# Teachers' perceptions of visual arts creativity practices in elementary schools in Indonesia: a study of aesthetic habitus

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## ABSTRACT

The background comes from the teaching practice experience of students in the elementary school education program, which mainly focuses on core subjects. Although the visual arts are not considered a core subject in elementary schools, they still play an important role in helping students grow and develop by raising awareness about artistic practices. The goal of this article is to explain what teachers think about creativity in visual arts learning during their teaching practices, as seen through the perspective of students in the school teacher education department. The study uses a qualitative approach. To collect data, the researchers conducted interviews, made observations, and reviewed documents. The data was analyzed using the Miles & Huberman method, and the results were presented in both written and table formats. The findings show that teaching practices in elementary schools, done by students in the education program, give them hands-on experience as future teachers. They use aesthetic ideas as a way to connect art and beauty in daily life. The students create art that fits their home environments. Also, aesthetics are included in habitus practices, which are internalized as structured ways of seeing, judging, feeling, and acting towards the subjects they study.

## 1. Introduction

In order to ensure that primary school pupils have creative experiences, experiment, create, and comprehend the purpose of art in life, special attention must be paid to art education [1]. Students can gain a better understanding of the creative process through art; art education covers crafts, skills, and artwork with aesthetic values [2]. Art education is an effort to improve students' creative cognitive skills in a learning process based on certain aesthetics. In this context, the human mind operates as a whole, and each person's intelligence can be measured. An ability can be considered intelligent if it demonstrates a person's ability to solve problems and overcome difficulties in everyday life. Creativity is a form of expertise related to imagination in the search for something valuable. In this way, artists and art lovers explore the experience of art through imaginative activities. There is a mutually connected relationship between artists and art lovers through ongoing experiences. This encourages the development of art and the variety of beauty until the experience of art emerges as an aesthetically appealing object, and the function of art is manifested in human experience. Students in the field of education become both artists and art enthusiasts as they learn to create art and engage in the process of appreciating it [3]. In order to develop students' personalities in a more positive way, elementary school art curricula are created to promote a thorough understanding of artistic

principles that encompass the areas of conceptual frameworks, appreciation, creativity, exposure, and psychological education [4]. The idea that children can acquire visual skills, abstract reasoning, and critical thinking through art education lends credence to this assertion [5].

Students who begin to understand art will develop greater discipline and self-confidence. Students will realize the importance of time management (having order, organizing their lives well), feel more confident in learning to express their thoughts and feelings with courage, and be able to interact with others anywhere with a sense of calm without fear or shame. Additionally, kids who comprehend art will be more inventive and prolific, enabling them to produce novel and surprising things. As a result, it is crucial to start and expand arts and crafts classes in elementary schools [6]. Arts and culture education emphasizes not only the acquisition of technical skills but also the development of character values and social identities that reflect a nation's cultural heritage. Therefore, introducing artistic insight and arts development at the elementary school level is considered essential. Previous studies have shown that arts learning contributes to the enhancement of children's critical thinking and problem-solving skills, further supporting the integration of arts and culture education [7]. Students' ability to express ideas and emotions creatively requires adequate institutional support, including appropriate infrastructure and learning resources. Creativity is commonly defined as the capacity to generate and integrate ideas and imagination to produce original outcomes, such as concepts, activities, or visual expressions. Previous studies indicate that creativity can be cultivated across various academic disciplines. Among these, visual arts education has been widely recognized as an effective pedagogical approach for enhancing students' creative abilities [8]. Visual arts constitute an area of art concerned with visual stimulation and expression. Visual arts education aims to develop students' mastery of visual art disciplines, enhance drawing skills, foster an understanding of local culture, and cultivate an appreciation of visual artworks. As a subfield of art, the visual arts employ two- and three-dimensional forms to convey human artistic experiences [9].

Artistic creativity plays a crucial role in ensuring that education promotes holistic and sustainable development. Creativity is generally defined as the ability to generate original ideas, products, or solutions through the integration of imagination and prior knowledge. This process involves creative and synthetic thinking that reorganizes existing information, establishes new patterns, and forms novel connections across different contexts [10]. Visual arts education, which encompasses the development of comprehension, appreciation, and technical skills within the visual arts domain, is closely associated with creativity in the art learning process. A fundamental concept in visual arts education is the understanding of basic elements of art, including line, shape, color, texture, space, and value. Such understanding enables the effective application of these elements in artistic works to achieve specific visual effects and convey artistic meaning [11]. Contemporary perspectives suggest that creativity encompasses both action and ideation, in addition to discovery. Creativity involves a complex interaction among motivational conditions, personality traits, environmental influences, chance factors, and resulting products. These components collectively contribute to the generation of original ideas. As a cognitive process, creativity involves the production of novel and meaningful outcomes [12]. Visual arts learning is commonly understood to encompass three domains: cognitive (knowledge), affective (attitudes and appreciation), and psychomotor (skills). These domains engage not only students' technical abilities but also their imaginative capacities. Imagination may be defined as the ability to conceive, visualize, or create mental representations beyond immediate experience. Accordingly, imagination and creativity are closely interconnected, as imaginative processes facilitate the generation of creative forms and expressions [13]. Artistic practices are widely recognized for their potential to foster creativity; therefore, art learning and creative development are closely interconnected. Individuals with creative capacities are able to generate original ideas or products, which may contribute to the emergence of novel or distinctive outcomes. In this context, creativity constitutes a core component of visual arts education [14].

Creativity is the process of expressing past experiences and placing shared experiences in new patterns, ideas, or new products. Another opinion states that creativity is the ability to

develop, create something, and enrich and detail an idea. Creativity is defined as the ability to generate original ideas or tangible products that are meaningfully distinct from existing forms or prior works [15]. Creativity in artistic production is commonly assessed through four indicators: fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. "Fluency" refers to the ability to generate numerous ideas, while "flexibility" denotes the capacity to approach problems from diverse perspectives. Originality involves the production of novel and uncommon ideas, and elaboration reflects the ability to develop ideas in detail. In this context, creativity constitutes an essential component of individual artistic endeavor and underpins the process of artistic creation [16]. Student creativity in this study is reflected through a range of cognitive, affective, and social attributes, including communication, enthusiasm, empathy, responsiveness, discipline, inspiration, optimism, and flexibility. These attributes are interpreted as supporting the development of students' creative capacities within cognitive, emotional, and artistic domains [17].

In visual arts education, creativity is supported by a combination of cognitive factors, including intelligence, talent, and practical skills, as well as affective factors such as motivation, curiosity, and attitudes. These interrelated dimensions collectively contribute to the development of creative capacities in artistic learning contexts [18]. Creativity is commonly characterized by indicators such as fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration [19]. The indicators can be said to be creative, which can be further explained by the fact that the creative process unfolds through four distinct stages: preparation, incubation, enlightenment, and verification. Preparation phase: This is the stage where an artist gathers as much information as possible regarding the issues related to the project they are currently engaged in or will soon undertake. The information collected is extensive, encompassing everything from the text to the contextual background. During this phase, all ideas that relate to the project's challenges will be examined and intellectually processed. Incubation stage: This phase is characterized by a state of mind that is not entirely conscious, and it is widely recognized across various theoretical models of the creative process. The existence of this stage is not always explicitly referred to as the 'incubation stage.' The enlightenment stage, often referred to as illumination, represents a critical phase in the creative process in which a solution or idea emerges suddenly following a period of cognitive association. This stage is characterized by the integration of previously unconnected ideas, resulting in new insights or creative concepts. Subsequently, the verification stage involves the application of critical thinking to evaluate, refine, and validate the ideas generated during the creative thinking process [20].

The visual arts learning practice in elementary schools conducted by the Elementary School Teacher Education program aims to channel their visual arts skills and creative processes in creating works of art. This practice is carried out directly in the classroom and face-to-face with students. The practice also collaborates with class teachers to be able to adapt to the output of this activity. Based on the results of this learning practice, the author tried to collect data on the responses of the school, namely, teachers and/or principals. According to previous studies, perception occurs when stimuli are presented to the five human senses and subsequently organized and interpreted by the brain [21]. In 21st-century learning, based on several studies that examine the perceptions of elementary school teachers towards dilemmas and changes in arts learning policies, it is known that elementary school teachers have a major role in education as the vanguard in the educational process. The effectiveness of elementary school teachers in delivering arts and culture education varies according to factors such as age, employment status, and educational background. Teaching in this field involves a range of challenges, particularly in responding to technological developments. These challenges may result in differences in the difficulties encountered during arts and culture instruction, especially in relation to the theoretical content of instructional modules [22].

Process indicators in perception are (1) stimulus (perception begins when an individual is confronted with a situation or stimulus). The situation faced can be a close and direct sensory stimulus, or it can also be a form of the socio-cultural and physical environment as a whole. (2) Registration process: A visible symptom is a physical mechanism in the form of sensing, and the conditions for a person to be influenced through the senses that he has. A person can hear or see information that is sent to him, then register all the information that is sent to him; (3)

interpretation of the meaning of information that is believed to represent the object of knowledge obtained through the perception of non-knowledge about the object, which depends on the way of deepening, motivation, and a person's personality; (4) Feedback can influence a person's perception [23].  Recent research on how teachers perceive various issues and policy changes in art teaching is crucial to understand, as it can influence their enthusiasm, adherence, and work outcomes. Elementary school teachers' perceptions need to be studied more deeply to develop appropriate ways to support them in teaching art in elementary schools. The curriculum used in schools also presents new challenges for teachers and educational institutions. The attainment of art learning objectives is influenced by teachers' adaptability to curriculum changes, the use of effective instructional strategies, and support from relevant stakeholders [24]. The theory regarding the perception of objects and spaces has a lengthy historical background. Nativism posits that synthesis is either intuitive or inherent. In contrast, empiricism characterizes synthesis as something that is acquired or deduced from previous experiences. Recently, Gestalt theory has proposed that this synthesis arises from the characteristics of the central nervous system, which may be referred to as sensory organization. The basis of Gibson's theory is the belief that our perception is determined by optical flow, optical arrays, which Gibson regards as a kind of structure or pattern of light in a circular relationship. Gibson believes that humans perceive objects (the quality of their senses) by means of information packets, arrays that are determined (structured) by objects entering their sensors. Visual perception is enabled by light reflected from object surfaces, while auditory perception results from sound waves produced by vibrating objects [25]. Based on the above explanation, the purpose of this article is to describe teachers' and principals' perceptions of the arts teaching practicum conducted by elementary school department students. This practicum was conducted directly in selected and licensed elementary schools. The results of this activity, including perceptual data, are used to provide insight and discourse on sending students to teach arts subjects rather than just general elementary school subjects.

## 2. Method

In qualitative research, the researcher functions as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, aiming to understand phenomena within their natural settings. Accordingly, this study adopts a comprehensive, multi-method approach to generate rich, in-depth descriptive data, with an emphasis on the quality and trustworthiness of the information [26]. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis. Interviews involved direct interaction between researchers and participants to obtain in-depth information relevant to the phenomena under investigation [27]. Elementary school teachers from Yogyakarta, Lampung, Riau, and Papua participated in the interviews. Students enrolled in an elementary school teacher education program served as participants in the observations. The observations were conducted in a non-participatory manner by independent observers [28]. The observational focus was on the instructional practices of participants in an elementary school teacher education program involving the use of visual arts content across different courses. Document analysis was conducted to verify the originality of the materials, assess their quality, and evaluate their alignment with the required instructional documents [29]. The documents reviewed were photos of practical activities and student work. Data analysis techniques were carried out by reducing data, presenting data, and drawing conclusions from the data that had been obtained and presented in the form of sentences and tables.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. Results

Based on research data from interview results, six aspects were obtained regarding teachers' perceptions of teaching practices by students in the elementary school teacher education department, including: teaching art and culture in schools, efforts to develop arts in schools, learning strategies used, the learning model used, learning tools used, and class conditions during art teaching practice by students. These six aspects can be explained as follows: it shows that the teaching practice program in elementary schools carried out by elementary school teacher department's students is very necessary because: (1) it can provide direct experience as prospective elementary school teachers; (2) students can interact and practice theories and

concepts in art practice; (3) students can adapt and develop learning tools, learning models, learning strategies that are appropriate to the characteristics of students; and (4) fostering emotional bonds with students and the school atmosphere and character. Furthermore, there are certainly shortcomings and weaknesses, including ongoing innovations in learning models, strategies, and media; the relatively short number of practical sessions; and the need to increase the number of students involved. Observations conducted by researchers revealed that students assisted students at every stage of the practical work, from providing materials and examples to providing technical guidance on the creation of the work to presenting the results. According to Fig. 1, elementary school teacher education students are conducting collaborative art teaching practice with elementary students, illustrating peer-assisted learning strategies applied during visual arts instruction. In between the practical directions, it was seen that the students were interacting, looking engaged, enjoying themselves, and responding to the way the directions were given.



**Fig 1.** Students are Accompanying Students in Their Practice

Fig. 2 shows the students' enthusiasm for working on project-based and group assignments after receiving guidance from elementary school education students. They followed the directions and collectively divided tasks and roles within their respective group. Data from the document review shows that students' creative work has become more focused and organized. This is because elementary school teacher education students provide clear guidance and direction during classroom practice.



**Fig 2.** Students practice making visual art works using the paste technique in groups.

Fig. 3 shows that the students' woven craft project demonstrates how traditional art techniques are included in the elementary art curriculum. Also, the images should clearly connect to the research findings or the discussion. For instance, they should explain how the activities shown reflect what teachers think about how effective art learning is. In this way, the images do more than just show what happened; they also have real research value and help support the main argument of the study.

**Fig 3.**   The results of the work and the students show the results of their work

## 3.2. Discussion

Based on Gibson's theory, perception is believed to be based on optical flow, optical arrays, a kind of structure or pattern of light in a circular relationship. Gibson believes that humans perceive objects (the quality of their senses) by means of information packets, arrays that are determined (structured) by objects entering their sensors. The light beam reflects the surface of the object and thus carries information about its shape, size, texture, etc. Likewise, our ears are affected by the arrangement of waves that vibrate or by the influence of tangible objects. Perception indicators consist of stimulus, registration process, interpretation, *and feedback,* which can be narrated as follows.

- Stimulus occurs when the subject is faced with an activity stimulus. Based on the results of observations conducted by students, namely, entering the class and observing how teachers teach arts and culture through practical activities. From the results of the observation report, the following data were obtained: (1) Students cannot understand how to tidy up and clean up the practice tables that have been used; (2) the facilities and infrastructure used for art practice are adequate; (3) the curriculum used for arts and culture learning is the Independent Curriculum; (4) learning tools, learning methods, and learning models are not yet varied; (5) the pedagogical competence of class teachers who do not have an arts education background slightly complicates the learning process, thus affecting the quality of practice. The results of these initial observations become the initial capital for students to compile and choose different or more appropriate learning methods, models, or strategies for the material in the class. The learning practices that have been implemented are then reviewed by the principal and class teachers by filling out a survey in the form of a Google Form. The results of the study show that overall, it has run well and smoothly, but there are still shortcomings in several points that reappear after students carry out the practice. This reinforces that this activity is worthy of being carried out continuously and periodically so that deficiencies and weaknesses can continue to develop. According to Mecacci et al, deep stimulation refers to a perceptual process in which individuals interpret and internalize stimuli, resulting in meaningful engagement that becomes integrated into their experience [30]. In context This shows that the role of the principal, teachers, and students is very crucial to gathering information related to art learning practices. This functions as capital and a guide in planning art learning practices [30].

- The registration process that occurs in the practice of arts and culture learning in elementary schools is evident in physical activities that involve the senses (sense of touch and sense of sight) as a requirement for students to be able to combine or operate the information sent. The process of assisting in the practice of creating works of art follows the plan made in the teaching module. This finding is consistent with Poerio et al, who argue that perceptual processing is closely associated with sensory mechanisms, particularly sensing, through which individuals receive and respond to sensory stimuli.

This suggests that children are able to perceive auditory and visual information and subsequently process and encode it cognitively [31].

- The feedback process was obtained after students provided practical guidance to students who were creating artworks according to the material and class phase. Students were asked to present their artworks to the class, where they received comments and appreciation. This process was witnessed by the class teacher. According to the findings of Pitt *et al*, the feedback process is closely associated with classroom communication patterns, in which students tend to expect more explicit guidance or support when practicing artistic creation. In contrast, student teachers perceive that learners are capable of engaging in independent learning during art-making activities [32]. The explanation of teachers' perceptions above is certainly also based on the concept of aesthetic habitus in learning. This means integrating aesthetic values into the habits of learning visual arts for elementary school students. Goldman found that although beauty is a subjective concept that varies among individuals, aesthetic values can be identified across different manifestations of beauty [33]. From a formal aesthetic perspective, the study and practice of visual arts can be understood through the interaction of unity, complexity, and intensity, which collectively shape aesthetic experience [34]. Aesthetics in visual art encompasses fundamental elements such as color, shape, texture, composition, balance, and harmony, which interact to produce aesthetic value through the equilibrium of visual and conceptual components within an artwork [35]. To achieve aesthetic value in a work, it must be balanced with the practice of habitus in learning, encompassing how students respond to school rules and existing norms and how they interact with classmates and teachers. This is intended to shape students' habitus through experiences that are internalized into habits that bind them. The starting point of habitus in learning visual arts to achieve aesthetic values is focused on interactions with classmates and teachers through teaching practices carried out by students of the elementary school teacher education department.

## 4. Conclusion

Teachers' perceptions of art teaching practices by elementary school education students are crucial. This is because the six essential aspects, teaching art and culture in schools, efforts to develop arts in schools, learning strategies used, the learning model used, learning tools used, and classroom conditions during art teaching, are integrated into the practice of habitus and visual aesthetics, emphasizing the use of basic elements of art. Therefore, this practice is intended to achieve a connection between creativity, cognition, and aesthetics in artwork.

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