

**FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN  
VISUAL ARTS EDUCATION IN GHANA: AN EVIDENCE FROM DORMAA  
SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL.**

by

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**(BEd. Art)**

**A thesis submitted to the Department of Educational Innovations in Science and  
Technology, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in partial  
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of**

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN ART EDUCATION**

**Faculty of Art**

**College of Art and Built Environment**

**February, 2018**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research is my work towards the degree of MPhil. Art Education. It does not contain previously published academic resources by any individual nor approved for the award of Degree at any other University. Every source referred to in this study has been appropriately cited and acknowledged.

KNUST

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## **ABSTRACT**

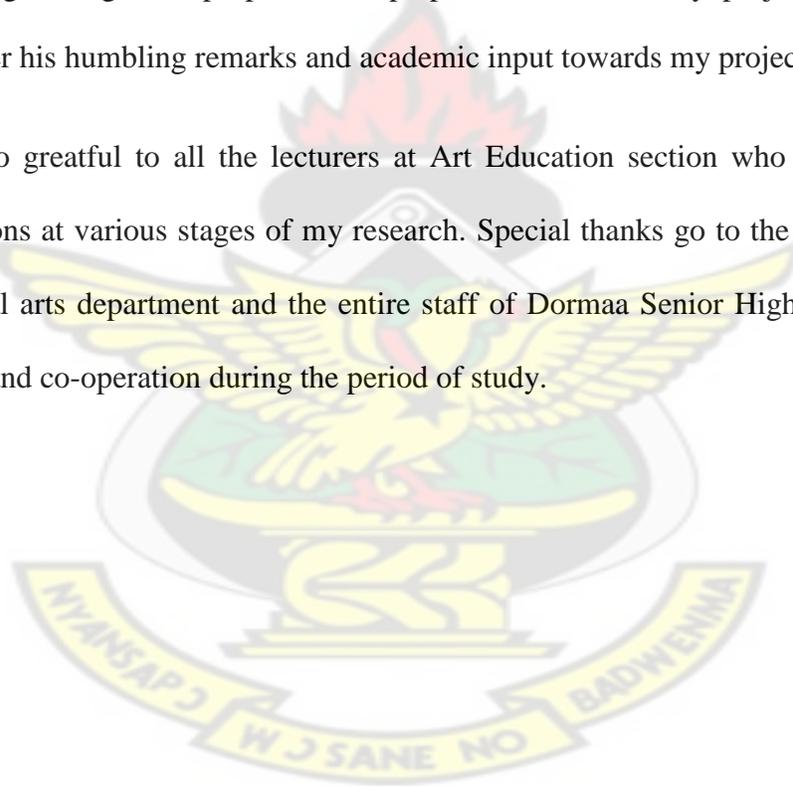
This study was conducted to examine factors affecting students' academic performance in Visual Arts Education in Ghana with an evidence from Dormaa Senior High School in the Brong Ahafo Region. The study's objectives were: to identify factors that result in high students' academic performance of Visual Arts education in Dormaa Senior High School; to examine specific factors that underpin low academic performance of Visual Arts students in Dormaa Senior High School; and to propose strategies that can be put in place to enhance academic performance of Visual Arts students in Dormaa Senior High School. As a descriptive research under qualitative study, a sample size of forty (40) respondents were purposively and conveniently selected to help in eliciting responses for this study. The methods of data collection were focus group discussions and unstructured interview. The sources of data were primary and secondary. Data were analysed using a thematic approach. The study's findings revealed that there are factors that affect academic performance of Visual Arts Students in Dormaa Senior High School. The study further revealed that for the past three years (2014-2016) Dormaa Senior High School has recorded low academic performance for its Visual Arts Students. Finally, useful insights gained from the qualitative analysis as well as the findings and conclusions could serve as practical evidence for school administrators interested in adopting strategies in enhancing academic performance of their students.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the people who greatly contributed to the accomplishment of this research project. I greatly appreciate my family for their moral support, patience and understanding.

I thank my classmates for their moral support and encouragement. Sincere thanks to my supervisor, Dr P. Osei-Poku, for his enabling guidance, patience, constructive criticism and personal interest in the progress of my study, his availability in reading through the proposal and preparation towards my project. I will always remember his humbling remarks and academic input towards my project work.

I am also grateful to all the lecturers at Art Education section who gave advice and suggestions at various stages of my research. Special thanks go to the students, staff of the visual arts department and the entire staff of Dormaa Senior High School for their support and co-operation during the period of study.



## DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my mum, Madam Margaret Abenaa Fosuaa, for her love and support throughout my education.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Overview**

This chapter provides an introduction to the thesis. It comprises the following sub-topics: Background to the Study, Statement of the Problem, Objectives and Research Questions. It spells out the Limitation, Delimitation, Definition of Terms, the Significance of the Study and the Organization of the Rest of the Text.

#### **1.2 Background to the Study**

Education is described as a globally recognized basic human right, which can be seen as a form of investment that contributes to the development of both individuals and the society. Specifically, formal education is said to contribute highly to social-economic development and social mobilization in any society (World Bank Group, 2009).

The basis for any development is said to begin with the development of human resources. Partaking in examinations plays important contribution in area of developing human resources for any given nation(World Bank, 2009; and UNESCO, 2007). The central objective of every education is to get individuals prepared for the job market in the form of transferring virtues such as knowledge, skills, attitudes and cultural norms of the adult world for the younger generations (Griffin, 1998).

Also, it is one of the most powerful instruments known for reducing poverty and inequality and for laying the basis for sustained economic growth; raises the productivity and efficiency of personnel. Education provides solid processes through

which key indicators such as intellects, moral capacities, proper conduct, and technical competencies inherent in learners are developed to make them fit in the larger society (Tuan, 2009, as cited in Dorleku, 2013). There is positive correlation between teaching and learning since the two form core part of education, provide essential learning tools and the basic learning content required by human beings to survive, to develop their full capacities, live and work in dignity, participate fully in development, improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions and to continue learning (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2000 as cited in Siaw, 2009).

Education empowers people, opens up countless number of opportunities, reduces and prevents the outbreak of diseases and eradicates poverty and helps individuals to acquire a greater voice in society, whereas on the perspective of nations, education opens doors to economic and social prosperity which is always spurred by a dynamic workforce and well-informed citizenry who can compete and cooperate willingly on the global scale (World Bank, 2000).

Across the globe, investments and contributions done in education can be divided into three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary. In specifics, secondary education is mainly aimed at meeting global challenges in areas related to science and technology as well as organizations of production processes and markets (Mbelle and Katabalo, 2003).

It is stressed that investments done in education can result in faster growth for both developed and newly industrialized countries (Schultz, 2002).

Little wonder developing countries, especially those found in the Sub-Saharan Africa have started investing in education from the levels of primary, secondary and tertiary in the form of increasing enrolment and improving education quality.

A study conducted by Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder (2002) on secondary school education revealed that Secondary schools are key – in terms of providing interventions in education in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, it can be maintained that the main challenges bedeviling secondary school education are said to be academic performance of students. Cambridge University Reporter (2003) stresses that academic performance is frequently defined in terms of examination performance. In this current study, academic performance was considered by senior high students' performance in tests, in course works and performance in West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE).

Students are dynamic people always in progress. They are full of potentials, which have to be discovered and properly channeled hence the inclusion of Art Teaching Curriculum in our school systems.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Education is one of the most important aspects of human resource development. Failure in the national examinations, especially in the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) spells doom for the students whose lives become uncertain and full of despair. Therefore, a student's life is determined by academic performance in the national examinations. Public pressure on school administrators and teachers to improve

academic performance has led to schools coming up with various performance improvement strategies, including extra supplementary tuition, reward and punishment systems for well performing and poor performing students, forced grade repetition among others. However, some of the strategies employed by schools to improve academic performance are not grounded in research evidence, while some like grade repetition and extra supplementary tuition have been shown to be counterproductive (Bray, 2007).

Besides, academic performance of Senior High School students is measured through tests, class exercises and other ways for continuous assessment purposes in the elective Business, General Arts, Science and Visual Arts subjects and in Core English, Integrated Science, Core Mathematics and Social Studies, which constitute the core curriculum. High academic performance in the core and elective curriculum subjects is required of Senior High School students over the three-year period of Senior High School education.

A student must make a cumulative score of WASSCE Aggregate 24 or better in the core and elective subjects to be considered for admission to higher education programmes (Curriculum Research and Development Division of Ghana Education Service, 2008; Asihene, 2009). A number of international studies on academic performance, including Ehren and Visscher (2008), Chaturvedi (2009), Lloyd and Ghuman (2010) have been carried out and have shown that various factors influence academic performance. Also, a number of local studies such as Daniels (2005), Kitavi (2005), Katana (2007), Orenge (2007) among others have been carried out. Several factors have generally been identified as causes of poor academic performance. Orenge (2007) found a lack of in-

service training, inadequate teacher supervision by head teacher, inadequate staff meetings, low level of parents' education as causing poor academic performance. Katana (2007) found that inadequate teaching staff and high pupil enrolment, poor syllabus coverage, poor time management, poor standards of discipline in the school, poor teacher, pupil and parent relationship, lack of motivation for both teachers and pupils and inadequate teaching and learning materials cause poor academic performance.

Failure in the national examinations, especially in the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) spells doom for the students whose lives become uncertain and full of despair. West African Senior School Certificate Examination performance determines whether the students will proceed to university or to other tertiary institutions. Therefore, a student's life is determined by academic performance in the national examinations. The relevance of this is that, secondary school administrators, including that of Dormaa Senior High School, are pressurized to improve upon the grades obtained by students in WASSCE. Public pressure on school administrators and teachers to improve academic performance has led to schools coming up with various performance improvement strategies, including extra supplementary tuition, reward and punishment systems for well performing and poor performing students, forced grade repetition among others. It is in line with this that this research also expresses concern about the kind of grades that the students are admitted into the school with, thus leading to poor academic performance in WASSCE.

The poor academic performance of Visual Arts students of Dormaa Senior High School (DSHS) has been a concern for quite some time. Visual Art was first introduced in Gold

Coast now Ghana in the year 1908 (Foster, 1967). The Elective Visual Arts Courses in the case of Dormaa Senior High School are General Knowledge in Art, Graphic Design and Leatherwork. The 2014 study of WASSCE results gives the following results picture. The school presented 35 visual arts students for WASSCE. Out of this number, 28 students (80 %) were successful in all the electives whereas seven (7) students failed in the elective. The 2015 WASSCE result also gives the following appalling results picture. The school presented 38 students for Visual Arts students. Out of this number, ten students (24 %) were successful in all the electives subjects whereas twenty-eight failed the elective. The 2016 WASSCE equally indicated that out of 29 students presented for the examination, Six students (21 %) passed all the three Elective Visual Arts Courses. This indicated that the Dormaa Senior High School visual arts students result is deteriorating yearly. The present study therefore sought to identify factors that affect academic performance of visual Arts students' of Dormaa Senior High School in Dormaa Central Municipality of the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana. The students who pass and are able to progress to the tertiary level become assets to the nation while those who fail in the final examination become burden to their families, their society and the nation at large.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

1. To identify factors that result in high students' academic performance of visual arts education in Dormaa Senior High School.
2. To examine specific factors that underpin low academic performance of Visual Art Students in Dormaa Senior High School.

3. To propose strategies that will enhance academic performance of Visual Art students in Dormaa Senior High School.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

1. What are the factors that result in high students' academic performance of visual Art students in Dormaa Senior High School?.
2. What are the specific factors that underpin low academic performance of Visual Arts students in Dormaa Senior High School?
3. What are the strategies that will enhance academic performance of Visual Arts students in Dormaa Senior High School?

### **1.6 Limitations of the Study**

It is instructive to note that all academic studies like this study cannot do without limitations that always confront the researcher. Specifically, the study was prone to the following limitations.

Responses that were obtained from the respondents were validated through authoritative documented sources such as attendance register, terminal reports, placement forms for admissions, WASSCE detailed results for the school. Again, there was a clear unwillingness on the part of certain respondents for both the focus group discussions and the interview to make themselves available to provide right responses or information to help further the study. This reduced the actual number of respondents with the right information to provide to the researcher to help in successfully carrying

out the study. Others who made the attempt to respond to the interview question did not respond to certain questions. This also affected the overall quality of the responses the researcher was expecting.

The adoption of interview as a data collection device led to the following as limitations. Participants feared to committing themselves to telling the truth. The researcher had no control over responses considered as bias. It was difficult to trust what the respondents actually said during the interviews. The answers could be influenced by their colleagues who were not ready to respond to certain questions. Related to this is that other respondents booked for interviews declined audience when the time was due.

Interviews are argued as highly time consuming activities and filling of data overload as a result of the huge volume of rich data produced (Karen, 2011). Moreover, Easterby (2002), argued that understanding issues from an interviewee's point of view can be extremely difficult, especially when the respondent himself is unable to articulate views or unwilling to divulge sensitive information.

Lastly, the subject, factors affecting academic performance is broad. It was not possible for the researcher to explore all the variables that underpin it, hence the three objectives that were thoroughly researched into. Also, this study covers only one Senior High School, it would be difficult to generalize the findings to the nation as a whole.

Upon these limitations, the quality of responses from the respondents and the evidence of data gathered from the students and teachers in Visual Arts department, and the inability of some respondents to divulge some information, it did not affect the quality of the work.

## 1.7 Delimitation

Geographically, this study was limited to Dormaa Senior High School. Study participants were students and teachers of the Visual Arts Department. Participating year's batch of students was selected from those that have been consistently performing well for the period 2014 – 2016 and those that have been performing poorly for the same period.

Contextually, this study focused on the factors that affect students' academic performance of visual arts education. The primary data were gathered through the use of focus group discussion and interview with respondents purposively selected.

## 1.8 Definition of Terms

- Hermeneutics: The study or theory of the methodical interpretation of text, especially holy text.
- Invigorated: feeling stronger, healthier, and more full of energy.
- Unearthing: discovering
- Tenets: an opinion, belief, or principle that is held as absolute truth by someone or especially an organization
- Deductive analysis: inferences made from general principles
- Dross: irrelevant material
- Efficiency: effectiveness
- Extant: still existing despite being very old: surviving

- Spurious: a statement that is unreasonable because it is not based on true facts or a sensible way of thinking.

### **1.9 Significance of the Study**

The study is considered as significant and timely because the government, parents and other stakeholders in education spend large portions of their respective resources in education. Low levels of Visual Art performance lead to undesirable wastage and deny students' entry into their preferred programmes when furthering their professions (usually very competitive). The effect spills over to the labour market, where the students fail to get employed in lucrative jobs.

School administrators, who include Headmasters, assistant headmasters and heads of department, the study provides data that could be used to improve management practices for improved academic performance of Visual Arts students. By establishing the extent to which schools are implementing the seven correlates of effective schools and how this influences academic performance, the study could stimulate strategic thought among school administrators. By identifying the strategies employed by well performing schools, poor performing schools could learn lessons that could enable them improve academic performance of their students. Senior High school students could benefit from the study because findings reveal the way students' performance can be affected by the facilities and members of the school community and the school environment. Through this, students in poor performing schools could be encouraged to adopt strategies employed by well performing schools in order to improve academic performance. The study is also significant to the community that their investment in education is expected

to translate to quality education, and the findings show how this can be achieved. The study also adds to the existing body of knowledge on the determinants of academic performance.

### **1.10 Organization of the Rest of the Text**

Chapter Two covers the review of literature relevant to the topic. Chapter Three deals with the strategies adopted in the research design, data collection, the sample and sampling technique, administration of research instruments and data analysis plan. Chapter Four presents the discussion and analysis of findings while Chapter Five presents the summary, conclusions drawn from the study and recommendations for improving the situation in the schools.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 Overview**

This chapter presents related literature on the theoretical framework on performance, Overview of Academic Performance; Visual Arts Education programme in Ghana; Factors that affect low academic performance of the students, Strategies for enhancing students academic performance.

#### **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

Academic performance is one of the most extensively used concepts in educational research and assessment in second cycle institutions. Bandura (1977) worked to develop the theory of Self-efficacy in order to elucidate, predict and affirm the fact that the theory has an effect on academic performance.

The Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977 and 1986) functions as a theoretical framework of this research since it refers to a person's beliefs to effectively accomplish a course of action necessary to achieve a preferred outcome in order to elucidate academic performance (Greene, Miller, Crowson, Duke and Akey, 2004; Miller, Greene, Montalvo, Ravindran and Nichols, 1996).

Most recent study from Greene et al. (2004) demonstrate a substantial influence of self-efficacy on academic achievement. According to Bresó, Schaufeli, and Salanova (2011), self-efficacy affects academic duties and performance and the effective utilization of the knowledge and skills acquired. The model is estimated to have an indirect influence on

the academic performance through educational approaches and a direct influence on academic performance.

Bandura (1986: 395) defines the theory of “self-efficacy” as “people’s judgment of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances.” According to Bandura (1986 and 1997); and Schunk (1991), these competencies is causal elements of educational motivation choice and performance.

Vrugt, Langereis, and Hoogstraten (1997); and Vrugt, Oort and Zeeberg (2002) reaffirm the belief that high self-efficacy will inspire a person to follow inspiring individual goals and expend considerable determination to realize them, and further demonstrate high academic performance, while low self-efficacy will bring about the pursuance of a less high level of academic achievement. In respect of this, learners who are confident that they “are able and that they can and will do well are much more likely” to be invigorated regarding determination, perseverance and conduct than those who are confident “they are less able and do not presume to be successful (Pintrich and Schunk, 2002). There is also evidence to suggest that these confident students will also be more cognitively engaged in learning and thinking than those who doubt their capabilities to do well (Pintrich, 1999; Pintrich and Schrauben, 1992).

One of the findings of Salomon’s (1984) study establishes that self-efficacy is completely linked to self-rated cognitive effort in the course of students’ learning from writing material, which was assumed to be difficult. Learners who are not self-assured or see themselves not capable may escape conducts that appear to be taxing (Bandura, 1993). Grounded on the above-mentioned realistic outcomes in relation to Bandura’s

theory, it is probable that self-efficacy has a positive effect on understanding meaning (deep), and a negative effect on knowledge retention (surface). This is buttressed by Malka and Covington (2005) and Zimmerman and Kitsantas (2005) who claim that self-efficacy reliably emerge as a robust predictor of academic performance.

### **2.2.1 Critical Theory**

The academic performance of students nowadays are used to determine the effectiveness of how quality a school is and the effectiveness of its teachers. They are sometimes isolated from other education stakeholders like policy makers, educators and the parents. Employers sometimes threaten teachers with job losses anytime students' academic performance in terms of results are not satisfactory to parents and the public at large.

In this thesis critical theory is used to comprehend the nature of problems attributed to the Visual Arts students' low performance in schools. Critical theory hinges on the premise that respondents are being humans. Critical theory is premised on the fact that humans should have the liberty they require and should be informed about the behaviour accepted in a particular society (Basit, 2010). This theory is also explained by Stanford Encyclopedia (2015, p. 1) that critical theory "provides the descriptive and normative bases for social inquiry aimed at decreasing domination and increasing freedom in all their forms". It appears that critical theory empowers individuals who are less privileged. As a result, tutors are criticized due to low academic performance since the onus lies on them to ensure students go through all forms of testing.

"In critical theory, the viewpoint of the researcher is to find out about common meanings and get understanding into a context, for example, school, classroom."

(Wellington, 2000, p. 16). Educators in this theory usually learn about what is significant about a group of people and then perceiving it from their angle (Neuman, 1997). The theory seeks to examine the false nature of the arguments presented by an individual or a group making it weak and also by posing questions to that (Cohen, Manion and Morris, 2007). Still, this theory has been used by teachers who have limitations in carrying out activities which hitherto might help improve the academic performance of students who are unable to do so.

### **2.2.2. Systems Theory Input-output Model**

System theory which made use of the input-output model was propounded by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy in the 1950s. This theory, as reported by Koontz and Weirich (1988) argues that an enterprise does not work in a vacuum, but is hinged on external conditions which imply that it receives inputs, and generates outputs for onward transmission for its surroundings. Applying this theory to the current study, the selected school admits (inputs) and then changes them through the process of teaching and learning which is expected to be reflected in the academic performance of students' (output).

### **2. 3 Overview of Academic Performance**

In every educational institution, accomplishment or attainment of success in difficult subjects is measured and assessed by academic performance as a criteria. As noted by Cambridge University Reporter (2003), "academic performance is usually based on students' performance or success in their examination". Relating this definition to the

study, the academic performance of students takes the form of test, class work and examinations at the senior high school level.

Academic performance depicts the way in which students go about their studies, and how they manage their work as per their teachers, which is related to content and intelligence. It is also based on a student's competence (Osei-Mensah, 2012).

Ankomah (2002) is of the view that in every educational setting, the ultimate aim is to achieve academic excellence or how students cope with their academic work. It also involves how students can manage their work from teachers and the way teachers are able to arrive at their aims.

The aim of education in line with academic performance is students ability to achieve a goal when tested on what they have been taught (Otoo, 2007), which could be linked to the curriculum content of the Visual Arts programme, the learner's intellect, and its dependence on student's ability.

Babatunde and Olanrewaju (2014) argue that academic performance is the same as academic achievement. Aremu and Sokan (2003), as cited in Osei Mensah (2012) believe that academic performance of students is not only based on a pointer to the effectiveness or otherwise of schools, but it is somewhat a main factor likely to affect the future of youths at schools and in the society to a larger extent.

Adams (2000) as cited in Yeboah (2014) has emphasized the need for a number of ways to evaluate the academic performance of which examination is one of the factors when considering quality education. In order to measure academic performance, examination marks which indicate the strength of a particular student is crucial in determining the

knowledge and skills acquired by a student. With the issue on student grading, students exhibit their knowledge when they partake in a number of written and oral exercises, presentations, home works, as well as class exercises and discussion. Performance of students is ranked in grades or letters which correspond to a particular score, and this suggest the performance of the student, and helps to check the teacher's and school's performance as against the grade of the student (Bell, 2012). Moreover, evaluation of a student is based on standardized tests which should be in line with the objectives of the subjects being studied. Previously, academic performance was evaluated by observations from a teacher and this constituted a big percentage of a student's assessment, however, at present, a sum of how well a student performs seems to be the new approach to this issue (Ali, Haider, Munir, Khan1, and Ahmed, 2013). Considine and Zappala (2002) highlight the fact that students whose parents are within a high social class have the opportunity to get academic materials which help to improve their understanding. Graetz (1995) also supports the opinion that parents background can also enhance students academic performance.

The performance of a student is affected by factors such as their admission scores, social class of their parents or guardians, previous school attended (Kyoshaba, 2009), student's sex, age, residence of the student, mode of instruction, methods of teaching, hour of studies, the accomodation status of students (day or boarder) (Ali, Haider, Munir, Khan1, and Ahmed, 2013 According to Considine and Zappala (2002), students whose parents background are good in terms of social, educational and economical are likely to provide the necessary materials for their wards at school leading to a high academic performance.

They add, the social class of parents is based on their educational background, type of employment, and income level. For this study, the social class is based on income level of parents and their educational and employment status. In a similar vein, Graetz (1995) has observed that students from a high social class background perform better than those from a low social class bracket.

#### **2.4. Visual Arts Education Programme in Ghana**

In Ghana, Visual Arts as a programme is studied by senior high school (SHS) students and tertiary levels. At the SHS level, the vocational skills programmes comprise Visual Arts and Home Economics. The curriculum for students reading Visual Arts include Sculpture, Ceramics, Graphic Design, Picture Making, Textiles, Jewellery, Leatherwork, Basketry, and General Knowledge in Art which serves as core to all students (Evans-Solomon, 2004; Asihene, 2009). The Curriculum Research and Development Division's Teaching Syllabus for Visual Arts for General Knowledge in Art (2008) suggests that students should have adequate foundational knowledge and skills in any of the eight elective subjects in addition to self-employment or apprenticeship with respect to students who wish to finish their education at the second cycle.

The syllabus offers advice on two types of elective subjects to choose from, for each student: namely, two-dimensional and three-dimensional subject. Subjects under the two dimensional category include Graphic Design, Picture Making and Textiles. Those classified under three dimensional art forms comprise Sculpture, Ceramics, Jewellery, Basketry and Leatherwork. In a related study, Siaw (2009) has reiterated that three elective subjects (one of the three-dimensional category and two from two-dimensional

category) plus a compulsory core subject: General Knowledge in Art, making it a total of four elective subjects. By studying these subjects for a period of three years in addition to other core subjects such as English Language, Mathematics, Integrated Science and Social Studies, students get the chance to write their final year exams, West African Senior Schools Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and hopefully get the opportunity to continue their education at the tertiary level or enter the job market.

The choice of a particular Visual Arts subject is dependent on specialist teachers available in a school and the right facilities available, tools, equipment and relevant materials (Owusu-Afriyie, 2009). It is worth noting that the range of subjects studied by students at the SHS level will to a large extent has an impact on a student's academic and career path after completing the programme.

General Knowledge in Art (GKA) as well as other subjects has its own challenges (Evans-Solomon and Opoku-Asare, 2011). The 2008 Teaching Syllabus describes GKA as a composite subject which has been taken from all the Visual Arts subjects studied at the Senior High School level and is supposed to give information on the history of art, creativity and appreciation, the elements and principles of art, and practical skills in various exercises. Just like any other elective subject, GKA involves theory and practice-based topics. The first part, which is the theoretical component is needed to advance the scope of art vocabulary so as to equip students with the right knowledge to communicate in the subject area with reference to art. The practice-based aspect of the syllabus is to underscore what has been learnt in the individual subjects (Evans-Solomon and Opoku-Asare, 2011).

Opoku-Asare (2008) asserts that GKA has no specialist teachers, hence, every teacher teaching any of the elective subjects is likely to teach the subject well. In order to teach GKA, it assumes that a teacher should be knowledgeable, resourceful, genius, helpful nature of teachers who are assigned to teach the subjects in various schools. Despite, Visual Arts could help transform secondary education by providing jobs for individuals (Rihani, 2006), it seems that Ghana might not be able to benefit from this programme if the vocational and technical is under resourced and thereby resulting in a negative impact on human capital development for economic growth (The President's Education Reform Review Committee, 2002).

## **2.5. Factors that Affect Academic Performance of Students**

Many researchers have argued that there are number of factors affecting students' performance at various schools, colleges and even universities (e.g. Durden, and Ellis, 1995; Kwesiga, 2002; Crosnoe, Johnson, and Elder, 2004; Kyoshaba, 2009; Osei-Mensah, 2012; MolokoMphale, and Mhlauli, 2014). Findings from this research suggest students' effort, previous school attended, the background of the parent, income of the family, self-motivation of students, the age of the student, students learning choice and grade of student are factors that have an effect on students academic performance. The relevance of these studies by previous authors should lead to corrective measures that is likely to improve the academic performance of SHS graduates. So it stands to reason that students who perform well might be encouraged to pursue further studies after completing their first degrees and even move on to doctorates based on a person's career path.

### **2.5.1 School's Leadership**

The success of an institution is dependent on the leadership of that institution. Currently, leaders of schools may perform multiple tasks as compared to their counterparts in the past. Their roles include managing, giving instructions, curriculum delivery, counselling and performing advisory roles in the society. Experts in the field think that there is a relationship between good leadership and school performance (Emerson and Goddard, 1993). Some authors, for instance, Yusuf (2012) acknowledges that no institution is greater than their leaders and vice versa. On the one hand, a strong relationship exists between the quality of school and the quality of its leadership. On the other hand, some authors seem to argue that there is not much evidence to substantiate that relationship between the two variables (Witziers, Bosker and Kruger, 2003). MolokoMphale and Mhlauli (2014) think that many studies about school leadership quality impacts a school's success, teacher's effectiveness and students' academic effectiveness. The head of a school is in-charge of all activities that occurs in a school and is accountable to Educational Directorate, Board of Governors, Parents- Teacher Association (P.T.A.), among others. It is the duty of a head to monitor the success of a school by making teaching and learning satisfying and more effective. It is the desire of a head of school that he or she is trusted, respected and praised by the community he or she works in. A school's reputation in terms of academic performance could be poor and if this happens, then the school's reputation is diminished. This is what most of the times, the head of a school tries to avoid. Academic performance is likely to be maintained by a guiding philosophy for a school, instructions for a school with its settings and aiming to achieve its target as provided by a supervisory body, that is, becoming instructional leaders.

Among the ways in which leaders in a school have an impact on students' performance include instructional leadership which consists of goals setting, curriculum management, lesson plans, monitoring, resource allocation and assessment of teachers on a regular basis to help students learning and development (Concordia University, 2013). Effective instructional leaders have the ability to build the art of learning, make provision for resources towards quality teaching, and structure the classroom environment to encourage teachers and students' motivation. Indeed, effective instructional leadership of leaders in a school is important to teachers' performance and students' academic achievement (Strauss, 2013). One of the supervisory responsibilities by heads of schools is to find out what goes on in the classroom. Observation in the classroom should be done from time to time and where necessary teachers should be advised on their strengths and weaknesses. When heads of school praise teachers it usually makes teachers feel valued and this is likely to inspire teachers to work for longer hours. To provide helpful advice to teachers should lead to an improvement in their performance. Evaluation of teachers is one of the responsibilities of heads of schools. School leaders should be able to communicate in an excellent way. They should continually recap the school's vision, mission and values to teachers, parents and students and their core mandate as a school which is to provide teaching and learning in a safe environment. School heads should encourage teachers that with determination, they can survive in difficult times. In fact, it is prudent that they listen to all stakeholders in the running of their schools. It is also relevant for school leaders to follow the theory of shared leadership which involves other stakeholders in the field of education. Ideas and views of those in the school environment might help improve academic performance if heeded

to. Their skills in communication could instill confidence, motivation and skills among students and teachers, leading to a positive impact on students' performance. Collaboration among teachers should characterize a school's leadership style of leading. Meeting of teachers should help promote a safe place of exchanging knowledge and experiences in relation to teaching and learning. Hence, this prevents the idea of isolation among teachers on students' performance, which is a major issue on the part of academic staff. In addition to leading to a collaborative style among, it is expedient that school leaders should be easily approachable by all, lead with a positive mindset, seek to be a role model for students to emulate and examine a process that improves teaching and learning as well as provision of staff professional development. To be successful in leadership requires that one should have excellent planning and observational skills in addition to expertise in research and evaluation for teachers and students (Geshe,2017)

### **2.5.2 Teachers' Characteristics**

School improvement depends on teacher characteristics. Teachers are those who bring about development and improvement in students' knowledge and serve as agents of change (Wallace, 2011). Effective teaching is a key feature of, among other interests of policy makers in education, among teachers and parents. This is achieved through terminal and final examinations. On the one hand, teachers have a feeling that students who fail at exams are taught by inefficient teachers and those who are able to pass their exams are tutored by efficient teachers. Research in this field suggests that teachers' effectiveness has a relationship on students' academic accomplishment (Afe, 2001). It stands to reason that teachers serve as facilitators in the course of their teaching and

learning activities. They seek to bring an interpretation to students on the subject they handle bearing in mind the theory and practice components of the subject. As Taal (1996) noted the teacher is gradually the focus of attention due to the role they play in delivering quality education to students. This implies that teachers are considered as persons having the ability to change the academic performance of students. They are worthy of praise and also given perks when they perform well. In Botswana, the government has made it a point to reward both students and teachers who excel in their external examination and these include the receiving of gifts and fully paid trips to outside the country. Teachers are responsible for imparting knowledge and skills in students in addition to encouraging them. This is incorporated into the employment contract and clearly spelt out in their responsibilities as teachers. Teachers are known to help students develop their potential abilities in addition to developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes. At the beginning of a student's career, it is the duty of a teacher to nurture a student's primary skills required to help further development in academic work. Teachers serve as guides for students in achieving their academic goal in life. As a result, students should be prepared to face situations that may occur in the course of their education. In this era, according to Bubblews (2013, p. 3) teachers should "develop learners instead of teaching them, who help their pupils to become independent (learning to learn), who provide students with motivation and interest for lifelong learning and urge them to become autonomous learners". Teachers make use of a number of techniques in order to improve academic goals. This involves evaluation, assessment and provision for students who require special attention as far as academic work is concerned.

To sum it up, the characteristics of teachers are multifaceted and this should urge all teachers who feel they lack certain traits to fully acknowledge them and find innovative ways of improving on those traits.

### **2.5.3 Students' Characteristics that Affect Academic Performance**

A lot of authorities posit that the following factors (Type or nature of the School; Students' Learning Preferences; Class attendance and academic performance; Gender factors and Entry qualifications and prerequisites) constitute students characteristics that affect academic performance (e.g. Kwesiga, 2002 and Sentamu, 2003; Crosne and Elder2004; Harb and El-Shaarawi, 2006; Reid, 1995; Pashler, McDaniel, Rohrer, and Bjork, 2008; Devadoss and Foltz, 1996; Durden and Ellis, 1995; Romer, 1993; Park and Kerr, 1990; Schmidt, 1983). Based (Rodgers and Rodgers, 2003; Durden and Ellis, 1995).

**These factors are discussed below:**

### **2.5.4. Type or Nature of School**

How a school environment is and its teachers' expectation from its students are strong factors that influence a student's performance (Considine and Zappala, 2002 as cited by Sparkles, 1999). A teacher who works in a poor school setting might run into the lack of basic facilities which is required for academic work to take place and when students perceive that teachers are expecting a low performance on their part, it is likely to result in that. Kwesiga (2012) is of the view that the performance of students is often influenced by studies in the school and the number of facilities available which

corresponds to the rank of the school. This commensurate the performance and accomplishment of its students.

Sentamu (2003) underscore that a school's influence is based on its educational process in organizing its content, and also its teaching and learning process, resulting in its overall evaluation. Students who attend top-rated schools are normally expected to perform better because of the school they attend, which is seen to be well resourced. This is as a result of its resources which school authorities appropriate and also the available funds allocated for such activities, hence leading to a better performance of their students. Crosne and Elder (2004) point out that school ownership, provision of facilities and resources available as important structural components of a school setting. To conclude, the above authors are in support of what constitutes the nature of a school if it is to succeed or otherwise and paying heed to these factors are likely to improve academic performance of a school.

#### **2.5.5. Students' Learning Preferences**

Reid (1995) has defined learning preference as the “natural, habitual and preferred way” of grasping new information. Research by Harb and El-Shaarawi (2006) indicates that there is a link between learning preference of students and their teacher's teaching style. Every individual has a way of understanding what is taught effectively due to difference in them. In order to encourage learning preferences among students, teachers should be able to analyse student preference with regard to learning and adapt to that preference (Pashler, McDaniel, Rohrer, and Bjork, 2008).

Still, Omrod (2008) has come to understand that information which is put across in the form of words are better understood by some students, while other students are able to grasp such information in pictorial form. Teachers who make use of only one learning style are likely to affect the way students understand what is presented due to difference in students learning styles thereby affecting their performance academically. Previous research by Felder (1993) has argued that there is a link between a learner's preference and an instructor teaching style which should result in a better memory and comprehension. Moreover, learning preferences has been widely researched in the field of education despite its lack of evidence to support the claims.

#### **2.5.6. Class Attendance and Academic Performance**

Among researchers in this field, Romer (1993) is one of the authors whose work has been cited largely and it sought to examine the link between student attendance and examination performance. Many factors contribute to the fall in students' performance over the past 15 years. Key reasons given include "assessment pressures, poor delivery of lectures, timing of lectures, and work commitments" (Newman-Ford, Lloyd and Thomas, 2009). The critical question worth asking is, "does absenteeism affects students' academic performance?" Meanwhile, several authors have argued that students who miss class might perform badly (Devadoss and Foltz, 1996; Durden and Ellis, 1995; Romer, 1993; Park and Kerr, 1990; Schmidt, 1983). As a result of this finding, stakeholders in the education sector are of the view that class attendance should be always checked.

However, evidence suggests a strong relationship between attendance and academic performance, and it seems that none of those studies mentioned beforehand specifically show a causal effect. The lack of longitudinal studies which focuses on students' characteristics is a main setback to the usefulness of these findings (Rodgers and Rodgers, 2003). It is clear that class attendance and academic performance have a strong relationship and the absence of one is possible to impact on the other.

### **2.5.7 Gender Factors**

The impact of age as against gender on academic performance has been the focus of some researchers which has led to varied conclusions on the subject. Differences in what researchers have focused in this field might vary based on the subject of study of a student, age and gender. It has been found that men perform better than women in some circumstances, whereas women also do likewise in certain fields of study (Haist, Wilson, Elam, Blue, and Fosson, 2000).

In contrast, a study by Borde (1998) failed to provide evidence for academic performance as influenced by gender. For an analysis of 2,000,000 students about to graduate, Woodfield and Earl-Novell (2006) found that females performed better than males due to the fact that they are meticulous and may not absent themselves from class. From the above views of experts in the field, it is evident that both boys and girls may have subjects they excel at and should be encouraged to pursue their passion.

### **2.5.8 Entry Qualifications and Prerequisites**

Anecdotal evidence suggests that senior high school (SHS) students will often provide their Basic Education Certificate Examination result slip provided by West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) plus the placement form provided by The Computerized School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS). Previously, a JHS student graduate should have a grade from six to thirty to enable all students who chose the subject get the opportunity to read the programme. Currently, the Government of Ghana policy for Free SHS for all students has made it possible for students with even aggregate forty and above get access to senior high education.

According to Mlambo (2011) learning is a cumulative process, that is, if a student is admitted with a good grade into the school, that student will be ready for the course material than the one admitted with a weak grade. School authorities should investigate the background of students in order to know their previous performance.

### **2.6 Parents or Guardians Factors**

Studies have shown that when parents participate in their ward's education, it has a positive effect on their academic performance and the school's success (Halsey, 2004; Christie, 2005). Involvement of parents in their ward's education improves the morale of teachers and thereby may create a cordial relationship between the school and the community. The important aspect of it is that of parents involving themselves in their ward's education. There are several things that parents or guardians can do to help their ward's education. The purpose of the involvement promotes positive behaviour between students, checking up on students' work, encouraging contributions from each parent

towards their ward's education, helping students to do their assignments, tutoring, supervision of afternoon study periods, coaching sports and motivational talks. Provided that parents are aware that their opinions are factored in their ward education, they will be interested in providing such assistance to their ward education. The wish of a parent is to have a child who becomes a good citizen. An aspiration of a parent is to see their ward succeed in their education. Moreover, developing countries that have a high percentage of unemployment rate usually have parents focusing on their ward's education which they believe will result in career choices and lucrative jobs.

### **2.7. Home Conditions of Students that Affect Academic Performance**

Parents financial status and their education level, occupation, and their academic status affect their wards' academic performance. Many studies corroborate that the academic achievement of students is possibly based on parents socio-economic condition. To this end, students from higher socio-economic background will outperform their counterparts from low socio-economic background together with the work they do and their income level (Jeynes, 2002).

Researchers such as Graetz (1995), Considine and Zappala (2002), Eamon (2005) and Pedrosa et al. (2006) have undertaken research on academic achievement, and as such it is not very surprising to note that the socio-economic status is a key element when making projections for academic performance. In fact, Graetz (1995) conducted a study of socio-economic research with parents of students and came to conclusion that the social status might have a great impact on students' academic performance; thereby

creating imbalance between students and their success which is possible through their socio-economic status.

Two authors (Considine and Zappala, 2002 and Graetz, 1995) are of similar views that social and economic demerit in the academic performance of students when parents or guardians have social, economic and educational advantage may achieve a higher success rate in the future. However, it has come to the notice of parents who make available sufficient psychological and emotional support to their children by providing a sound education and learning environment which result in confidence and the improvement of the requisite skills to succeed.

On the contrary, students from poor homes are likely to perform poorly based on the socio-economic and educational background of parents, and the opposite is true for those from wealthy families (Pedrosa et al., 2006). This occurrence is called educational elasticity. It is noteworthy that the criteria in the classification of socio-economic standard in different nations vary in terms of their norms and values. The checklist for low socio-economic status are made known to developing nations and those from high socio-economic principles are different as well.

The income of a family for a month or year and their expenditure also put a great effect on the learning opportunities accessible to the younger generation and their opportunity to achieve success. A parent's income or social status could have a positive effect on a student's test score. It is presumed that students learning outcome and educational performance have a relationship with the standard and type of educational institution a

student may find him or herself with an education setting. The educational atmosphere of the school one attends sets the limits of students' learning outcomes.

## **2.8. Strategies that can be put in Place to Improve Students' Academic Performance**

Gagne (1990) has observed that learning occurs when a learners' performance has changed repeatedly. This is what Gagne considers to be learning. Ehiameter (1990) is of the view that after learning, assignments to test students' knowledge on what has been taught follows. For instance, when a teacher is teaching in class, it seems that students are able to follow through, but as soon as similar problems are given students are likely to find it difficult to solve such problems. Teachers are able to gauge the students' weakness and prepare towards such weakness in helping students overcome those areas in his or her subject area.

A significant factor in learning as stated by Ehiameter (1990) and Farrant (1992) is the learning environment. A conducive atmosphere is what makes learning more effective. Moore (1998) opines that teachers who are zealous are likely to produce top students who can achieve more in their academic pursuit. Farrant (1982) argues that students perform better when their fellow students teach them and this usually underscores what the teacher has already taught in class. This leads to better students exercising their teaching ability. Hence, this suggests how learning should take place in an effective teaching atmosphere. The importance of teaching and how it is handled in the classroom is very important. This is shown through the UK Government's effort in the ways

teachers teach in a more prescribed manner such as literacy, numeracy, among others (Mortimore et al., 1998).

Mortimore et al. (1998) has noticed that teachers who spent more time in routine exercises with individual students use low order questioning strategies and those who go for discussion in class often use the high order questioning strategies. Moreover, the factors that make effective teaching among students include “structured sessions, intellectually challenging teaching, a work oriented environment, communication between teachers and pupils” (Mortimore et al., 1998). The following are considered to be good traits of teachers as stated by OFSTED (1995): good subject knowledge, good questioning skills, an emphasis upon instructions, a balance of grouping strategies, clear objectives, good time management, effective planning, good classroom organization, and effective use of other adults in the classroom.

Learning by doing involves students’ active participation in a particular subject in the field of education (Zapalska et al. 2002). This result in the student’s ability to learn on their own and they should adapt to changes in the learning environment. As a result, teachers could encourage student learning on their own. Teachers should give learners the ability to contribute at certain when they are teaching in order for learners to discover things by themselves and contribute meaningfully in class. In this vein, “teachers must therefore act as consultants, catalysts, arbitrators, troubleshooters, confidants, fellow learners and sign posters, managers, communicators and facilitators in the classroom” (Mordedzi, 1999). As described by Farrant (1980), effective teaching considers how a teacher teaches with respect to students, the curriculum, resources and teaching methods. It involves the requisite knowledge of child and adult development

and teaching skills in order to structure and deliver effectively in his teaching. From the above views of different authors, it is clear what teachers and students should do in order to improve the academic performance which has effects on both students and schools.

# KNUST



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Overview**

This section of the study discusses the research design, the data collection instruments, the study population, the sample size, the sampling techniques, data analysis and presentation procedures, criteria reliability and validity, reliability and validity of results, and finally ethical consideration.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

A research design gives details of the basic structure of the research as it offers the procedural framework for the conduct of the research in line with the researcher's preferences, philosophy, and ideas (Amedahe, 2004). According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, (2009) the types of design or plan for a research; is exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive. Saunders et al. (2009) maintains that exploratory research is adopted on a research field that have not yet been discovered in previous researches and strives to generate hypotheses for more research. Explanatory research analyses the causes and relationships and make efforts to identify patterns related to the subject matter or phenomena studied.

Exploratory research is thus explained as finding new insights and evaluating occurrences in a new light (Robson, 2002) whereas explanatory study centres on enlightening relationships among variables (Saunders, et al., 2007). In descriptive research, a subject matter or phenomena is described and documented. It is not

necessary to use all these three in a particular research as the aim of the study was not to develop new propositions for future research (Yin, 1994) or an explanation to decide the impact that a variable has over another though the problem was considered structured (Emory and Cooper, 1991).

### **3.3 Research Approach**

#### **3.3.1 Qualitative Approach**

Hollensen (2007) describes a qualitative research of been able to provide “*a holistic view of a research problem by integrating a larger number of variables, but asking only a few respondents.*”

Qualitative in simplest form deals with words and for this purpose provides opportunity to rely on observation and fieldwork, which help to understand a reality or to understand an object (Bryman and Bell, 2007) under study. The qualitative approach helps to better understand social phenomena as it provides opportunity to deeply understand and investigate the phenomena or topic (Creswell, 2007), in a totality which in this study refers to the factors that affect students’ academic performance of visual arts education in Dormaa Senior High School and the strategies that need to be put in place to enhance the Visual Arts Program in the school.

#### **3.3.2 Qualifications of Qualitative Approach**

With the nature of the research questions (being “what”), the need for control over behavioural events, and the descriptive nature of this study coupled with adoption of case study, as specified by research methods experts (e.g. Yin, 2003b; Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2005; Baverstam and Larsson, 2009), qualitative becomes the required

approach since according to Holme and Solvang (1997), within qualitative method, the researcher's understanding and interpretation of the phenomenon under study that stands in the centre. Secondly, a qualitative approach was chosen because it was considered useful for the study aimed to obtain a comprehensive information on factors that affect students' academic performance of visual arts education in Dormaa Senior High School and the strategies that need to be put in place to enhance Visual Arts education in the school.

Thirdly, the researcher intended to use qualitative research to test theories inductively without any intention of quantifying findings. Hence, with the adoption of qualitative approach, the researcher described certain aspects of the phenomenon relying on the researcher's interpretation of the actual situation (Cormack, 1991; Leach, 1990 as cited in Charoenruk, 2006; Holmen and Solvang, 2001).

Lastly, in defending why qualitative approach was chosen, the researcher was informed by empirical study that the gathering of data that involved larger, more respondents' samples and numerical calculation of results (Wiid and Diggines, 2009), or findings. As researching into the factors that affect academic performance of Visual Arts Students of Dormaa Senior High School in Brong Ahafo Region in Ghana does not need large sample size selection, because information could be collected effectively by contacting forty(40) key respondents in Dormaa Senior High School being the case-studied school.

### **3.4. Research Methods**

Research strategy, according to Saunders et al, (2007), is defined as the general strategy of how a researcher will go about providing answers towards the research questions. Remenyi, Williams, Money and Swartz (2003) defined research strategy as providing broad direction of the research as well as the process by which the research is conducted. Considering the topic under discussion, the researcher sought to adopt a case study and descriptive research method as the appropriate strategies on the subject. The research is based on factors that affect students' academic performance of visual arts education in Dormaa Senior High School and the strategies that will enhance the Visual Arts programme in the school. The following section briefly describes case study strategy and justifies its preference in this study as well as description.

#### **3.4.1 Case Study**

Creswell (2003) defines case study as “a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (such as observations, interviews, audiovisual material, documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes”. A case study becomes a suitable strategy when the researcher decides to focus on one or few research units with the purposes of getting deeper insights into events, relations and processes (Denscombe, 2000). It is stated that when finding answers to “what” research questions, when the researcher have little control over events, and when the focus is on a phenomenon in a

real-life context, case study becomes the preferred strategy (Yin, 2003b; Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2005).

With the focus of the research being to gain deeper understanding of the factors that affect academic performance of Visual Arts Students in Dormaa Senior High School, and giving the nature of the research questions, the need for control over behavioural events, and the descriptive nature of the thesis topic as specified by Yin (2003b), and Ghauri and Gronhaug, (2005), all these qualifications informed the researcher's decision to conduct a single case.

- Justifications for the adoption of Case Study method

There are three qualifications recommended by Yin (2003b), as regards the adoption of case study method that is forming the basis for its preference in this present study. In the present thesis, case study was preferred and justified. The usage of “what” questions are evidenced in the research questions below:

- i. What are the specific factors that underpin low academic performance of Visual Arts Students in Dormaa Senior High School?
- ii. What are the strategies that need to be adopted to get the academic performance of Visual Arts Students in Dormaa Senior High School enhanced?

The second condition as identified in Yin (2003b), was the degree of control the researcher has over the actual behaviour of respondents. In this thesis work, the researcher had no control over the behaviour of selected students and the teachers who

were chosen as participants for the study. Furthermore, there was no possibility of manipulating the behaviour of all the respondents selected from the school, and regarding the subject matter, factors that affect students academic performance of visual arts education in Dormaa Senior High School and the strategies that need to be put in place to enhance Visual Arts Programme in the school. This means that all these events were beyond the control of the researcher.

The last condition is the degree of focus on contemporary or historical events. Ideally, the phenomenon under investigation was contemporary one, that is, factors that affect students' academic performance of visual arts education in Dormaa Senior High School and the strategies that need to be put in place to enhance the Visual Arts program in the school. This made the third condition for selecting case study research also justified, and preferred in this study.

As a type of research strategy, case study makes use of several methods to generate knowledge and ideas. Triangulation has been described as the essence of adopting case study and is considered as imperative to ensure validity as quality criteria in a case study (Johansson, 2003), method. The meaning of triangulation, is to "... use multiple research methods across multiple time periods." To constitute triangulation, the researcher used three different common methods, which were mentioned by Woodside, (2010) to include:

1. Direct observation within Dormaa Senior High School being the scope of the study.

2. Probing by asking participants during the focus group discussions and the explanations and interpretations of the interviews.
3. Analysing written documents such as attendance register, terminal reports, placement forms for admissions, and WASSCE results analysis, hence the researcher used triangulation being generated from case study method.

The sampling selection was done through judgemental, in order to ensure that all the students and teachers chosen as respondents had the characteristics of fitting into the profile and every interviewee was available, willing and equipped to provide the needed answers to the questions posed during the focus group discussion and interview session. In this wise, it needs to be stressed that only students, offering visual arts and their teachers (in GKA, Leatherwork and Graphic Design) as the elements to be studied. All these respondents were located through the researcher's network of contacts, hence negotiating access became easy.

### **3.4.2 Descriptive Method**

The most appropriate strategy for conducting this study was descriptive research methodology which was adopted to design and collect data for analysis. It is instructive to note that when touching on the factors that affect the academic performance of visual arts students in senior high school in the Brong Ahafo Region in Ghana, it is assumed that the researcher already had some knowledge and information about the chosen area. So what followed was to do a comprehensive description of the subject matter or the phenomenon. In adopting descriptive research design for this study, data collection took

the form of focus group discussions and Unstructured Interviews. These were used to collect the necessary data from the students and teachers of Visual Arts Department of Dormaa Senior High School, being the case-study school.

The blueprint of this study was to do a detailed description of the phenomena as it exists in the majority of senior high schools in Ghana. The last but not the least reason for conducting descriptive research was to define the features of the phenomenon (Zikmund, 2000), which for this situation is referred to the critical factors that affect students academic performance of Visual Arts education in Dormaa Senior High School and the strategies that need to be put in place to enhance Visual Arts programme in the school.

### **3.5 Population and Sampling**

#### **3.5.1 Population**

To gather data for this study, the researcher had to do that from a total population of one hundred and thirty-two, and more specifically from an identical sample. The term population, in this case is defined as “the universe of units from which the sample was to be selected” (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005). It is also described as the “first step” in adopting sampling method to select a particular sample in a group of units which is termed as population (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

The population for this study consisted the students pursuing the Visual Arts Education in Dormaa Senior High School and the past students from 2014-2016 year group. All the three classes in the department and the past students of the three year groups (2014-

2016) are considered for the study. The researcher believed that students in these classes might have knowledge about WASSCE and that they are also familiar with factors affecting their academic performance. In addition are the visual arts teachers.

### **3.5.2 Sample Selection**

It has to be noted that to include every individual participant in the population for a study can be considered so close to be impossible and impractical. Also, it should not be assumed that a census would necessarily and practically provide more useful results than gathering data from a sample which represents an entire population.

That is to say, the sample selection is a very significant step in the research process, particularly when the researcher is constrained in terms of time and the results to be collected from the data are needed quickly (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). A sample is “the segment of the population that is selected for investigation” (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005).

### **3.5.3 Sample Size**

A sample size of forty(40) respondents were purposively and conveniently selected out of one hundred and thirty-two(132) to help in eliciting responses for this study. To get all the forty (40) respondents, a quota of nine (9) Visual Arts students from each year group was selected from all the three previous year batches (that is, 2014, 2015 and 2016) and the current students, making thirty-six (36) and a total of four (4) teachers were selected to be interviewed.

This is illustrated in Table 3.1:

Table 3.1: Number of respondents

<b>Year Batch</b>	<b>Number of respondents selected</b>
2014	Nine (9) VAS
2015	Nine (9) VAS
2016	Nine (9) VAS
9 Current students (2017, 2018, 2019)	With three (3) selected from each year class=(9)
Total number of students who participated = 36	

Author's construct, 2017

Hence, this brought to the fore the criteria which were used to purposively sample participants to participate in this study, which included the following:

- Visual Arts students (both past and current: 2017; and current form 3 and form 2 students).
- Students (past and current with the time and willingness to accept to participate in this study specifically in the focus group discussions and the unstructured interviews).

With regards to the population of this study, interview as a data collection method was adopted. Four teachers were also selected to be interviewed on the subject matter, “factors that affect students’ academic performance of visual arts education”.

It is instructive to note that all these categories of respondents were chosen for each of the data collection techniques because they were considered to be the right people needed to give the right information on the subject. Holme and Solvang (1997), posit that it is of great importance to find the respondents to obtain the right information from them.

#### **3.5.4 Sampling Method: Non-probability Sampling**

In adopting sampling selection process, there are two main alternatives available. They are: the random sampling, which deals with the researcher ensuring the possibility to generalize the empirical findings, and the non-random sampling. Saunders *et al.*, (2007) stresses that probability sampling also known as random sampling is most commonly associated with survey-based research strategies. Conversely, “for non-probability sampling, it is impossible to answer research questions or to address objectives that require statistical inferences about the characteristics of the population.” The authors view it as a type of stratified sampling sometimes referred to as “judgemental or purposive sampling” or expert choice (Saunders *et al.*, 2007).

In the latter process, the researcher decided based on her own subjective judgement which respondents should be included in the study. Previous idea of the sampling could lead to some representatives to be favoured before other representatives. Due to time and other resource constraints in this master’s project work, convenience sampling of the key respondents (that is, Visual Arts students and their teachers) was done. Through a self-selection process, the representatives involved are voluntarily participating in the

study and usually noticed earlier in time (Johansson, 1993). The researcher arrived at a conclusion that a non-probability sampling method remained suitably qualified for the study, since a smaller number of Visual Arts Students, thirty-six (36) and their four (4) teachers were available. Snowballing or referral technique was adopted to get the past students (who have completed school for the past three years) participate in the focus group discussions.

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### **3.6 Sources of Data**

It is widely known that researchers in their quests of carrying out studies are able to gather data through several means such as observation, experiment, interview, survey, focus groups, panel discussions, etc. It needs however, maintain that the choice of data collection is dependent heavily upon the type of data needed (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005) to be collected. It is known as the rule of thumb that any form of data can be classified into primary and secondary data (Emory and Cooper, 1991).

According to Hollensen (2007), primary data are simply, “information that is collected first-hand, generated by original research tailor-made to answer specific current research questions”.

For the purposes of this study, the data sources were primary data ones that were gathered directly from the field using instrumentations such as focus group discussions and unstructured interviews, whereas, secondary source of information simply comprised published articles from peer reviewed journals, internet sources such as dogpile.com, etc.

### **3.7 Data Collection Methods**

#### **3.7.1 Focus Group Discussions**

Focus group discussions and unstructured or in-depth interviews were used to collect data for this study. Morgan (1996) defines focus group discussions “as a research method that collects data through group interactions on a topic determined by the investigator”. According to Zikmund and Babin (2010) focus group discussions comprise unstructured, free flow interview with a group of participants usually between six and ten. Including significant narrative data which was found in the focus group discussions improved the study’s validity and reliability standards (Halcomb, Gholizadeh, DiGiacomo, Phillips, and Davidson, 2007). Conducting more than a focus group discussion was required to provide sufficient exploration (Shoqirat, 2009) and was likely to lead to the increase in the reliability of the data to be gathered by detecting the agreement across differing focus groups (Morgan, 1997). For the purpose of this study, issues that emerged from one focus group discussion triggered the discussion in successive focus groups.

Following the position of Zikmund and Babin (2010) regarding the number to be chosen for a focus group discussion, a total of thirty-six (36) respondents – nine (9) past students were selected from each past year; 2014, 2015 and 2016 respectively. Another (9) nine respondents being the current Visual Arts students were selected (comprising three students selected from each class).

All these respondents were selected because they remained the right individuals and in the best position to provide the right responses or information needed to carry out this study (Holme and Solvang, 1997). Practically, the students who were selected for the

unstructured interview from each year completed batch together with the current students were all considered the most suitable participants for this study because they remain individuals most likely to have greater understanding when it comes to unearthing the factors that affect students' academic performance of visual arts education in Dormaa Senior High School. On the other hand, teachers were also considered right respondents because they impact knowledge being acquired by the students. Hence, they too have a wealth of information concerning factors that affect students' academic performance of visual arts education in Dormaa Senior High School.

In each year's batch, two forms of data were gathered and compared with one another for the purposes of gaining the most preferred data to be gathered from each participant. The focus group discussions were based on the factors that affect students' academic performance of visual arts education in Dormaa Senior High School.

With the researcher acting as the moderator, a series of sub-questions derived from the three main research questions were posed to the participants. The structure of the questions for the focus groups was as follows:

- i. What are the factors that result in high students' academic performance of visual arts students in Dormaa Senior High School?.
- ii. What are the specific factors that underpin low academic performance of Visual Arts students in Dormaa Senior High School?
- iii. What are the strategies that can be put in place to enhance academic performance of visual art students in Dormaa Senior High School?.

### **3.7.2 Unstructured Interview Method**

After the focus group discussions, the same participants were used to conduct a one-on-one interview.

These interviews hinged on the same objective, but questions were posed a little bit different in a form similar to the former structure. These interviews were used to establish if the responses from the focus group discussions departed significantly from the One-On-One Interview. They were also used to check if groupthink had an influence on the information that were gathered from the first two focus group discussions. The challenge associated with this method was to ensure that the differences in the responses from the focus groups and the One On One Interview, if any, were attributable to groupthink. The actual limitation concerned with how potential sources of falsity and inaccuracies were to be controlled, relating to variables grouping and individual responses in all the focus group discussions. To deal with this limitation of spuriousness associated with the responses given by the respondents a brief period of thirty minutes existed between the focus group discussions and the One-On-One Interview.

Before the focus group discussions and the unstructured interview, permission was sought from participants to do audio recording for responses from them using a digital recorder. During the discussions and unstructured interview, the researcher adopted brief note-taking to augment the digital recording of the responses, which was followed up by detailed notes that were taken right after each interview. This was to ensure the capturing of as much detail as possible from each interview.

From a hermeneutical standpoint, the one-on-one interviews comprise text, but not statistics (Huei-Wen and Huei-Fu, 2017). This study was based on hermeneutics because it provided a support during the analysis stage of the chosen theme (that is, the factors that affect academic performance of Visual Arts Students) by gathering data and literature. The study primarily concerned with the viewpoints of Visual Arts Students and their teachers in the school.

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### **3.7.3 Pilot Study**

When organizing the focus group discussions for the study, the researcher realized that little information could be obtained on the factors that affect students' academic performance of visual arts education in Dormaa Senior High School.

Thus, it was difficult to know which question should be posed during focus group discussions and how to structure them in order to provide answers to the research questions. A survey questionnaire was designed and submitted to the Visual Arts students and teachers selected as the respondents for the study. The researcher realized then that some mistakes might have been made. Through this pilot study, the researcher realized that certain questions were unnecessary while some others were good. Afterwards, the whole structure was modified to get improved set of questions posed to help answer the research questions.

### 3.8 Data Analysis

The data in this study were analysed using a standard procedure. It is contended that thematic analysis being the main method of analysis in this study is seen as “*essentialist or realist*” method (Braun and Clark, 2006), following the tenets of the study, which were based on description and reporting on experiences and reality of students being participants in the focus group discussions, whereas, teachers also selected as participants in the interviews. It was against this premise that thematic analysis became applicable to the study as it examined both students and teachers’ views in relation to the factors that affect students’ academic performance of visual arts education in Dormaa Senior High School. Thus, it provided an opportunity for the study to have a reflection of current realities and to which led to the exploration of the surface of this reality that emanated from the perspective of the respondents.

By using thematic analysis, the researcher painstakingly examined all the questions posed to participants during the focus group discussions and unstructured interviews. The data were analysed in the three steps of thematic analysis, which were further grouped into categorizations (i.e. dividing findings into groupings). Once the themes and the categorizations were finalized, explanation building was adopted to examine within the context of each question posed in the interview guide and schedule.

The first objective, that is, the general factors that affect students’ academic performance of Visual Arts Education in Dormaa Senior High School, comprised five categorizations – School based factors; Teachers’ Factors; Student’s characteristics/ demographics; Parent’s/ guardian socio-economic condition and Home Conditions Or Parental Support.

The second objective being specific factors that underpin low academic performance also comprise five categories – School based factors / School leadership; Teachers' Factors; Student's characteristics/ demographics; Parent's/ guardian socio-economic condition and Home Conditions Or Parental Support.

The third objective being the strategies that need to be adopted to get the academic performance of Visual Arts students in Dormaa Senior High School be enhanced. Also, it comprised of two categorizations: the role to be played by the leadership of Dormaa Senior High School in adopting strategies to enhance academic performance of Visual Arts students in the Visual Arts Department and specific roles to be played by teachers in adopting strategies to enhance academic performance of Visual Arts students. The specific role to be played by the students to enhance academic performance, specific role to be played by Dormaa Ahenkro community to enhance academic performance of visual arts students and the specific role to be played by old students to enhance academic performance of Visual Arts students.

All the manuscript obtained from each of the focus group discussions and the unstructured interview was transcribed exactly into separate identified folders. The digitally recorded focus group discussions and one on one interview were re-played many times to ensure that the data obtained were understood adequately by the researcher.

The researcher read through each manuscript repeatedly, to become familiarized with the complete data gathered (hence making it deductive analysis). Then, line by line a search for the manuscript was carried out to have central themes scanned through.

These also included repeated ideas or statements (Theme) “which implied something” (Brunard, 1991) about the topic. This was followed up with making brief notes about each manuscript using different colors for different themes (e.g. selected ideas that repeat have the same colour that identify them).

Once again, each manuscript was re-read to ascertain that common themes were really common in all manuscripts. Also, by so doing irrelevant materials which were referred to as “dross” (Brunard, 1991) were identified and deleted from the analysis. To ensure the credibility of the findings and results in this qualitative analysis, the researcher all the time checked the manuscripts to eliminate inaccuracies and ambiguities.

### **3.9 Quality Criteria: Reliability and Validity**

#### **3.9.1 Reliability**

Bryman and Bell (2011), maintain that the goal of reliability as criteria for assessing quality standards is to minimize errors and provide stable results of the data to be collected. The researcher took into consideration that the right sample was selected from the pool of respondents since there was the need to have the right respondents who have knowledge of the factors that affect students’ academic performance of visual arts education in Dormaa Senior High School.

Also, more information was obtained from secondary data through journal articles and textbooks. All the journal peer reviewed articles and sources for textbooks obtained from the KNUST were scrutinized to conform to reliability and credibility status. For

the researcher to be sure about the reliability of the articles and books, all of them were read and compared to establish consistency before being used.

### **3.9.2 Validity**

It is established that the areas of validity for qualitative study comprise descriptive, interpretive, theoretical and generalizability (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2005). Descriptive validity deals with to what degree does the descriptions actually hold true. This was achieved to an acceptable degree through the data collection. The researcher having both taken extensive notes and putting most of the words that came from the interview on tape recorder, this allowed the author believe the interpretations made in the study to be valid. The theories and models for extant studies used were selected based on the fact that emerged legitimate and credible sources, hence considered as highly applicable to this study.

In the main, it is instructive to note that the interview subjects or those chosen as key respondents were all competent with the subject under discussion, having been in the key position to contribute to the provision of information regarding factors that affect academic performance of Visual Arts students in the selected Senior High School. This suggests that the findings of this study hold true and the study theoretically valid.

### **3.9.3 Reliability and validity of the Study's Results**

To enhance the reliability and validity of the results, these activities were done by the researcher:

First, objectives had a correlation with the research questions posed with enough literature to support both the objectives and the research questions. Second, it was imperative to have the right respondents selected for the interview process. These were the ones with sufficient knowledge when it comes to the subject, factors that affect academic performance of Visual Arts students in the case studied school.

Third, before the interviews were conducted, several meetings took place to establish a rapport with the respondents. To the researcher, that was hopefully made to make the respondents feel more comfortable when giving out the information.

Lastly, as the researcher was present during the unstructured interview, the researcher had the opportunity to get the interpretations confirmed. Summary of the interview findings was sent to the respondents to make sure nothing was misinterpreted. These efforts were meant to strengthen the reliability of the results. In essence, the responses obtained from the different respondents were found to be similar, something that made the researcher trust the results of the study. This also indicated that the results can be related to a certain extent.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Overview

This chapter presents the analysis and the results obtained from the field in the focus group discussions and one-on-one interviews. The responses received from the field addressed the three objectives, which comprise general factors that affect academic performance of Visual Arts Students in Dormaa Senior High School. Specific factors that contribute to low academic performance of Visual Arts students in the school and the strategies that need to be put in place to enhance effective academic performance of Visual Arts students. This study therefore sought to find out the causes of the decline in students' academic performance and to propose strategies that will enhance students' academic performance.

#### 4.2 Objective 1: Factors that Result in High Academic Performance of Visual Arts Students in Dormaa Senior High School

Five categories were obtained under this objective which included: School based factors/School leadership; Teachers' Factors; Student's characteristics/demographics; Parent's/ guardian socio-economic condition and Home Conditions Or Parental Support.

All these categories summed together indicate the extent to which participants contributed to the discussion which also revealed that they had worth of information regarding factors affecting academic performance of Visual Arts students in Dormaa Senior High School.

#### **4. 2.1: School based Factors / School Leadership**

The prevailing factors inherent in the Dormaa Senior High School Visual Arts students are capable of influencing their academic performance. This stems from a number of teachers with high academic qualification, teaching and learning materials, judicious use of contact hours by teachers, medium of instructions in the school, and tuition trend.

The school authorities can provide guidance and counselling to parents to create a positive home environment for improvement in the students' quality of work. The direction from the school authorities sometimes influences performance of their students. The guidance from the school authorities indirectly influence the students' performance.

Similarly, the school's leadership (which is headed by the Headmistress and the various Heads of Department appointed by her) supervise academic progress of the various departments of the school, organize workshops for the students to help improve their academic performance. Moreover, it is its duty to ensure there is discipline to promote a peaceful environment for teaching and learning to thrive; evaluate or appraise the performance of teachers at the end of every academic year.

Evidently, it was revealed that it is the overall Head of the school who recommends the appointment of any teacher through the consultation of Head of Department (HOD) but it is the same Head of Department who selects teachers to teach the subjects that fall within their areas of specialization. Also, the Heads of Departments are delegated by the overall Head of the School to monitor the teachers under their supervision e.g. Monitoring to ensure consistency regarding the content of the syllabus and the actual

content being delivered to the students, both Teachers and students' punctuality, absenteeism and attitude towards work are all monitored by the Head of Department who also report to the overall Head of the School on these. Teachers as part of the school's leadership also report to their Heads of Departments regarding the students they teach and their academic performance. Additional teaching and learning which is also known as extra classes is also sanctioned by the overall Head of School through approval of the Parents Teachers Association.

Lastly, disciplinary actions are taken by the overall Head of School against teachers and students who sometimes do not conform to the rules set by the school. These punitive actions go to the extent of serving as a deterrent to others.

In all, three past students from 2014 batch, four students from the 2015 batch, five students from the 2016 batch and two students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*Government as part of the leadership of the school provides teaching and learning materials such as textbooks.*

All the participants during the Focus Group Discussion agreed that:

*Visual Arts Students are always taken through regular practical works by the various subject teachers.*

Five students from 2014 batch, six students from the 2015 batch and seven students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*Teachers routinely discuss marked practical works of Visual Arts Students with them.*

Seven students from 2014 batch, five students from the 2015 batch and seven students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*The school's authority provision of guidance and counselling to Visual Arts students improve their quality of work at school.*

Visual Arts Students learning and academic performance is usually affected by the standard and type of the previous educational institution in which they attended that sets the parameters of students' learning outcomes. Thirty(30) participants who took part in the focus group discussions mentioned that, Dormaa Senior High School environment and certain teachers' expectations from their students also have a strong influence on students' performance.

Respondents also indicated that their performance as Visual Arts students is influenced by the nature of the previous school in which they studied; coupled with the number of facilities the school offers which usually determines its quality, which in turn affect the performance and accomplishment of the students. The kind of school attended by one influences his/her educational process in content, organization, teacher and teaching learning materials and final evaluation.

#### **4.2.2 Teachers' Factors**

The responses gathered from the field indicated that teachers contribute to certain factors that influence academic performance of Visual Arts students in Dormaa Senior High School. These factors include teachers being punctual and regular at school, their

ability to complete the syllabus, assign regular homework (practical works) to Visual Arts students all contribute to academic performance.

Comments that emerged from the respondents include the following:

Three students from 2014 batch, five students from the 2015, four students from 2016 batch and two students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*The effective use of contact hours by teachers contributes to Visual Arts students' academic performance.*

Four students from 2014 batch, seven students from the 2015 batch, three students from the 2016 batch and seven students from the current students' front strongly noted that:

*Certain teachers' expectations from their students also have a strong influence on students' performance.*

All the participants noted that:

*The ability of Visual Arts teachers to complete syllabus is key in getting Visual Arts Students to perform creditably in the WASSCE.*

The responses from the teachers also indicated that performance of teachers as reflected by the level of training and longer years of teaching experience will determine the quality of grades to be attained by students who undertake the WASSCE. A trained teacher with long years of experience seeks to possess pedagogical skills which is essential if it comes to promoting students' understanding, motivation to learn, and in so doing contributing to academic performance positively. It was revealed in the unstructured or one-on-one interview with teachers that all the four teachers in the

department have been in the service ranging from eighteen(18) years to eight years and are always alert, looking for methods and instructional materials that will promote meaningful learning.

#### **4.2.3: Student's Characteristics**

Previous Junior High School achievement affects the future academic performance of the Visual Arts Students in the school. This was confirmed by the teachers who were interviewed. They indicated that grades which are always obtained by Visual Arts students in Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) are also used for admission selection and which determine the students' future performance. For the students to excel academically, they have to be regular and punctual at school, attend to their assignments, initiate and embark on their own private studies, attend extra classes in school or during vacation, having access to required textbooks, etc. All these contribute to their good academic performance.

In addition to contributing to the academic performance of students in the Dormaa Senior High School, peer assistance positively influences the performance of Visual Arts students. Through peer interaction, students might increase their skills in solving both qualitative and quantitative problems.

Comments that emerged from the respondents include the following:

Three students from 2014 batch, five students from the 2015 batch, four students from 2016 batch and two students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*Students who are self-motivated and initiate their own private studies always end up doing well academically.*

All the participants agreed that:

*Good grades (as in from five-ones upwards) obtained in BECE as an entry qualification of students into the Visual Arts programme contribute positively to Visual Arts students academic performance.*

Six students from 2014 batch, eight students from the 2015 batch, all students from 2016 batch and seven students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*Previous schooling and the kind of foundation obtained by students contribute to their academic performance.*

All participants agreed that:

*Peer teaching or assistance seeks to encourage other students' participation in class.*

#### **4.2. 4: Parent's/ Guardian Socio-economic Conditions**

It needs to be established that parents or guardians' involvement in the Visual Arts students' education increases the rate of their academic performance. It is instructive to note that educated parents are able to provide further assistance to their children (Visual Arts students) regarding some of the subjects they are taught in school. During the interviews with the teachers, it was established that students who are appropriately guided by their parents or guardians do well in school.

That is, these parents or guardians show much interest in finding out about their wards' performance in school. The extent at which parents are involved in the education of the Visual Arts Students contributes to his or her performance in school. The encouragement from parents or guardians strongly improve Visual Arts students' performance in school. It was gathered that students with parents or guardians considered economically disadvantaged, suffer on the Visual Arts programme, hence end up not doing well academically at times. This is because they face challenges in getting money to buy educational tools and materials.

Comments that emerged from the respondents include the following:

Six students from 2014 batch, eight students from the 2015, all students from 2016 batch and seven students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*The level of parent's education background can contribute to Visual Arts students' performance.*

Seven students from 2014 batch, five students from the 2015, six students from 2016 batch and five students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*Parent's socio-economic standing, which deals with factors such as their level of academic and professional qualification, income and occupational affiliation, all affect the performance of the Visual Arts Students.*

#### **4.2. 5: Home Conditions or Parental Support**

Home conditions or parental support constitutes variables that can contribute to Visual Arts Students academic performance. The state of the home the Visual Arts student comes from may affect him or her since the parents are the first socializing agents in an

individual's life. Home variables such as number of siblings, survival status of parents, high dependency ratio, inability to provide textbooks and supplementary readers, inability to afford fees for extra classes, lack of motivation from parents of students can cause low academic performance.

The home vis-à-vis family structure has a great influence on the Visual Arts students psychological, emotional, social and economic state. All the respondents agreed that the state of the home affects the student's performance in school since parents are considered as the first socializing agents in the life of these students.

Comments that emerged from the respondents include the following:

All the past students from 2014 batch, five students from the 2015 batch, six students from 2016 batch and all the students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*A Visual Arts Students desire in learning coupled with his or her conducive home environment contributes to academic performance.*

All the participants noted that:

*Parents continuous interaction with teachers to know the performance of their wards contribute to their academic performance.*

All the past students from 2014 batch, five students from the 2015 batch, six students from 2016 batch and all the students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*Survival status of the parents determines their involvement in the education of the student.*

**4.3. Objective 2: This comprises categories of responses that underpin factors that account for low academic performance of Visual Arts Students in the school.**

All the respondents contacted in the field agreed that Dormaa Senior High School had registered low academic performance in the Visual Art department for the past three years (2014-2016). The following factors account for the low academic performance of the Visual Arts Students in the school.

**4.3. 1: School Environment**

The following constitute how the Dormaa Senior High Senior as a school, its environment and leadership influence academic performance of Visual Arts students.

Comments that emerged from the respondents include the following:

All the participants noted that:

*The resources in the school do not meet the current requirements of academic work of Visual Art education.*

Owusu-Afriyie,( 2009) is of the view that the choice of a particular Visual Arts subject is dependent on specialist teachers available in a school and the right facilities available, tools, equipment and relevant materials.

Six students from 2014 batch, eight students from the 2015, all students from 2016 batch and seven students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

For the past three years (2014-2016) authorities of Dormaa Senior High School has been admitting students with poor BECE grades into the Visual Arts programme hence the low academic performance registered by the final years. It is against this backdrop that certain Core Subject teachers hide behind this shortcoming in academic attainment at junior high school, and the perceived lack of interest and the generally low academic aptitude among Visual Arts students to disregard the need to give professional help to Visual Arts students in particular, to improve their potentials by giving equal attention to all subjects.

Seven students from 2014 batch, six students from the 2015 batch, all students from 2016 batch and seven students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*Most of the teachers working in the school often have low performance expectations from the Visual Arts Students and students getting to know that their teachers have low performance expectations from them, hence it leads to poor performance by the students.*

#### **4.3.2: Teacher Factors**

These are critical teachers' factors that underpin low academic performance of Visual Arts Students in Dormaa Senior High School.

All these comments emerged from the focus group discussions.

All the past students from 2014 batch, five students from the 2015 batch, six students from 2016 batch and all the students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

Teachers in the Visual Arts department of Dormaa Senior High School do not always complete their syllabus due to a lot of constant co-curricular activities occasioned in the school.

Six students from 2014 batch, five students from the 2015 batch, seven students from 2016 batch and all the students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

Teachers in Dormaa Senior High School do not always complete their syllabus because the time allotted for teachers to commence the academic year for first term for all first year does not work. The explanation for this being that first years, sometimes report in the middle of the first term in October. Some parents choose to bring their wards to start the programme in the second term, hence majority of students missing the whole of the first term.

Four past students from 2014 batch, seven students from the 2015 batch, eight students from 2016 batch and all the students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

WASSCE practical works for the final year Visual Arts Students are given to them early second term. During this period, all attentions are focused on the practicals at the expense of the theory and the core oriented subjects. Hence, teachers do not get the chance to continue with the syllabus

All the participants who took part in the Focus group discussions strongly agreed that:

Certain core subject teachers perceive and label Visual Arts Students as ‘unintelligent’, ‘not serious’ and ‘difficult to teach’ as compared to their peers offering other programmes in the school.

#### **4.3.3 Student’s Characteristics**

Low academic performance of the Visual Arts Students in the department is characterized by the following factors. Truancy plays a crucial role. The majority of the students are athletes who only become regular and punctual when there is going to be sporting events. The number of days they have been absent themselves, teaching and learning have been taking place which goes against them.

The following comments came out of the field discussions:

Six students from 2014 batch, Eight students from the 2015, all students from 2016 batch and seven students from the current students’ front strongly agreed that:

Some of the Visual Arts Students come from poor homes and cannot afford buying of tools and materials to promote the progress of learning. Comparing to the elite senior high schools in the country, the majority of the Visual Arts Students in Dormaa Senior High School were admitted with low entry grades, coupled with lack of motivation from their parents or guardians and teachers, they find it difficult to excel academically.

All the participants agreed that:

Many of the Visual Arts Students perceived the theoretical aspect of their course as difficult to learn.

The effect of this perception is that these students neglect the learning of these so-called theory aspects and focus their time and effort on their elective practicals – invariably, they make poor WASSCE grades in elective subjects and miss an entry into tertiary education.

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#### **4.3.4: Parent's/ Guardian Socio-economic Condition**

It was revealed from the field work that the following constitutes parent's or guardian's socio-economic conditions that contribute to low academic performance of Visual Arts Students.

These comments were couched from the discussions on the field.

Six students from 2014 batch, Eight students from the 2015, all students from 2016 batch and seven students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*Some parents or guardians do not monitor the progress of their wards who are Visual Arts Students in the school.*

All the participants agreed that:

*Truancy or long absenteeism of a majority of the Visual Arts students is not checked by their parents or guardians*

#### **4.3.5: Home Conditions or Parental Support**

The prevailing conditions of the home may affect the academic performance of the Visual Arts Students since the parents or guardians are considered the first socializing agents in the lives of these students. Some of the students are raised by single parents, low income parents, etc. with a lot of children to cater for. All these factors affect better living conditions which equally affect the Visual Arts Students.

These comments were couched from the discussions on the field.

Six students from 2014 batch, eight students from the 2015, all students from 2016 batch and seven students

from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*Certain parents or guardians fail to motivate their wards towards their academic progress.*

Both the current and the past students who took part in the Focus group discussions indicated that their parents found it difficult to provide them with housekeeping money, hence majority of them being day-students attend classes on empty stomachs.

Seven students from 2014 batch, six students from the 2015, all students from 2016 batch and five students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

Some of the Visual Arts Students sometimes have to absent themselves for the purposes of looking for menial jobs elsewhere to do to earn income meant to afford their personal belongings. However, some of these parents who pay their wards' fees end up not supervising the academic work of their wards.

**4.4. Objective 3: Strategies to be adopted to enhance effective academic performance of Visual Arts Students in Dormaa Senior High School.**

Quite a number of strategies have been indicated by respondents on what needs to be done to enhance academic performance of Visual Arts Student in Dormaa Senior High School.

Six categories were couched out from this objective to comprise the role play by the Leadership of the School and that of teachers.

**4.4. 1: The Role to be Played by the Leadership of Dormaa Senior High School in Adopting Strategies to Enhance Academic Performance of Visual Arts Students in the Visual Arts department.**

The leadership of Dormaa Senior High School should encourage the teachers to give more assignments or exercises (including practical works) so as to keep the Visual Arts students busy all the time. Authorities should provide more effective resources to promote efficient teaching and learning to take place. Students with interest in the Visual Arts programme should be allowed to pursue it as against pushing it for students lacking the interest.

The following comments were taken from the responses:

Seven students from 2014 batch, six students from the 2015, all students from 2016 batch and five students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*The school authorities should provide resources.*

Provision of resources and facilities in the form of furnishing the Visual Arts workshop or studio with plenty tools and materials, current Visual Arts textbooks, Information Technology or computers etc are effective in promoting effective teaching and learning in the Visual Arts department. According to Concordia University, 2013, the school authority or leadership should have an impact on students' performance which include goals setting, curriculum management, lesson planning, monitoring, resource allocation and assessment of teachers on a regular basis to help students' learning and development.

Kwesiga (2012) is of the view that the performance of students is often influenced by studies in the school and the number of facilities available which correspond to the rank of the school. This commensurate the performance and accomplishment of its students.

Eight students from 2014 batch, five students from the 2015, all students from 2016 batch and six students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*The school's authorities should identify all the athletes in the Visual Arts department who are facing financial difficulties and give them scholarship.*

Those Visual Arts Students who are athletes should be given a scholarship for them to be motivated to learn at school and at the same time excel on the various athletic disciplines they are good at.

All the participants agreed that:

*The school itself must patronize the art works produced by Visual Arts Students and use them for decorative purposes in the school.*

It will provide a sense of joy, appreciation and encouragement to the Visual Arts Students if the authorities of Dormaa Senior High School partake in patronizing all the art works or artefacts to be showcased during annual exhibitions to be organized by the Visual Arts Department.

Six students from 2014 batch, five students from the 2015, all students from 2016 batch and five students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*Enabling school's premise and atmosphere promote positive academic performance.*

How a school environment is and its teachers' expectation from its students are strong factors that influence a student's performance (Considine and Zappala, 2002 as cited by Sparkles, 1999). A teacher who works in a poor school setting might run into the lack of basic facilities which is required for academic work to take place and when students perceive that teachers are expecting a low performance on their part, it is likely to result in that.

A significant factor in learning as stated by Ehiamator (1990) and Farrant (1992) is the learning environment and a conducive atmosphere is what makes learning more effective.

Conducive school's climate necessitated by improved teaching methods, provision of available teaching aids, tools for practicals, avoiding overcrowding in the classrooms

and Visual Arts workshops, etc. are considered as factors that require attention to ensure academic success among Visual Arts Students in Dormaa Senior High School.

Five students from 2014 batch, six students from the 2015, all students from 2016 batch and five students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*The school authorities must create the Visual Arts classroom as a social context where communication occurs freely.*

It needs to be pointed out clearly that with teachers and students having their roles to play, and with opportunities for collaboration structured to influence students' understanding and construction of knowledge, it thus affects learning. Class size affects academic performance of Visual Arts Students because students' performance lowers as class size increases.

Similarly, overcrowding in the Visual Arts studio makes it difficult for the teachers to manage each student's attention and also make use of various teaching and assessment methods during practicals. The fact is, where a teacher is limited by space and finds it difficult to provide individual attention and supervision, students who are unattended tend to disturb the entire class and distract the attention of other students during lessons. The high level of distractibility as evidenced in the Visual Arts studio, the density of class size, and social interaction that goes on with certain students are potential barriers to high academic performance.

In addition, the responses revealed that there should be constant monitoring of teaching and learning processes, attitudinal change and motivation could build the capacity of Visual Arts students to participate fully in the economic development of Ghana.

The school authorities should ensure constant and proper collaboration between teachers who teach in the department. This will seek to encourage and motivate the Visual Arts Students to study hard what is taught them so they would get better grades in WASSCE and get the opportunity to further their education to the tertiary level.

#### **4.4. 2: Specific Roles to be Played by Teachers in Adopting Strategies to Enhance Academic Performance of Visual Arts Students**

Teachers as technical handlers should vary their teaching methods and techniques when delivering instructions in both Core subjects and Visual Arts subjects to help Visual Arts Students considered as seemingly weak to better understand, encouraged to learn topics taught them and excel.

In this era, according to Bubblews (2013, p. 3) teachers should “develop learners instead of teaching them, who help their pupils to become independent (learning to learn), who provide students with motivation and interest for lifelong learning and urge them to become autonomous learners”. Teachers make use of a number of techniques in order to improve academic goals. This involves evaluation, assessment and provision for students who require special attention as far as academic work is concerned.

Teachers should prepare their lesson notes in advance before going to the classroom to teach. Students who do not do well academically should either be repeated or sacked after receiving several warnings against withdrawal from the authorities.

The following comments were couched to validate the findings.

Seven students from 2014 batch, six students from the 2015, all students from 2016 batch and five students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*Teachers must identify weak students and offer them with special assistance.*

Individual differences in terms of abilities require teachers to identify weak students and offer them with special assistance. This is because Visual Arts Students vary in the way they acquire new information or skill. Hence, no single teaching method or strategy can satisfy all needs of Visual Arts Students due to the technical and vocational nature of the Visual Arts Programme.

Six students from 2014 batch, five students from the 2015, all students from 2016 batch and seven students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*Teachers in the Visual Arts Department must identify the intelligence strengths of Visual Arts Students so that they can teach to reinforce the strengths of their intelligence and learning styles when teaching new topics.*

For this strategy to materialize and achieved in Dormaa Senior High School, it is expected of the teachers who teach both the Core subjects and the Visual Arts subjects to vary their teaching methods and techniques when delivering instructions for the purposes of helping those students who are considered seemingly weak to improve upon their lot. This is because teaching strategies and methods have great influence on the entire academic performance of Visual Arts Students. Effective teaching methods can combine both the theory of multiple intelligences and the concept of learning styles, as Visual Arts Students vary in the way they acquire new information or skills when it

comes to executing their practical works and learning the theoretical aspects of their education.

All participants agreed that:

*Some of the teachers must be talked to, to change their attitudes towards their job as teachers.*

This is sometimes reflected in the teachers' poor attendance to class, lateness to school, passing of unpleasant comments about Visual Arts Students academic performance that could damage their ego, confidence and interest towards learning.

All the participants agreed that:

*Heads of Department must consider an area of specialization of teachers before allocating subjects to them.*

Quality of Visual Arts teachers and their commitment to the teaching job are key inputs that can contribute to the positive academic performance of the Visual Arts Students. In essence, teachers' knowledge of the subject matter coupled with the choice of the right textbooks, instructional time and other learning materials has great and positive influence on the academic performance of the Visual Arts Students during WASSCE. In other words, teachers in the department without both the academic and the professional qualification would undoubtedly contribute to a negative influence on the teaching and learning of any of the Visual Arts subjects entrusted into his or her hand. It was revealed

during the interview with the teachers that out of the four teachers in the department, two are professional teachers and two are not.

The academic performance of the Visual Arts students is positively correlated with teachers' qualification. Thus the teachers' qualification is considered to be an effective causal effect on Visual Arts students' performance

All the participants agreed that:

*For the Visual Arts students to achieve academic performance, language and communication styles can be blended during teaching and learning processes.*

Academic performance of Visual Arts students has been always dependent on the type of language used in school which is familiar to the students. The majority of the participants opined that the Visual Arts Programme being technical and practically oriented, sometimes should be taught in the language the Visual Arts Students is also familiar with so that as learners, they can easily comprehend every aspect of the instructional content. The high failure rates experienced by the Visual Arts students in Dormaa Senior High School is as a result of the English Language used in delivering the instructions in school which differs from the various local dialects spoken at home. This means that language and communication styles if not checked in the classrooms can therefore impede the academic performance of the Visual Arts students.

All the participants agreed that:

*Teachers with long years of teaching experience have significant effect on the academic performance of Visual Arts Students.*

Effective teaching of the Visual Arts subjects by experienced teachers who have taught for at least ten years can result to their mastery of the subject. Experienced teachers can boast of effective communication in the classroom, effective lesson preparation, planning and presentation, distribution of tests by taking into account individual differences, and allowing Visual Arts Students to practice and apply theories taught them. Also, experienced teachers can create conducive learning environments that are safe and supportive of their students to ensure high teaching and learning outcomes. Such teachers are best when it comes to establishing learning goals for their students and cultivate a positive culture that enables students to perform positively in their academics. Thus, experienced teachers know that no single teaching strategy or method can satisfy all needs of Visual Arts Students hence varying the methodology can be effective. Based on the interview conducted, it was found that the teachers in the department have been in the teaching profession, ranging from 18 years, 12 years, 8 years and 4 years.

As learning deals largely with student's ability to organize and use ideas and skills to solve a problem, Visual Arts Teachers ought to deliver instructional content that their students need to know, understand, and be able to practicalise. However, the whole teaching exercise is rendered unproductive if students are not actively involved in the learning processes and experiences.

#### **4.4.3: Specific Roles to be Played by Visual Arts Students' themselves in Adopting Strategies to Enhance their Academic Performance.**

During the Focus group discussions, all the participants agreed to the fact that Visual Arts students' themselves have roles to play when it comes to contributing to strategies to enhance their academic performance.

The following responses emerged in the various discussions held between the researcher and the participants.

All the participants agreed that:

*Visual Arts Students' should be willing and able to learn what is taught them by their teachers in class.*

Willingness stems from the extent at which the Visual Arts Students' will be disciplined towards their studies as senior high school students. Also, discipline on the part of the Visual Arts Students' include they developing inordinate passion towards learning both what they have been taught and new things they have not in class. For example, making friends with Visual Arts students from the elite schools for the purposes of comparing notes, hence having an idea about what they have been taught and the ones they have not. It is also believed that those elite schools always lead the less endowed senior high schools in infrastructure, facilities, experienced teachers, teaching and learning aids, etc. Developing the culture of executing practical works assigned to them by their teachers and solving past questions on their own can also be included in the "passion package".

It is a rule of thumb that per the WAEC rules, failure on the part of any Visual Arts Students to execute his or her practicals works amount to overall failure in the entire

WASSCE. Visual Arts Students willingness and ability to learn automatically prepares their minds and souls to receive and assimilate whatever is taught them by their teachers.

Though students with lower admission requirements are sometimes admitted, with the willingness on their part they can take their studies seriously and excel at all cost.

Visual Arts students should avoid attaching themselves to other deviant students (e.g. truants, those who do not do their practicals, etc.) but the serious and purposeful ones.

All the participants agreed that:

*Visual Arts students' backgrounds influence their academic performance.*

Visual Arts students from different backgrounds and cultures always attend senior high with differing prior knowledge and resources to learning. The background of a Visual Arts Students affects positively the teaching-learning process and also serves as a springboard for further education. To succeed in identifying and helping students who are not learning requires teachers to ensure that instructions being delivered are not unsuitable to the students' learning styles. It is therefore imperative that academic performance of Visual Arts Students is investigated so that the negative factors that affect students' performance could be lessened to enable all students to have equal opportunity to excel on the Visual Arts Programme.

Some of them complain that sometimes they are faced with financial difficulties. To handle this issue, Visual Arts students are advised to be innovative by producing and packaging their practical works and sell them to interested buyers for handsome fees.

Such proceeds obtained from such sales can be used by the Visual Arts Students to help them solve their financial needs.

All the participants agree that;

*Visual Arts Students should be regular, punctual in all classes and avoid absenteeism.*

Those students who have cultivated the habit of not attending classes should desist from such behaviour. Absenting themselves from classes are catalyst for them to missing several topics being taught behind them. The Visual Arts Students must be counseled to be punctual and regular in classes, so that they will get the opportunity to participate in class activities such as executing their practical works, taking part in the theory sections, etc.

Seven students from 2014 batch, eight students from the 2015, all students from 2016 batch and seven students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*They should use their time judiciously.*

It was revealed that the majority of the Visual Arts students spend much time on social media. The Visual Arts students should be counseled for them to use those precious times on social media to learn all the topics they have been taught by their teachers. Even the data they have been using to browse for social media can be used to do further research concerning course contents.

#### **4.4. 4: Specific Roles to be Played by Parents and Guardians in Adopting Strategies to Enhance the Academic Performance of Visual Arts Students.**

All students from 2014 batch, eight students from the 2015, all students from 2016 batch and seven students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*Parents and guardians irrespective of their socio-economic condition should do their possible best in providing for the Visual Arts Students.*

Majority of Visual Arts Students who took part in the Focus group discussions did indicate that they perform bad academically because they were sometimes faced with financial difficulties in accessing reading materials, tools for practicals. They blame it on their guardians or parents' inability to providing for their wards in terms of buying books, tools for practical, money to buy food, and other personal belonging. The Visual Arts Students lacking of all these essential things do not contribute positively to academic performance.

All the participants agreed that:

*Parents and Guardians should take upon themselves to advise their wards who are Visual Arts students about the essence of education so that they will be encouraged to study the programme seriously.*

After providing for their wards, the next appropriate thing is for the parents or guardians to regularly advise their wards to take their studies seriously.

Eight students from 2014 batch, six students from the 2015, all students from 2016 batch and seven students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*Parents and guardians should encourage and motivate the Visual Arts Students with rewards.*

In their quests of getting their wards doing well in school, parents or guardians must promise them of rewards so that the students can be motivated to take their studies in school seriously.

All the participants to the Focus group discussions agreed that:

*Parents or guardians who are educated should find time to supervise and monitor the homework of their wards who are doing Visual Arts.*

After providing for the students, it should not end there. Parents or guardians must take it upon themselves to sometimes pay their ward unannounced visits in the school to find out from their teachers the academic performance of their wards. Where the children fall short, parents can sit with their wards, discuss these shortfalls with them and provide solutions to help contribute positively to their academic performance.

Parents and guardians regardless of their work schedule should find time to visit the school to find out about the academic performance of their wards.

#### **4.4. 5: Specific Roles to be Played by the Dormaa Ahenkro Community in Adopting Strategies to Enhance the Academic Performance of Visual Arts Students**

There was overall agreement regarding the role the entire community of Dormaa Ahenkro needs to play to enhance the academic performance of the Visual Arts Students in Dormaa Senior High School.

Five students from 2014 batch, Four students from the 2015, six students from 2016 batch and seven students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*There should be the institution of the Community Watch committee to be emerged from the Unit Committee to put close surveillance on Visual Art Students who are truants, and other students who always hide in obscure places during class hours and bring them to the school. The school authority, and especially the Visual Arts teachers should then monitor the attendance of these students.*

The existence of the Community Watch committee will lead to the curbing of the regular Visual Arts Students absenteeism and truancy.

Six students from 2014 batch, Six students from the 2015, all students from 2016 batch and seven students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*In the community, people with houses should help by renting them out to Visual Arts Students who are day students at affordable fees.*

Most of the students who do not get access to the boarding house complain about getting access to accommodation outside the school's premises.

All the participants agreed that:

*The school's authorities must give permit to food vendors who can prepare healthy food to sell to students on time and on the school's premises, so that Visual Arts Students will not use it as excuse to run away to town. Apart from this, the food sold should also be affordable.*

Most of the Visual Arts Students who go out of the school's premises during break time and do not come back, do so because enough food vendors are not in the school's

premises for them to buy from them. The few who sell to them on the school's premises to buy, according to the students sell at exorbitant price. Should the permission be given and enough food vendors are seen around the school's premises the habit of running away during break time will minimize.

All the participants agreed that:

*Visual Arts Department should organize regular exhibitions to showcase the various innovative art works of Visual Arts Students; with invitations given to the community to participate in the event.*

From first to the third year, all the Visual Arts Students must be encouraged to produce several artworks or artefacts for the purposes of promoting and marketing them to the general public. The sales that will be made from selling those artefacts can be used by the Visual Arts Students to support themselves while in school. A way of solving their financial challenges

All the participants agreed that:

*Job owners in the community should accept employing Visual Arts Students as casual workers during the long vacations to enable them access funds to buy their personal belongings.*

Some people in the community who own businesses like poultry farms, shops, filling stations, etc. should give opportunity to the Visual Arts Students to work with them as a way of raising income to buy their personal needs to help them perform well academically.

All the participants agreed that:

*Landlords and landladies accommodating the Visual Arts Students can play the role of guardians by advising them to take their studies seriously, especially, the Visual Arts Students who have rented accommodations but do not attend classes. These landlords or land ladies can report them to the school authorities or the Community Watch committee to be organized to monitor truancy.*

#### **4.4. 6: Specific Roles to be Played by Old Students in Adopting Strategies to Enhance the Academic Performance of Visual Arts Students**

Old students here refer to past students of the Visual Arts Department of Dormaa Senior High School.

Six students from the 2014 batch, Six students from the 2015 batch, all students from 2016 batch and seven students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*Invitations should be given to these old students to attend the annual Visual Arts Department exhibitions to be organized by the Visual Arts Department.*

During the exhibitions, the invitees will use the occasion to address the Visual Arts Students on topics like the essence of taking their studies seriously, avoiding bad companies, shunning drugs, etc. These invitees should be personalities who were former Visual Arts Students and now serving mother Ghana in various capacities. This will encourage the current Visual Arts Students in Dormaa Senior High School that, should they do well in school and pass their exams successfully, there will be several job opportunities out there for them.

All the students from 2014 batch, all the students from the 2015 batch, Seven students from 2016 batch and seven students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*Awards should be instituted by any of the old student groupings and be presented to the best and deserving Visual Arts Students.*

This will encourage others who are not doing well academically to emulate the brilliant ones.

Seven students from 2014 batch, eight students from the 2015 batch, seven students from 2016 batch and seven students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*Any of the old students grouping should be written to, to come and help the Visual Arts Department in terms of expanding the Visual Arts workshop and resourcing it regularly.*

Resourcing the Visual Arts workshop will help the students to access the modern tools and logistics which help the Visual Arts Students to excel in their WASSCE.

All the participants agreed that:

*Old students can liaise with the business community to provide various forms of scholarship incentives to those needy, but brilliant Visual Arts Students—hence lessen their financial burden.*

Six students from 2014 batch, six students from the 2015 batch, all students from 2016 batch and seven students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*The Visual Arts Department should take advantage of the annual Speech and Prize Giving Ceremony to invite old Visual Arts Students who are serving mother Ghana and*

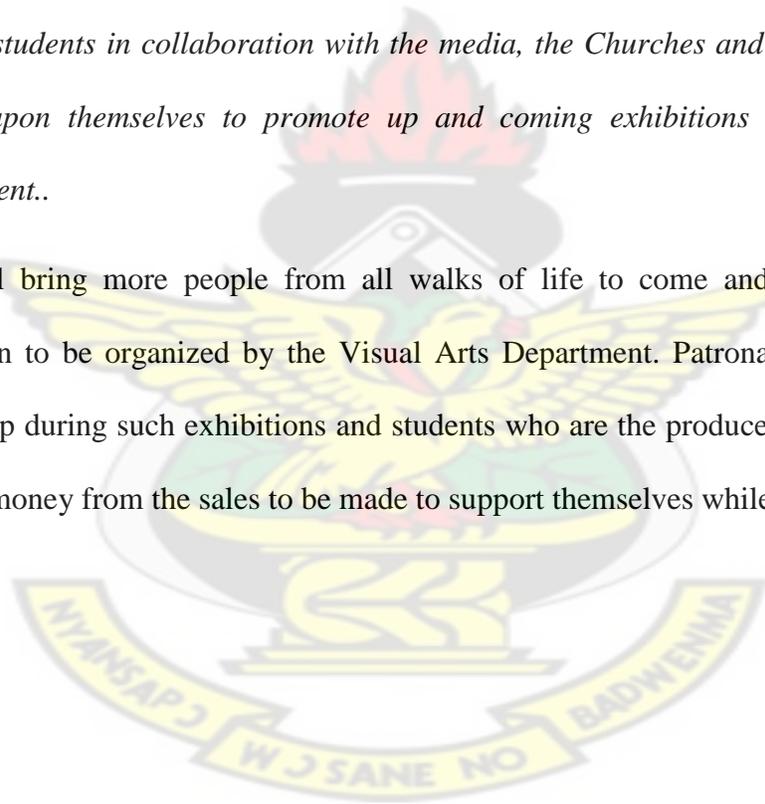
*the world at large in various capacities to counsel the students and also donate to the department either in cash or in kind.*

The guidance and counselling that will be given to the Visual Arts Students by these old students will go a long way in changing those students who are not serious to turn new leaves.

Five students from 2014 batch, five students from the 2015 batch, all students from 2016 batch and seven students from the current students' front strongly agreed that:

*The old students in collaboration with the media, the Churches and the mosque should take it upon themselves to promote up and coming exhibitions of the Visual Arts Department..*

This will bring more people from all walks of life to come and participate in the exhibition to be organized by the Visual Arts Department. Patronage of the artworks will go up during such exhibitions and students who are the producers of such products will get money from the sales to be made to support themselves while in school.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1. Overview

This chapter presents summary of all the study's findings, and their conclusions. What follows next are the recommendations for policy formulation and suggestions given to areas of further research.

#### 5.2 Summary

##### 5.2.1 Summary of Findings

The findings revealed, among other things that:

It is indicated in chapter four that there are certain prevailing factors that influence academic performance of the Visual Arts Students in Dormaa Senior High School.

These include recruiting of teachers with high academic qualification, provision of learning tools and materials as resources, judicious use of contact hours by teachers, quality of medium of instructions adopted in the school, tuition trends, daily study by Visual Arts Students, provision of guidance and counselling to parents or guardians for creating a positive home environment for improvement in Visual Arts Students' education. The direction from the school authorities sometimes influences performance of their students.

In specifics, the school's leadership should supervise academic progress of the various departments of the school; organises workshops for the students to help improve their academic performance; ensure there is discipline to promote a peaceful environment for

teaching and learning to thrive; evaluate or appraise the performance of teachers at the end of every academic year. On the perspective of teachers of Dormaa Senior High School, they influence academic performance of Visual Arts Students in the school through being punctual and regular at school, ability to complete one's syllabus, assign regular assignments or practical works to Visual Arts Students to keep them busy. On the Student's characteristics or demographics, the following characteristics affect Visual Arts Students academic performance.

Previous Junior High School attainment affects the future academic performance of the Visual Arts Students in the school. This was confirmed that the grades obtained by a Visual Arts Students in BECE that are used for admission selection determines a student's future performance.

Others include the Visual Arts Students being regular and punctual at school, attend to assignments, embark on private studies, attend extra classes in school or during vacation, having access to required textbooks, etc. all contribute to their academic performance.

On the side of parents or guardians of Visual Arts Students, their involvement in their wards' education increases the rate of the student's academic performance. Educated parents are able to provide further assistance to their children regarding some of the subjects.

All the respondents contacted in the field agreed that academic performance of the Visual Arts Students in Dormaa Senior High School for the last three years (2014-2016) have been low.

The following factors account for the low academic performance of the Visual Arts Students in Dormaa Senior High School: Lack of resources in the Visual Arts Department which do not improve academic work of visual Art education, admission of students with poor BECE grades into the Visual Arts department, and perceived lack of interest of Visual Arts Students regarding the programme. There is also the inability of teachers in the Visual Arts Department to complete their syllabus.

On the part of the Student's characteristics as factors that underpin low academic performance of Visual Arts Students in Dormaa Senior High School, the following can be summed up.

Visual Arts Students sometimes focus heavily on the elective practicals to the neglect of learning the theory aspect which results in them making poor WASSCE grades in elective subjects and eventually miss the entry into tertiary education.

The following are given as strategies to be adopted to enhance effective academic performance of Visual Arts Students in Domaa Senior High School.

The leadership of the school should encourage teachers to give a lot of assignments and exercises (including practical works) so as to get the Visual Arts Students busy all the time. Authorities should provide more effective resources to promote efficient teaching and learning to take place in the Visual Arts department.

Students with the interest should be admitted to pursue the Visual Arts programme as against pushing it for students with low grade and no interest.

Teachers should endeavour to vary their teaching methods and techniques when delivering instruction in both Core subjects and Visual Arts oriented subjects to help Visual Arts Students who are considered as seemingly weak to better understand, encourage to learn topics taught and excel.

Also, the majority of the Visual Arts students who are athletes, should be given scholarship by the member of parliament(MP) of the constituency and the chief of the traditional area to motivate them to pursue the programme and to excel. The school authorities should ensure constant and proper collaboration between teachers of both Core Subjects and Visual Arts to counsel the students on how to plan, allocate, manage and use their time judiciously on all the aspects and subjects making up of the Senior High School curriculum.

During exhibitions to be organized annually by the Visual Arts Department, the authorities of the school must patronize the art works produced by Visual Arts Students and use them for decorative purposes in the school, provides an enabling atmosphere to promote positive academic performance, and also create the Visual Arts classroom as a social context where communication can occur freely.

Teachers need to perform the following roles in order to get Visual Arts Students to perform positively academically.

They must identify the strengths of students so that they can teach to reinforce the strengths when teaching new topics.

Also, some of the teachers must be talked to by management to change their attitudes towards their job as teachers.

Heads of Department must consider an area of specialization of teachers before allocating subjects to them; Language and communication styles can be blended during teaching and learning processes; and finally teachers with long years of teaching experience have significant effect on the academic performance of Visual Arts Students.

The Visual Arts Students themselves must adopt the following strategies to help them perform well academically:

Visual Arts Students should be encouraged and motivated to learn what is taught them by their teachers in class.

Visual Arts Students' backgrounds influence their academic performance; Visual Arts Students should be regular, punctual in all classes and avoid absenteeism; they should be counseled for them to use those precious times on social media to learn all the topics they have been taught by their teachers.

### **5.3 Parents and guardians must adopt the Following strategies to enhance the academic performance of Visual Arts Students:**

Parents and guardians irrespective of their socio-economic conditions should do their possible best to provide for their wards. They should take upon themselves to advise the Visual Arts Students on the essence of education so that they will be encouraged to study the program seriously. They should encourage and motivate the Visual Arts Students with rewards. Parents or guardians who are educated should find time to supervise and monitor the home works of their wards who are Visual Arts Students.

#### **5.4 The Dormaa Ahenkro Community should adopt the following strategies to enhance the academic performance of Visual Arts Students**

The community should appoint some people to form a committee known as Community Watch committee to put close surveillance on Visual Arts Students who are truants, always hiding in obscure places during classes hours and bring them to the school; people with houses should help by renting them out to Visual Arts Students who are day students at low prices. Thus, instead of paying one year advance, the students should be given the opportunity to pay in monthly instalments.

Studies have shown that when parents participate in their ward's education, it has a positive effect on their academic performance and the school's success (Halsey, 2004; Christie, 2005). Involvement of parents in their ward's education improves the morale of teachers and thereby may create a cordial relationship between the school and the community. The important aspect of it is that of parents involving themselves in their ward's education. There are several things that parents or guardians can do to help their ward's education. The purpose of the involvement promotes positive behaviour between students, checking up on students' work, encouraging contributions from each parent towards their ward's education, helping students to do their assignments, tutoring, supervision of afternoon study periods, coaching sports and motivational talks.

The school authorities must give permission to food vendors who can prepare healthy foods and sold to students on time and on the school's premises, so that Visual Arts Students will not use it as an excuse to run away to town. Visual Arts Department should organize regular exhibitions to showcase the various innovative art works of Visual Arts Students; with invitations given to the community to participate in the event;

Job owners in the community should accept employing Visual Arts Students as casual workers during the long vacations to enable them access funds to buy their personal belongings.

Finally, landlords and landladies accommodating Visual Arts Students who are not their wards can play the role of guardians by advising them to take their studies seriously.

### **5.5 Old students need to adopt the following strategies to enhance the academic performance of Visual Arts Students**

These old students need to attend the annual Visual Arts Department exhibitions to be organized by the Visual Arts Department.

Awards should be instituted by any of the old students and be presented to the best and deserving Visual Arts Student. The old students from the visual arts department should be written to, to come and help the Visual Arts Department in terms of expanding the Visual Arts workshop or studio and resourcing it regularly. Old students who are businessmen in and around Dormaa community can provide various forms of scholarship incentives to those needy, but brilliant Visual Arts Students, hence, lessen their financial burden. The Visual Arts Department should take advantage of the annual Speech and Prize Giving Ceremony to invite old Visual Arts Students who are serving mother Ghana and the world at large in various capacities to address the students.

Lastly, the old students can invite the media, the Churches and the mosques to take it upon themselves to promote up and coming exhibitions of the Visual Arts Department.

## **5.6 Conclusions**

It needs to be noted with emphasis that like any academic institution, where there is greater focus on the academic attainment of students, who are considered as the core business of the school, all the factors that affect students' academic performance in the Visual Arts department of Dormaa Senior High School need to be identified and improved upon. This is to say that the findings of this study have confirmed with extant knowledge which posit that there are certain number of factors that affect academic performance of students in general. That gives much to conclude that the findings of this study are congruent with the existing findings (e.g. Emerson and Goddard, 1993; Witziers, Bosker and Kruger, 2003; Strauss, 2013; Wallace, 2011; Afe, 2001; Taal, 1996; Kwesiga, 2002, Crosnoe and Elder, 2004; Harb and El-Shaarawi, 2006; Reid, 1995; Pashler, McDaniel, Rohrer, and Bjork, 2008; Sentamu, 2003; Crosne and Elder, 2004).

The study's findings have identified that the Visual Arts Students in Dormaa Senior High School for the past three years, that is, (2014-216) have recorded low academic performance for the students in the WASSCE. There are specific factors that underpin the low academic performance recorded by Visual Arts Students in Dormaa Senior High School Visual Arts Department among others include: majority of the Visual Arts Students enter with poor BECE grades, teachers inability to complete the syllabus, final

year Visual Arts students heavily focus on the elective practical aspects to the neglect of the theory aspects which always results in majority of them missing out the opportunity to continue their education up to the tertiary level.

Lastly, it is concluded that the school authorities and other relevant stakeholders have a significant role to play in dealing with the factors that underpin low academic performance of Visual Arts Students in Dormaa Senior High School. Strategically, leadership of Dormaa Senior High School should encourage teachers to give more assignments or exercise (including practical works) so as to get the Visual Arts Students busy all the time; and to provide more effective resources to promote efficient teaching and learning to take place in the Visual Arts department. The authorities should ensure constant and proper collaboration between teachers of both Core Subjects and Visual Arts subjects. Also to counsel the students on how to plan, allocate, manage and use their time judiciously with all the subjects making up the Senior High School curriculum. All these established as the findings indicate consistency in existing studies (e.g. Gagne, 1990, Ehiemetator; Farrant, 1982; Moore, 1998; Mortimore et al., 1998; OFSTED, 1995 Zapalska et al, 2002; Mordedzi, 1999; Witkin and Berry, 1975; Witkin and Goodenough, 1981; Dunn *et al.*, 1990; 1989; Doyle, 2006, as cited in Mucherah and Frazier, 2013; Babatunde and Olanrewaju, 2014).

## **5.7 Recommendations for Policy Formulation**

Although, most of the questions were answered positively by respondents on the field, findings have indicated that there is more to be done as far as adopting strategies to enhance academic performance of Visual Arts students is concerned. The researcher therefore recommends the following:

The poor academic performance of students in Visual Arts in WASSCE should be treated as the topmost agenda at the Visual Arts Department, Parents/Teachers Association, Old students' meetings. In such meetings, ideas and strategies needed to solve the problem will be brainstormed by the attendees, which will be adopted by the authorities to help them in solving that challenge bedeviling the school in recent times.

The authorities of the Dormaa Senior High School should continue their quests in recruiting a number of teachers with high academic qualification and experience. They will have the required expertise in handling all caliber of students who may be admitted into the school.

The school authorities should also make judicious use of Information Technology systems. By this, they will have most of their projects, activities and processes (in terms of monitoring and supervision) speed up. Hence, efficiency and effectiveness will be achieved all the time.

To gain more experience, teachers of Visual Arts must register with WAEC as examiners for them to abreast themselves with how questions are set; where questions are set from the syllabus and what specific questions sometimes are needed to be given to students as exercises, assignments. The more they contribute their quota in helping

the examining body in carrying out its mandate as the test administrator (specifically, appointed as examiner or markers), Dormaa Senior High School will benefit from their expertise gained through knowledge transfer. Teachers must continually motivate all Visual Arts Students in Dormaa Senior High School. They should use their humble beginnings to counsel the students in improving their lots. The supervision of teachers' works at the school should be intensified so that the effective use of contact hours by teachers can contribute to the effective completion of the syllabus hence contributing to the overall academic performance of the Visual Arts Students.

The guidance and counseling unit should be structured by the school in a way so as to appeal effectively to the Visual Arts Students. This will help solve those consistent cases of truancy, no urgency with regards to initiating their private studies, attending classes, peer assistance, having access to reading materials- textbooks, past questions, etc. It was revealed in the study that the active participation of most of the Visual Arts Students in athletics or sporting disciplines contributes to their low performance in the Visual Arts Programme. To realize the all-round development of the Visual Arts Students, curricula should be combined with co-curricular (extra-curricular activities). Co-curricular activities help in the realization of the aims and objectives of education. Games and Sports make them mentally and physically fit and sound. Games make them learn how to perform while losing or winning an event. Sometimes, classroom teaching becomes monotonous and routine. Here, co-curricular activities can bring pleasant and joyous experiences. Co-curricular activities not only make the students active and energetic, but also enable them to harness the in-depth potential of students. It was reported that WASSCE practical works for the final year Visual Arts Students are always given to

them early second term, hence in order to speed up and get it executed to meet the submission deadline, this always compels the Visual Arts Students to focus all their attention towards the practicals at the expense of the theory and the core oriented subjects. This makes the teachers face the challenge in continuing with the syllabus and get it completed. In dealing with this challenge, it is recommended that the authorities of Dormaa Senior High School should appeal to WAEC as the test administrator to either bring the practicals questions earlier than the time the schools have been receiving them or they extend the submission deadline to an additional two or three months. With this, the Visual Arts Students can apportion their time equally on both practical works, theory and the core subjects. If this appeal from the school fails, the authorities can go ahead and change the strategy by using agencies like the Ministry of Education, CHASS, GNAT and NAGRAT as a way of putting pressure on WAEC to heed this positive call.

Teachers of core subjects in Dormaa Senior High School as a matter of urgency must be advised to change the way they address the Visual Arts Students in the classroom. This will let them stop the use of certain derogative remarks (such as 'unintelligent', 'not serious' and 'difficult to teach' as compared to their peers offering other programmes in the school) that they have been using for the Visual Arts Students which to some of the students they are suppressed anytime such words are uttered by the teachers to describe them.

Lastly, old students and other stakeholders should help the school by providing effective resources (that is, furnish the Visual Arts workshop or studio with plenty tools and materials, current Visual Arts textbooks, Information Technology computers, etc.) to promote effective teaching and learning in the Visual Arts department. There should be

constant monitoring of teaching and learning processes, attitudinal change and motivation to build the capacity of Visual Arts students to participate fully in the economic development of Ghana. The school authorities should ensure constant and proper collaboration between teachers who teach in the department. This will seek to encourage and motivate the Visual Arts Students to study what is taught them so they would get better grades in WASSCE and get the opportunity to further their education to the tertiary level.

### **5.8 Suggestions for Further Studies**

It is suggested, among other things that future researchers should turn to investigate into the following:

1. Improving Visual Arts Education in Dormaa Senior High School. Here the future study will delve into how the aspects of Visual Arts handled in the school can be improved. Objectives of the study will trace the emergence of Visual Arts in the school, focus on the role of stakeholders, strategic interventions to be adopted for improvement, possible challenges, etc. The main finding of this current study, “factors affecting academic performance of Visual Arts” indicate that Visual Arts Students in Dormaa Senior High School record low academic performance in recent times. So this topic will bring to the fore and add to the existing ones strategies authorities in schools in Ghana facing similar challenges.
2. The role of effective medium of instructions in improving Visual Arts Education in Ghana. A medium of instruction is a language used in teaching. It may or may

not be the official language of the country or territory. If the first language of students is different from the official language, it may be used as the medium of instruction for part or all of schooling. So in examining the role of effective medium of instructions in improving Visual Arts Education, future researchers can take the bold attempt at focusing on the actual language(s) needed to be used in teaching Visual Arts Students, the benefits to be derived in adopting such languages, possible challenges to be dealt with.

3. The roles played by co-curricular activities in affecting academic performance of Visual Arts Students in Ghana. Activities sponsored or recognized by a school or college which are not part of the academic curriculum but are acknowledged to be an essential part of the life of an educational institution. Co-curricular activities include sports, school bands, cadet, red cross, etc. In the current study, “factors affecting academic performance of Visual Arts” it was revealed that co-curricular activities such as sports contribute to the low academic performance of Visual Arts Students in the school. It is important for future researchers to investigate how the concept affect academic performance of Visual Arts Students positively and negatively, how they can be streamlined to better their purposes in the schools.

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## APPENDIX 1

DISCUSSIONS THAT EMERGED WITH THE STUDENTS DURING FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION. POSING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TRIGGERED THE DISCUSSIONS THAT ENSUED BETWEEN THE INVESTIGATOR AND PARTICIPANTS

(1). What do you understand by the term academic performance?

PART B: Factors that contribute to Visual Arts students' low academic performance.

(2). What do you understand by the term low academic performance?

(3). Do you agree to the fact that certain factors contribute to low academic performance?

B2: Parents or guardians factors

(4). Were your parents involved in your studies?

(5). Through what means did your parents became involved in your learning?(*This question was posed to the participants who answered "yes" in question 4 above.*)

(6). Why do you think your parents weren't involve in your studies?(*This question was posed to the participants who answered "no" in question 4 above.*)

B3: Type or nature of School

(7). In what way or ways do you think the prevailing conditions and facilities in Dormaa Senior High School Visual Arts Department contributed to your low academic performance?

(8). In what way or ways do you think other schools are ahead of Dormaa Senior High School in Visual Arts and thus contribute to its Visual Arts students' low academic performance?

B4: Class attendance and academic performance

(9). What way or ways do you agree to the fact that truancy contributes to students' low academic performance?

(10). What are the major reasons that normally account for truancy on the part of Visual Arts students in Dormaa Senior High School?

B5: Entry qualifications and prerequisites

(11). Comparing your entry qualifications to your counter parts in the other elite schools, will you agree that you were admitted based on superior qualification than them?

(12). So what accounted for your low academic performance in the Visual Arts Programme you were offered by Dormaa Senior High School?*(This question was posed to participants who responded "yes" to question 11 above).*

(13). Though you entered the Dormaa Senior High School with such a qualification, what actually contributed in your low performance for the Visual Arts Programme?

(14). So what accounted for your low academic performance in the Visual Arts Programme you were offered by Dormaa Senior High School?(*This question was posed to participants who responded “no” to question 11 above*).

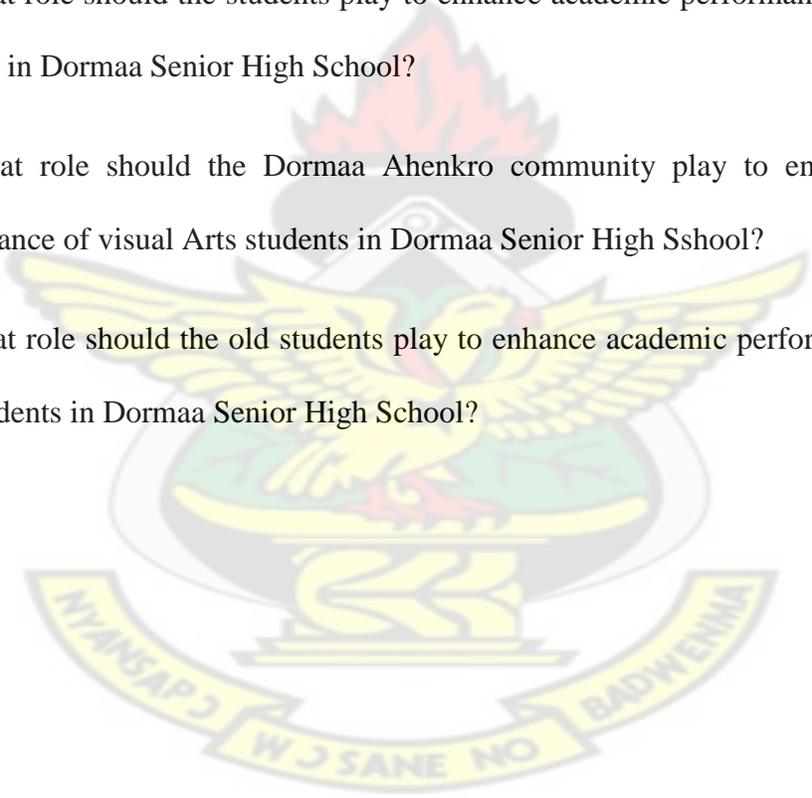
PART C: Strategies that can be put in place to improve students’ academic performance

(15). Can you recommend to the leadership of this school, strategies that they can put in place to help improve the academic performance of visual arts students?

16) What role should the students play to enhance academic performance of visual Arts students in Dormaa Senior High School?

17) What role should the Dormaa Ahenkro community play to enhance academic performance of visual Arts students in Dormaa Senior High School?

18) What role should the old students play to enhance academic performance of Visual Arts students in Dormaa Senior High School?



## APPENDIX 2

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE FOUR TEACHERS

The interview focused on School Leadership and teachers' contribution to low students' academic performance in the Visual Arts Department

#### PART A: FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO LOW ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

(1). Do you agree to the fact that the school leadership have an impact on the students' academic performance?

(2). In specifics, through what means can you say the school leadership have impact on the students' academic performance?

(3). What comprise the school leadership involvement in instructional leadership?

(4). An effective instructional leadership is able to build the culture of learning, provide resources needed for quality teaching, and structure the classroom environment to stimulate teachers and learners motivation. Do you see these activities evidenced in this school?

(5). Do you agree to the fact that this school for the past three years has registered low students' academic performance in your department?

(6). What are the factors that will account for the low students' academic performance in this school?

(7). Do you agree to the fact that teachers in general contribute greatly in students' academic performance (either low or high)?

(8). Through what means can you say teachers in this school have been contributing to low students' academic performance attained by Visual Arts students?

(9). It is a general feeling that students who fail the examinations are taught by ineffective teachers; on the other hand those who excel are taught by the very effective teachers. In what way or ways will you explain that teacher's effectiveness has an influence on the students' academic attainment?

PART B: Strategies that can be put in place to improve students' academic performance

(1). Can you recommend to the leadership of this school, strategies that they can put in place help improve the academic performance of visual arts students?

(2). Can you recommend to your fellow teachers Factors that can contribute to their effective functions?

