts. This suggests that when these students are given the chance, they can make brave and wise decisions based on their abilities and may not need much guidance. Such students normally end up being very creative and highly imaginative. It also presupposes that such students were properly taught creative arts and pre-vocational skills in their previous classes and as such have developed much interest in the course right from there.

Moreover, Table 2 shows that 104 student respondents, representing 61% (which is the highest) were persuaded or inspired either by teachers, outsiders or a relative to choose the type of Visual Arts elective that they are offering today. This revelation implies that majority of the students can easily be influenced to perform better when they get the opportunity to see the practical works and final year results of students in the same school or other schools. This is supported by the Equity theory which states that workers seek for a balance between their effort (inputs) and return (outputs) by comparing their position and their reference

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points such as peers, co-workers and others. As a result, if these students get to know that their effort is on the right track, then they will be motivated to continue with their good works.

Also, it can be inferred from Table 2 that 24, representing 14% of the 170 student respondents were compelled by their school to offer the various elective subjects they are offering. Even though the students chose to study Visual Arts through the computer placement programme, they were not given the chance to choose the electives they wanted to pursue. As such, they are forced to study or choose between what already exist in the schools without any say. So far as these selected schools are not offering the students a variety of options to choose from, the implication is that there is a high tendency of these students not furthering their education in the Visual Arts and rather entering other career options.

Table 3: Number of Practical Lessons per Term

Number of practical lessons per term	Schools								Total	
	School A		School B		School C		School D			
	Freq	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%		%
Once	16	41	10	26	23	49	19	42	68	40
Twice	15	38	25	64	18	38	23	51	81	47.6
Thrice	4	10	2	5	4	9	3	7	13	7.6
Four times	2	5	1	2.5	2	4	0	0	5	3
Five times	2	5	1	2.5	0	0	0	0	3	2
More than five times	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	39	100	39	100	47	100	45	100	170	100

Source: Survey Data, 2014/2015

It is evident from Table 3 that teachers in School C are given the lowest number of practical exercises which is once in a whole term, unlike Schools A, B and D which could give two or more different practical exercises within a term. It is said practice makes one perfect, but in this situation, there is virtually nothing good to write home about. Are the teachers doing so just to help the students specialize in certain fields because of the trend in final year examination questions or is it that the students are failing to provide the necessary materials for other practicals since the schools are not supposed to bill any student with such charges? As a result, there is a high likelihood of girl's low performance in practical lessons.

Table 4: Girls' Motivational levels

Level	Schools				Percentage (%)
	A	C	D	TOTAL	
Highly Motivated	4	2	6	16	11
Fairly Motivated	13	17	16	46	33
Not Motivated	22	28	29	79	56

Source: Survey Data, 2014/2015

The figures in Table 4.7 indicate that 16 (representing 11%) of the girls are highly motivated in pursuing the various elective subjects that they pursue. Also 46 (representing 33%) are fairly motivated whiles 79 (representing 56%) are not motivated. This presupposes that majority of the girls are not motivated to put in all their best as such, there is a high possibility of these girls performing poorly in the practical lesson. The response from the student's questionnaire revealed that some art teachers looked down and never appreciates the little efforts the girls put in their work. However, [38] believes that the falling level of academic achievement is attributable to teachers' non-use of verbal reinforcement strategy. All these come together to prove [20] assertion that students' motivation is essential for school performance and that motivation helps students to accomplish academic goals by generating interest and effort in academic work, perseverance in doing class work or homework, completion of difficult tasks, self-regulation, risk taking, and independent learning, among others.

3.1 Effect of Motivation on Girls' Performance in Practical Visual Arts lessons

Data collected to achieve this objective was divided into two main sections. These were the pre-motivational stage and the post-motivational stage. However, this data was collected from the third year Visual Arts female students because it was deemed they had accumulated a lot of skills and training from their teacher as compared to those in second and first year. Moreover, a practical work each from two of the male friendly electives; Picture Making and Graphic Design were selected because of the time frame. These practical works were on Calligraphy and Still life composition. Even though not all the girls were pursuing these two elective subjects, the lessons on which the practical works were selected were also taught in General Knowledge in Art (GKA) which is a compulsory elective studied by all the girls and are also compulsory WASSCE examinable areas in GKA.

3.2 Pre-Motivational Stage

In collaboration with the teachers, the girls were provided with materials on two separate days to produce one still life composition and a calligraphy work each without any support of any kind. These works were collected and marked on completion. Marks obtained are as shown in Table 4.

Table 5: Marks obtained after pre-motivational stage practical works

Marks	SCHOOLS					
	A		C		D	
	Still Life	Calligraphy	Still Life	Calligraphy	Still Life	Calligraphy
1 – 19	0	0	0	0	0	0
20 – 39	4	2	1	2	3	1
40 – 59	3	4	1	1	2	3
60 – 79	1	2	1	0	0	2
80 –100	1	1	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	*9*	*9*	*3*	*3*	*5*	*5*

Source: Survey Data, 2014/2015

Table 5 above indicates that because the girls lacked motivation, over 60% of them in each school scored below 60% mark in practical exercises in all two subject areas. This implies that if these girls are not motivated and directed as to how they can perform better, but left alone, then there is a high possibility of recording low performances or scores in their subsequent elective practical examinations. Sample images of their works are as shown below:

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SCHOOL "A" (Still-life composition)



Figure 1: Still Life composition (Source: Photographed by researchers)



Figure 2: Still Life composition (Source: Photographed by researchers)



Figure 3: Still Life composition (Source: Photographed by researchers)



Figure 4: Still Life composition (Source: Photographed by researchers)

The figures labeled 1 to 4 showed above are samples of the best works done by the female students in school A after two different compositions were arranged and they were left alone without any assistance. Even though they had a fair knowledge of drawing, it is evident that they had issues with proportion, tonal gradation and colour blending. In addition, before the girls were asked to start work, they were complaining about the drawing of objects that had been selected for the composition and that was a clear indication of lack of confidence on their part to be able to deliver.

School "C" (Still-life composition)



Figure 5: Still Life composition (Source: Photographed by researchers)

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Figure 6: Still Life composition (Source: Photographed by researchers)

The figures 5 and 6 shown above are also samples of the best works done by the female Students in school C after two different compositions were arranged and they were left alone without any assistance. It is evident that they also had issues with drawing, proportion and blending of colours.

SCHOOL "D" (Still-life composition)



Figure 7: Still Life composition
(Source: Photographed by researchers)



Figure 8: Still Life composition
(Source: Photographed by researchers)

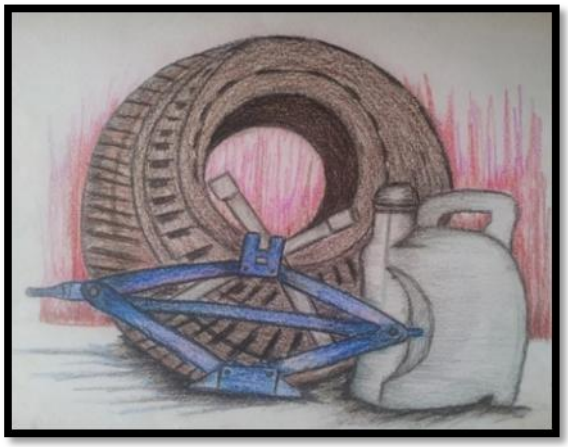


Figure 9: Still Life composition
(Source: Photographed by researchers)

The figures 7, 8 and 9 shown above are also samples of the best works done by the female students in school D after two different compositions were arranged and they were left alone without any assistance. Unlike school A and C, these three girls could draw a little bit better. It is evident that they also had issues with proportion and blending of colours.

SCHOOL "A" (Calligraphy)

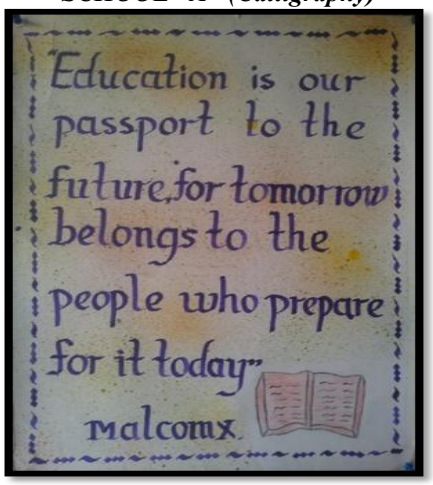


Figure 9: Calligraphy
(Source: Photographed by researchers)

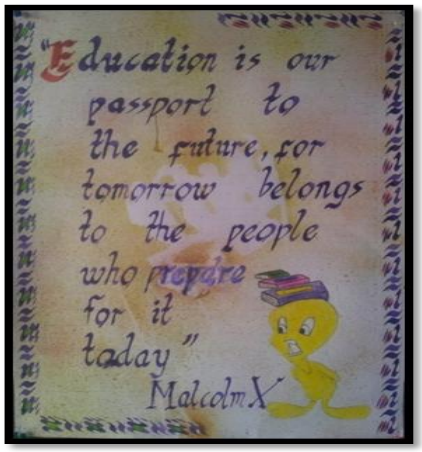


Figure 10: Calligraphy (Source: Photographed by researchers)

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SCHOOL "C" (Calligraphy)

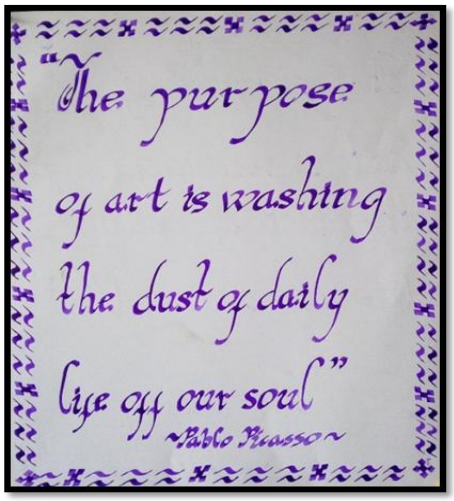


Figure 11: Calligraphy
(Source: Photographed by researchers)



Figure 12: Calligraphy
(Source: Photographed by researchers)

SCHOOL "D" (Calligraphy)

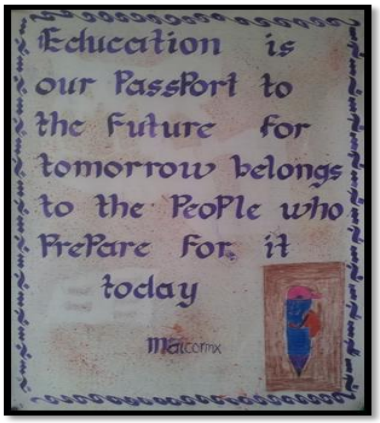


Figure 13: Calligraphy
(Source: Photographed by researchers)

3.3 Post-Motivational Stage

At this stage, the girls were given another chance to do the works again after a short lecture, which was aimed at helping to intrinsically motivate them to do better than before and they were also taught simple ways of doing still-life compositions. In the course of the lecture, the available female teachers in the selected schools were also given the opportunity to share their experiences with the girls. Prior notice was sent to the female teachers two weeks before the said date. The areas talked about included:

1) The need to believe in themselves
2) How they could save and purchase their own materials and tools
3) How they could work together in groups and also purchase their materials and tools
4) How they could improve upon their practical works

Moreover, after the lecture, the female teacher made samples each to be shown to the girls. The girls were then supervised and assisted to reproduce the same items. These works were marked and scores obtained are as shown in Table 9.

Table 5: Marks Obtained After Post-Motivational Stage Practical Works

Marks	Schools					
	A		C		D	
	Still Life	Calligraphy	Still Life	Calligraphy	Still Life	Calligraphy
1 – 19	0	0	0	0	0	0
20 – 39	0	0	0	0	0	0
40 – 59	1	1	0	0	1	1
60 – 79	5	4	2	1	3	3
80 – 100	3	4	1	2	1	1
TOTAL	9	9	3	3	5	5

Source: Survey Data, 2014/2015

Table 5 above shows that because the girls were intrinsically motivated and assisted, over 80% of them in each school scored above the 60% mark in both practical exercises in all two subject areas. This is a clear indication that if these girls are properly directed and intrinsically motivated, then there is a high likelihood for them scoring higher marks in their subsequent elective subject practical examinations. Sample images of their works are as exhibited below:

SCHOOL "A" (Still-life Composition)



Figure 14: Still Life composition
(Source: Photographed by researchers)

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Figure 15: Still Life composition
(Source: Photographed by researchers)

SCHOOL "B" (Still-life Composition)



Figure 16: Still Life composition
(Source: Photographed by researchers)

SCHOOL "B" (Still-life Composition)



Figure 17: Still Life composition
(Source: Photographed by researchers)



Figure 18: Still Life composition
(Source: Photographed by researchers)

SCHOOL "D" (Still-life Composition)



Figure 19: Still Life composition
(Source: Photographed by researchers)



Figure 20: Still Life composition
(Source: Photographed by researchers)

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SCHOOL "A" (Calligraphy)

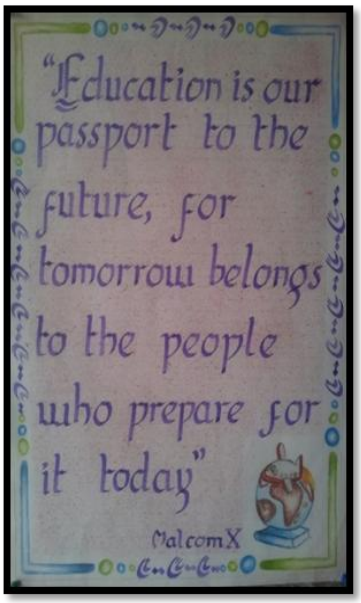


Figure 21: Calligraphy
(Source: Photographed by researchers)

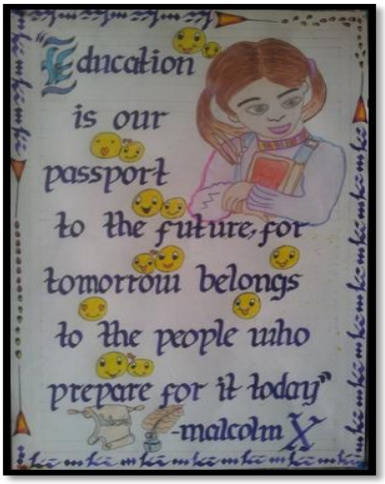


Figure 22: Calligraphy
(Source: Photographed by researchers)

SCHOOL "B" (Calligraphy)



Figure 22: Calligraphy

(Source: Photographed by researchers)

SCHOOL "C" (Calligraphy)

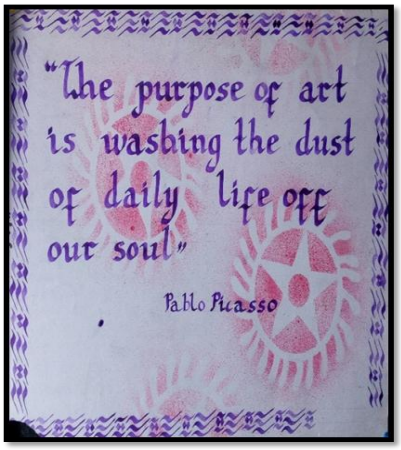


Figure 23: Calligraphy
(Source: Photographed by researchers)



Figure 24: Calligraphy
(Source: Photographed by researchers)

SCHOOL "D" (Calligraphy)

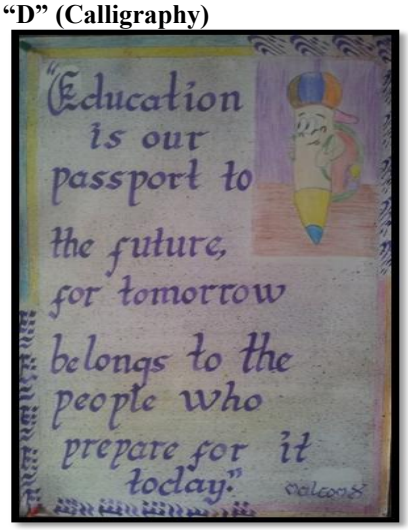


Figure 25: Calligraphy
(Source: Photographed by researchers)

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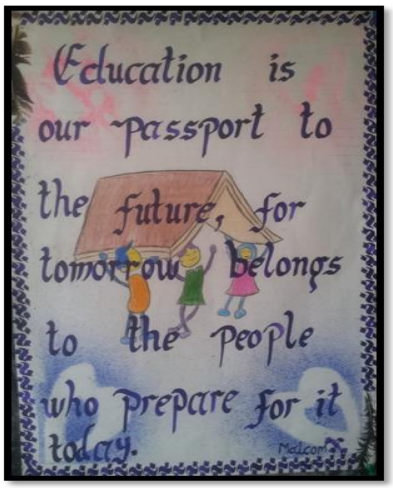


Figure 26: Calligraphy
(Source: Photographed by researchers)

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

In our quest to find numerous ways to appreciate the strong contributions that our major educational stakeholder are making to provide the enabling environment for education to thrive in the country, there still exist the call for greater attention in our Visual Arts education, more especially, the factors leading to the inability for majority of our girls match the boys boot for boot in practical lessons. It should be clear that solutions to this problem will require a high degree of commitment and cooperation among all the educational stakeholders. Moreover, the study reveals that the number of practical exercises given in a term in all the selected schools were woefully inadequate. In addition, the study brought out that some art teachers looked down and never appreciates the little efforts the girls put in their work. As a result, the majority of the girls are not motivated.

On the effect of motivation on girl's performance in practical Visual Arts lessons, the study revealed that if the girls are not motivated and directed as to how they can perform better but left alone, then there is a high possibility of recording low performances or scores in their subsequent elective practical examinations, on the other hand, if these girls are properly directed and intrinsically motivated, then there would be a high likelihood for them scoring higher marks in their subsequent elective subject practical examinations. The major conclusion drawn from this study is that, the identified differences between the various Visual Arts electives tagged as male-friendly and female-friendly in Senior High Schools has to be resolved through adequate resourcing, infrastructure and serious counseling sections for female students.

The authors recommend that there should be the institution of a course selection guidance or manual and counseling at the JHS level, which is regularly updated for students who are about to make their choice of programme for the Senior High Schools to enable them know the various Visual Arts electives offered in the schools before they make their selection. In addition, Visual Arts female teachers should practice their art to encourage their students to be confident by infusing the "can-do-spirit" in them to help them develop the drive to achieve and believe that achievement is possible for them. Teachers should also be encouraged to redefine their attitudes towards their profession and to develop love, passion and commitment to effective teaching and learning.

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