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Title of Thesis:

Investigating a rationale for a mandatory Visual and Performing Arts course for tertiary level university students in Trinidad and Tobago.

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ABSTRACT

The inspiration for the development of a rationale to integrate a mandatory Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) foundation course for tertiary level university students of Trinidad and Tobago is based on the requirement to produce dynamic, diverse, and all-rounded graduates. These individuals will be equipped with the knowledge, creativity, and innovation to aid in the establishment of a progressive and intellectual society. Arts education promotes creative and critical thinkers, a higher and deeper level of educational interest and artistic self-expression. These qualities provide reasoning on the importance, benefit, and purpose of an Arts education, on social life, economic standards, personal development, and environmental issues. Previous research mainly focused on Arts education at the primary and secondary level, as it aids in overall development, including motor skills and cognitive thinking. However, there is a gap in research for the significance of the Visual and Performing Arts in higher education. Data was collected by secondary sources and primary research through a quantitative and qualitative questionnaire which was dispatched to tertiary level university students ranging in age, year group, faculty, and disciplines from the University of the West Indies (UWI), University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT), and the University of the Southern Caribbean (USC). The majority of the students admitted to wanting a mandatory VAPA course and vouched for the importance of the Arts because of its holistic benefits.

Keywords: VAPA, Visual and Performing Arts, creative thinking, critical thinking, tertiary level, Arts Education, Trinidad and Tobago, educational interest, artistic self-expression.

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INTRODUCTION

Arts education unites crucial elements of intrapersonal skills such as reflection and innovation to assist individuals in becoming open-minded while investigating various perspectives of life. It enables individuals to blend the kaleidoscope of reasoning, understanding, and learning, which form the basis of cognitive thinking. This encourages one's holistic development which subsequently promotes the building of progressive societies. The teaching of the Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) has suffered universally due to stigmas, lack of awareness, and ignorance of the benefits, purpose, and significance of VAPA education both in schools and society (Mack). This issue is predominantly evident in tertiary level education as there is a greater advocacy for Arts education at the kindergarten, primary and secondary school levels. Previous studies have shown the importance of VAPA instruction for children's physical growth, as well as their social and cognitive development (Arts integration in School; Kisida & Bowen). Thus, a greater effort and rationale for the inclusion of Arts education for the lower school population has been established.

The Ministry of Education of Trinidad and Tobago (MOE) shows support for its significance through their rationale statement in the primary school VAPA curriculum guide; "These disciplines provide for the stimulation of the senses, emotion, intellect, and imagination. They contribute to the child's growth by developing skills, sensitivities, and positive attitudes. The arts reflect what is valued in society and celebrate our unique cultural mosaic" (21). The MOE's VAPA rationale for the lower secondary school states that the main objective of its teaching is due to remembrance and contributions to cultural legacy, using the Arts as a vehicle for transmitting messages to the public, personal development, creativity, and other knowledge-based skills (29,

30). Despite local and international claims for Arts education relevance, there is a lack of VAPA instruction worldwide. Consequently, there is a gap in studies for investigations on the benefits of the Arts education in higher education and limited research on VAPA being mandatory throughout the varying levels of education in general.

There is minimal literature on Arts education from the Caribbean, hence, the majority of the research was taken from international sources. Thus, this research paper focuses on the investigation of a rationale for a mandatory Visual and Performing Arts course for tertiary level students in Trinidad and Tobago. The study employs a primary research questionnaire using quantitative and qualitative methods and is geared towards students attending the University of the West Indies (UWI), University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) and University of the South Caribbean (USC). The students range in age, faculty, discipline, and years of study. These universities were chosen as they provide multiple academic disciplines in each campus, and it was felt that this would provide a broader perspective for the data collection. Both primary and secondary data were used in the research to create awareness about the significance, benefit, purpose, and contribution of an Arts education for individuals and the society at large. Arts education is important as it promotes critical and creative thinking, a higher and deeper level of educational interest, and artistic self-expression.

CHAPTER ONE

Significance of the Arts Education

The Ministry of Education in Trinidad and Tobago outlined the significance of the Arts education at the primary, lower and upper secondary school levels, but only a few schools within Trinidad and Tobago include Arts education into their curriculum. The rationale for upper secondary schools from the MOE states that; “the Arts have described, defined, and deepened human experience. All peoples, everywhere, have an abiding need for meaning – to connect time and space, experience and event, body and spirit, intellect, and emotion. People create Art to make these connections, to express the otherwise inexpressible. A society and a people without the Arts are unimaginable” (26). The MOE, however, offers no direct rationale for Visual and Performing Arts education at the tertiary level. Nevertheless, within the UWI’s Department of the Creative and Festival Arts (DCFA), which encompasses the disciplines of Music, Visual Arts, Theatre Arts, Dance and Carnival Studies such a rationale exists. It states that “DCFA offers courses and a place to explore the cultural expressions of Trinidad and Tobago and, by extension, the Caribbean. The DCFA strives to educate students in the creative arts at the highest level of academic, professional, and technical accreditation available at, or through The University of the West Indies” (About us) As such, a rationale for its relevance is included in each course offered by the DCFA. The same can be said for the UTT’s Academy for the Performing Arts (APA) campus as they offer a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in Performing Arts which states that, “it is a multidisciplinary study ... [where] the aspiring artist will have the opportunity to experience a range of courses in Theatre, Dance and Music. Building on a foundation of common and core courses in performance, culture, and entrepreneurship.” The APA also offers a BFA in the Performing Arts with a Specialization in Music, BFA in Digital Media Arts with a specialization in Animation, Music Technology or Game

Art and a Masters in Carnival Studies. The USC offers just two VAPA courses, that is, Bachelor of Arts in Music and Associate of Arts in Music.

Despite the existence of various research about the value of Arts education, this discipline still receives lip service as it is not sufficiently taught in schools throughout the country, at both primary and secondary levels due to a shortage of positions, teachers, resources, and funding, as well as a lack of general awareness of its overall benefits in promoting holistic growth and development. As such, the Arts suffer from budget cuts and lack of continuation in upper secondary school programmes as it is seen as irrelevant. Students at the lower secondary school level within the second term of year 3 must choose eight subjects they would like to pursue in preparation for their career path. Three subjects are mandatory: Mathematics, English A and English B, so this allows students to choose five other subjects. However, many schools in Trinidad and Tobago, and by extension the Caribbean, state that within the choice of eight subjects, a foreign language and a science are mandatory; thus in reality, students have only three choices, and in most cases, the Arts attract the lowest percentages and are usually disregarded after the Form 3 level, except for a small minority of the students who are seen as less academically capable. This situation extends to the tertiary level as the teaching of the Visual and Performing Arts is not mandatory unless it is one's specific discipline. Despite this, the University of the West Indies Division of Student Services and Development (DSSD) Co-curricular programme attempts to create a well-rounded educational experience by offering one VAPA course, that is, the Basics of Steelpan to all students, but this earns just one credit hour. Furthermore, the DCFA offers minors and certificates in all its' VAPA studies, but both course offerings are not well subscribed.

Although these initiatives for the inclusion of Arts education are commendable, they need to be expanded to a larger scale for all students to benefit from the opportunities for personal growth and development. VAPA studies have been shown to develop intra- and interpersonal skills, promote creative and critical thinking, enhance professional development, and a sense of patriotism as such, the Visual and Performing Arts should become a mandatory foundation course and become a part of the core curriculum from the lower school levels all the way up to workplace training. For example, art all around us and is used in science and engineering to illustrate ideas, concepts, and scientific data. Music pervades all aspects of life from marketing in commercials to piped music to create a serene atmosphere at work or for customers' comfort. Theatre is used as role play in advertisements and corporate training; dance is utilized in body movement which is encouraged for stress management. Film and video are now considered as essential tools in the scientific and corporate worlds.

Within the UWI, there are mandatory foundation courses that all students must complete regardless of their discipline before they can graduate. These include Law, Government, Economy, and Society (LGES); Science, Medicine & Technology (SMT); Caribbean Civilisation (CC); and Academic English. The Academic English language foundation courses, together with Critical Readings in Caribbean Arts and Culture (offered only to VAPA majors) aim to “build students’ analytical and critical thinking skills and written competencies and “nurture graduates who constitute an intellectual force to serve Caribbean people and the wider world. It also dovetails with the vision and mission of the Department of Creative and Festival Arts, which state a commitment to exploring Caribbean culture” respectively (UWI). Altogether, these courses focus on developing a critical and creative thinker; an effective communicator with good interpersonal skills and well-grounded in his/her regional identity; socially, culturally, and

environmentally responsible; and guided by strong ethical values (UWI). These qualities are key aspects for the formation of progressive societies and the betterment of communities. Thus, the two courses should be combined and tailored to suit the teaching of VAPA to other disciplines to promote persons who are creative and critical thinkers, have a higher and deeper level of educational interest and present artistic self-expression.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review on Creative and Critical Thinking

Creative and critical thinking are subsets of cognitive thinking which encourage unstructured and structured ways of problem-solving through the analysis, reflection, and evaluation of ideas (Bingham). Both modes of thinking are taught predominantly in STEM, Liberal Arts and VAPA. Dumitru argues that critical thinking cannot exist without a proper humanistic education into the Arts and Cultural Studies. In the research paper ‘Investigating the Empirical Links Between Creative and Critical Thinking,’ Tsai states that, “Traditionally the two modes of thinking have been viewed as independent skills and dispositions; however, commenters have argued that they can be complementary.” “Critical thinking is the ability to analyse, evaluate and dissect an issue to structure an educational perspective, while creative thinking relies on originality, fluency of ideas, flexibility and elaboration to develop new proposals.”

Some critics of arts education such as Alex Carter argue that creativity cannot be taught. He affirms that “No creativity theorist could (or should) claim to be able to ‘make you a more creative person.’ Likewise, no curriculum can (or ought to) include the learning outcome ‘students will become more creative.’ Yet many arts curricula make these claims, identifying the development of creative thinking as a learning outcome. Many are unable to guarantee this and instead, promise to ‘encourage creative practice.’” The article “Critical Thinking Can Be Learned” agrees that the statement is partially correct as it is difficult to teach creativity and critical thinking; however, he thinks it is not impossible. Persons can only learn, if they are willing to understand and internalize what is given to them, they can then transform the

information into something useful that assists in their personal development. Teaching someone to think involves generating an environment that allows for meaningful and in-depth discussion, feedback, analysis of subtext and meanings, differing perspectives and asking the 5 W's and 1 H – who, what, where, why, when, and how. The Arts encourage this environment, specifically at tertiary level by questioning theories, hypotheses, societal structure, political, economic, and environmental disasters. It stimulates understanding of the world, cultures, communities, individuals, and oneself.

STEM education teaches how to build things while the humanities teach what to build and why; both disciplines are equally important. The Humanities give context to the world as they teach persons how to think critically through unstructured elements while the sciences are heavily structured (Berridge). However, modern society honours STEM education as it provides stability and a reliant system. Science finds a solution to a problem which can then be repeated in a predictable manner to get the same results (Land). On the other hand, Berridge describes a scenario of a computer technology firm that was faced with the challenge of finding a solution for a major client. As a last resort, the firm invited a person with an arts background to converse with the client and a solution was subsequently reached as the artistic person was able to completely change the dynamic of the clients' thought process about the situation. Berridge further stated that workplace diversity “should not end with gender and race, we need diversity of backgrounds, skills, introverts, extroverts, leaders and followers.” He noted that although the firm is STEM based, a large population of its employees are from the Humanities, as it has been observed that persons involved in the arts possess a unique and creative approach to problem-solving.

George Land in his TEDx Talk reflects on ‘The Failure of Success.’ He asserts that there are two kinds of thinking that occur in the brain and these two types of thinking differ completely and use different parts of the brain. One is called divergent, that is, imagination, and generating new possibilities (creative) and the other, convergent, that is, judging, deciding, testing, criticising, and evaluating (critical). He stated that divergent thinking is susceptible to judgement, criticism, censorship, pressure to conform and, fear of failure. Thus divergent/creative thinking suffers as children grow up. This is shown in Figure 1 (below) which depicts a longitudinal creativity test developed by George Land and Beth Jarman. The test was initially developed to assess creativity in NASA’s employees. However, the creators sampled the test and distributed it to 1600 children and continued the research as the children grew older to monitor their creativity levels which is seen to become almost non-existent as they become adults.

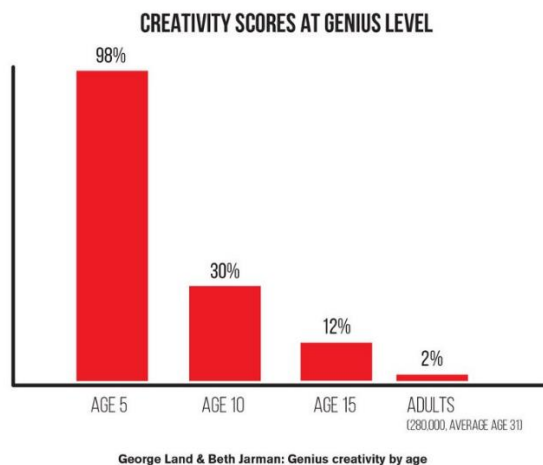


Figure 1. Creativity levels shown from George Land & Beth Jarman’s NASA creativity test given to children.

Consequently, Land and Jarman affirm that there is a need to teach both kinds of thinking at the same time. Thinking creatively and critically is a deliberate process that individuals must do as criticism and judgment are more openly displayed in adolescent years. Land says that “Nature goes through the same process in evolution through natural selection. Nature produces many alternatives and possibilities before selecting the best one.”

According to Lauren Mack, creativity matters. “Creativity is making something new or making something better” says Young-Hee Kim - the psychologist at William and Mary College in Virginia. Mack continues that observation, reflection, persistence, risk-taking, finding multiple solutions, envisioning and collaboration are a part of her ‘creative toolbox.’ Creativity and critical thinking produce tolerance-filled, adaptable, expressive citizens as knowledge plus creativity equals innovation (Bingham), and creativity gives persons permission to fail (Carter). Any individual can think creatively and critically; however, the quality and level of one’s thought process can be equated to the exposure in disciplines that encourage this higher level of thinking. Research has shown that undergraduate students in art have increased scores on the California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory (CCDTI) in comparison to non-art students regarding truth-seeking, maturity and open-mindedness. There is an assumption that all students, despite their subject area, can improve their creative and critical thinking skills by taking art lessons with the purpose of engaging in analytical discussion and self-reflection (Dumitru). The following point looks at the educational and cognitive outcome of Arts education in individual life and society.

However, recent research has shown that Art education teaches students to observe and analyse the world meticulously by employing both creative and critical modes of thinking. The human brain is divided into the left and right cerebral hemispheres, equating to critical and

creative thinking, respectively. According to Gamma, the left-side of the brain involves critical thinking, which is adapted to logical, rational, and calculating tasks. By contrast, the right side of the brain involves creative thinking, which is artistic, innovative, intuitive, and spontaneous. Art forms and works of art are layered with multiple elements, meanings, and media to produce a creative concept and creating or interpreting artwork requires time, intellectual consideration, and contemplation to produce an intuitive judgment. This includes truth-seeking, open-mindedness, analyticity, systematicity, self-confidence, inquisitiveness, and cognitive maturity. This process generates skills that constitute creative and critical thinking (Does Art Boost a Student's Critical Thinking; Tsai). Thus, employing both cerebral hemispheres encourage logistic and innovative problem-solving abilities. Ergo, Arts education encourages fuller use of the brain, and this is what generates holistic development in an individual.

CHAPTER THREE

Higher and Deeper Level of Educational Interest

The MOE endorses the connection between the Visual and Performing Arts to the core disciplines in the VAPA Upper Secondary School Curriculum Guide. Various elements of the Arts are evident in all the core courses and also provide a therapeutic value as each VAPA discipline has a therapeutic profession created to heal the mind, body, and spirit. The fields of science, medicine and technology all employ creative as well as critical thinking to generate new theories and processes to improve existing systems and create new inventions. These are communicated to the public through the arts in writing, drawings, photographs, film, and other media (SMT). Therefore, the Arts provide sensory elements to theoretical aspects of these fields (DelValley). In the social sciences, the Arts bring awareness to political, economic, and societal matters, for example, artworks on war, the industrial revolution, and the great depression (LGES). The creation of communities, culture and patriotism also form a critical element of the Arts and the VAPA courses function as vehicles for cultural diversity. Thus, the Arts have the ability to heighten and deepen students' levels of educational interest.

In 18th century Europe, the term 'high culture' described a subculture of elite upper-class individuals. Within this community, persons were required to learn an art form to achieve societal status, as only the elite and wealthy could attend art exhibitions, operas, ballets, classical music, and theatre (CC) (Aziz). Prior to the last two decades, Caribbean children were generally introduced to Arts education as an extracurricular activity and/or through private lessons. This is due to their parents' recognition of the importance of an Arts education to their personal development. This is also evidenced in the notion that being involved in the Arts shows one's creativity and versatility as these are considered to be important attributes to one's academic and

professional future as it can give one the edge in recommendations for scholarships and promotions.

The Arts are the source of action to deepen understanding of life and how to benefit society as a whole. An Arts education instils ideologies that allow individuals to use their creative prowess to build society. Art helps with human development in terms of learning and understanding difficult concepts, as it accesses different parts of the human brain. It allows people to problem-solve as well as make more complex concepts easier to understand by providing a visual format instead of just words or numbers. Art also assists child and adult learners in the development of motor skills, social skills, as well as the ability to think from different perspectives, otherwise known as critical thinking (Why Is Art Important); so exposure to the Arts heightens creativity and allows one to combine different disciplines to create innovative theories, projects, and products, to gain insight and understanding about society, civilisation, and the scientific world.

Harackiewicz proposes that student interest in education is a powerful motivational tool that increases learning because it increases attention, engagement, and class attendance and this improves students' performance levels. Another outcome is increased self-discipline and while simultaneously decreasing the incidence of unruly or negative behaviour. These aspects are essential to academic success and can also guide academic and career projections. This extends the relevance of the Arts within the education system as students can use what is learnt from the VAPA courses to increase their understanding of other subject areas. It heightens their educational interest as students appreciate the value that the Arts contribute to their academic life because it makes learning enjoyable and builds an environment that is sustainable for creativity and successful learning. These effects are recognized by students at all levels from the primary

school level to the workplace. VAPA skills also assist in presentations, questioning and problem-solving skills that are valuable in learning as well as the workplace, as this kind of thinking stimulates growth in the company by encouraging growth in the individual.

The Visual and Performing Arts create a sense of belonging by fostering a community that accepts individuals' creative talents to express themselves. As mentioned previously, VAPA can be therapeutic in that it provides a medium of expression as well as healthy coping mechanisms for persons who struggle to convey their emotions. Persons who have limited self-expression are often challenged with low self-esteem because of their lack of social skills. This results in heightened stress, anxiety, and mental health issues. However, Berridge suggests that through artistic practices, persons can overcome these personal conflicts. The Arts then become "a universal language for all of us to tell our stories; it is the ultimate storyteller." Creativity helps to enhance self-esteem, improve mental health, and improve one's overall well-being. In addition, creativity helps to communicate thoughts and feelings, allowing one to make sense of them and put things into perspective. This improves self-awareness which has a positive influence on self-esteem. Many individuals use art as therapeutic support, as it is an indispensable tool for maintaining mental and emotional wellness.

However, just as persons are deemed marginalized groups in society, within the hierarchy of educational disciplines, VAPA has been marginalized. It is considered peripheral or unimportant due to a general lack of awareness about its value to individuals and society. Yet VAPA allows for community integration as it connects people across geographic, ethnic, cultural, language, and religious borders. It creates an escape from limitations and forms an identity with the shared values, hopes, ideals, and ambitions. These values are critical for increasing cooperation within and among societies and reducing cultural bias.

METHODOLOGY

Most of the research on the role, significance and benefits of Arts education are focused on early childhood to the lower secondary school level. Therefore, there is a gap in research for the inclusion of Arts education in the upper secondary school and tertiary levels. This research paper focused on investigating a rationale for a mandatory Visual and Performing Arts course for university students in Trinidad and Tobago. Data was mainly collected from secondary sources, but primary research was done through a quantitative and qualitative questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to university students ranging in age, year, faculty, and discipline from the University of the West Indies (UWI), University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT), and the University of the Southern Caribbean (USC). There were twenty-six responses in total.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The following discussion is based on the primary research conducted through a qualitative/quantitative questionnaire. A sample of this questionnaire can be found in Appendix 2, and a summary of the responses of the twenty-six participants follows:

The first three questions focused on creative and critical thinking and whether the Arts promote both types of thinking. Respondents were allowed to justify their answers. All of the participants are of the firm belief that both creative and critical thinking are equally important. The consensus is that being able to think both creatively and critically can assist the individual as well as the country. Creative thinking utilizes the right hemisphere of the brain, giving it the opportunity to devise novel solutions to complex problems whereas critical thinking engages the left side of the brain, which is more analytical. Merging the ability to think critically and creatively provides an opportunity to approach, evaluate and solve problems from both angles with greater depth and meaning, thus producing a more favourable result (Healthline).

Sixty-five percent of the participants agreed that the creative and critical thinking can co-exist for the following reasons: together they can effectively create a balance between imagination/ intuitive thinking and logic and therefore provide alternative solutions and produce new ideas. They complement each other as both modes of thinking need to be used simultaneously to ensure the best possible solution is determined. It is believed that one always influences the other and is therefore dependant on each other. The website Healthline confirms this in its report, “A team of neuroscientists deduced that the two sides of the brain function differently, they work together and complement each other... Both sides of your brain are actively participating and providing input.” Less than twenty-five percent of the participants

disagree that critical and creative thinking can co-exist, arguing that they are two separate entities where creative thinking works toward expressing something while critical thinking seeks to make sense of things. They also believe that an individual's ability to think creatively requires more time and concentration as it is a deeper level of thinking; whereas critical thinking harnesses the ability to analyse elements and provide a solution within a stipulated time frame. This group believes that each mode has a different objective, and the process is different and may not always relate to each other. For example, Critical thinking requires one to weigh the facts of a situation not the emotions or unfounded beliefs or intuition in order to draw a conclusion. In addition to which certain types of thinking are required for different situations/topics, for example, the arts require creative thinking and more serious topics such as politics require critical thinking. They consider creative to be radical and whereas critical is more factual and when analysing more serious-minded topics, it is believed that being a creative thinker can create unwanted chaos. However, it would seem that creative thinkers pave the way for change as it challenges the rules in society. On a smaller scale, twelve percent of participants believed that the different modes of thinking are dependent on the situation, and one is required to either choose one over the other based on the circumstance or combine when necessary. However, a creative mind looks at an issue differently and can aid in critical thinking. It is believed that depending on the situation both modes can be joined to reinforce an ideology.

Almost ninety percent of the participants agreed that the arts promoted both types of thinking. "Gardner believed that people instead have multiple different ways of thinking and learning" (quoted by Watson). The Arts create a gateway to opening the mind and both sides of the brain are activated. The Arts are subjective, allowing for freedom to imagine different perspectives. The arts can also teach discipline, teamwork, and the ability to process a critique in

order to improve oneself. Although the Arts allow a person innovation and freedom of expression, in some circumstances there is the need to apply critical thinking in order to execute a precise decision (Watson).

Questions 4 – 7 focused on the benefits of an Arts education. One hundred percent of the participants unanimously agreed that the arts should remain in the school’s curriculum. The arts promote both types of thinking and it is strengthened with practice. When an artiste or artist creates art or performs, there is always a deeper meaning attached to the work and the public has to think both ways to ascertain the meaning behind what is being exhibited. Furthermore, participants connect creative and critical thinking with the Arts and recognize VAPA’s therapeutic benefits. Other responses include self-expression historical and cultural expression and diversity. They also mention the benefits of social interaction, memory, and assistance in other courses. The 90% speak on enhancement of knowledge, development of skills not often taught in other fields, expressing oneself creatively, communication skills, literacy, creative and critical thinking.

Forty-six percent of the participants believed that people involved in the Arts have a higher interest in school. The most common argument being that creatives are more passionate towards their work. They believe VAPA students take pride in their schoolwork and are able to balance their passion with their schoolwork, given that visual and performing arts are their passion. Contrastingly, another forty-six percent of the participants proclaimed that people involved in the Arts do not have a higher interest in school. Their general argument being that each student’s personality and goals which would affect their interest in school. They believe a person does not have a higher interest solely because they are creative. One individual even stated, “many art students submit assignments late and some don’t even submit their assignments at all.”

Eighty-five percent of the participants agreed that the link between the Arts and other subjects, increases students' educational interest as they can use what they learnt in VAPA in other subject areas. They believe that creativity in assignments and presentations can benefit all students as most courses assign a grade for creativity. They believe art students are open to different perspectives as they interact with different creative philosophies, opening their mind up to new ideas. Lastly, some participants stated that the arts allow them to approach different courses and material with a different approach and open mind.

Question 8. Almost seventy-six percent of the applicants believe that a VAPA course should be a foundation course at the university level. The general consensus is that the exposure of the arts as a foundation course, would increase awareness of its benefits and create an appreciation for the arts. Many believed in doing so, so that the university would be able to produce well rounded graduates.

Questions 9-16 talked about the benefits of the arts. All agreed that the Arts allowed them to express themselves freely and creatively. The majority of them used one and up to four VAPA artforms to express themselves and they all agreed that it has therapeutic benefits which kept them grounded, especially during the pandemic. They believe that the arts can help students to become well-rounded individuals and is a form of cultural identity as well as provide economic benefits.

CONCLUSION

The majority of the research on the benefits, purpose and significance of Arts education are focused on children from early childhood to the lower secondary school level. Therefore, there is a gap in research for the inclusion of Arts education in the upper secondary school and tertiary level. This research paper focused on investigating a rationale for a mandatory Visual and Performing Arts course for tertiary level university students in Trinidad and Tobago. Data was collected from secondary sources and primary research through a quantitative and qualitative questionnaire which was dispatched to university students ranging in age, year, faculty, and discipline.

Creativity helps to enhance self-esteem, improve mental health, and improve one's overall well-being. In addition, creativity helps to communicate thoughts and feelings, allowing one to make sense of them and put things into perspective. This improves self-awareness which has a positive influence on self-esteem.

Albert Einstein is celebrated as the world's greatest and most influential physicist, yet he says imagination is more important than knowledge. He understood the intimate connection between science and the arts which is reflected in his words, "After a certain high level of technical skill is achieved, science and art tend to coalesce in aesthetics, plasticity, and form. The greatest scientists are always artists as well." This statement gives resounding support for the need to make the Arts an integral part of the university curriculum as a mandatory foundation course.

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APPENDIX 1

SAMPLE OF POSSIBLE COURSE OUTLINE FOR A FOUNDATION COURSE IN THE VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

FACULTY: HUMANITIES & EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF THE CREATIVE AND FESTIVAL ARTS

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 3 hours per week.

CREDIT ASSIGNMENTS: A total of 3 credit assignments, 100% coursework.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed for Year II undergraduate students from the Faculties of Engineering, Science & Technology, Food & Agriculture, Social Sciences and Law. This course is essentially a combination of THEA 2010 Critical Readings in Caribbean Arts and Culture, and FOUN 1107 Writing in the Visual, Performing and Carnival Arts. The course is tailored to non - Humanities & Education students and is designed to introduce creative approaches to reflection, analysis, formal writing, and creative expression through the Arts. Merging the ability to think critically and creatively provides an opportunity to evaluate and solve problems from broader perspectives with greater depth and meaning, thus producing more favourable outcomes. The course offers exposure to numerous readings that give foundational insight into the Caribbean arts and culture and for assessment, the students can choose either one or a combination of VAPA disciplines - dance, music, theatre arts, and visual arts, film, or video - as their presentation format.

COURSE RATIONALE

Training and specialisation in the arts, provides area-specific knowledge that expands a student's vision, that is, how his or her chosen creative practice(s) fits into the broader systems of their specific discipline. This course gives students the opportunity to become enlightened on the importance and relevance of the Arts in local, regional, and global issues – past and present. It guides the students to think creatively and critically, deepen and widen their understanding and advance the process of becoming more innovative and imaginative. By applying these aspects, the students can explore their artistic self-expression in their discipline and construct rationales to build progressive societies.

AIMS

The aims of this course are consistent with UWI's Strategic Plan (2017-2022) to nurture graduates who constitute an intellectual force to serve Caribbean people and the wider world. It also dovetails with the vision and mission of the Department of Creative and Festival Arts, which state a commitment to exploring Caribbean culture and the Ministry of Education's appeal to produce all-rounded citizens.

GRADUATE OUTCOMES

The following qualities of an all-rounded and liberal graduate are addressed in this course:

- A critical and creative thinker
- An effective communicator with good interpersonal skills
- Globally aware and well-grounded in his/her regional identity
- Socially, culturally, and environmentally responsible

OBJECTIVES/LEARNING OUTCOMES:

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Express ideas orally and in written format
- Engage in reflective writing based on their disciplines and chosen art form(s)
- Interrogate a range of readings on Caribbean arts and culture
- Infer a point of view from a process of reasoning
- Justify and provide support for their points of view
- Locate their chosen creative practice in relation to Caribbean culture and their discipline
- Produce assignments that reflect high-quality tertiary level academic work

APPENDIX 2

QUESTIONNAIRE SAMPLE

Below consists of a sample of the questionnaire distributed to tertiary level, university students ranging in age, year group, faculty, and discipline from the University of the West Indies (UWI), University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT), and the University of the Southern Caribbean (USC). The questionnaire contains sixteen (16) questions in length relating to each thesis chapter, that is, creative and critical thinking, higher and deeper level of educational interest and artistic self-expression. Each question is marked required (shown by the red asterisk), participants have freedom in writing their response, hence each question has a comment section to answer.

Final year project research

Dear participants,

I am a year 3 student pursuing my B.A in Musical Arts at the University of the West Indies. My final year project is based on ' Investigating a rationale for a mandatory Visual and Performing Arts course for tertiary level university students in Trinidad and Tobago.' I would be sincerely appreciative and grateful for your participation in this questionnaire to aid me in research for my final year project. Thank you in advance for your support.

Please note: VAPA – Visual and Performing Arts includes (music, visual arts, dance, theatre, film, and carnival studies).

Creative thinking – encourages innovative, unorthodox, and unique ways of problem-solving.

Critical thinking – focuses on analyzing, evaluating, and reflecting on information to provide various perspectives and ideas for a solution.

1. Do you think creative and critical thinking are important and why? *

Your answer _____

Untitled title

2. Should creative and critical thinking co-exist or be separated? Please give a reason for your answer. *

Your answer _____

3. With regards to the previous questions, do you believe the Arts promote both types of thinking? Please give a reason for your answer. *

Your answer _____

4. Should the Arts remain in schools' curriculum and why? *

5. What are the benefits of VAPA education? *

Your answer _____

6. "Persons involved in the Arts have a higher interest in school" True or False? - Please give a reason for your answer. *

Your answer _____

7. "The link between the Arts and other subjects, increases the educational interest in students as students can use what they have learnt in VAPA to aid in other subject areas. E.g. Creativity in presentations and assignments and offering different perspectives in topic discussions." – True or False? - Please give a reason for your answer. *

Your answer _____

8. What are your thoughts on including the Visual and Performing Arts as a foundation course at the university level? *

Your answer _____

9. Do you believe the Arts create a medium for persons to express themselves? If yes how? *

Your answer

10. Have you ever used the Arts to express yourself? If yes, which art form(s) did you use and how? *

Your answer

11. Do you think the Arts are therapeutic? Please give a reason for your answer. *

Your answer

12. What is the purpose of the Arts in society? *

Your answer

13. How do the Arts benefit society? *

13. How do the Arts benefit society? *

Your answer

14. How does it personally benefit you? *

Your answer

15. Do you think the Creative Arts speak about historical facts, societal, political, and environmental issues? Please give an example. *

Your answer

16. With regards to the previous question do you think it effective? If yes, how? *

Your answer

Submit

Page 1 of 1

Clear form

APPENDIX 3 DIAGRAMS OF STATISTICAL DATA

Questions 12-14 are not represented by pie charts.

Figure 2

1. Do you think creative and critical thinking are important and why?

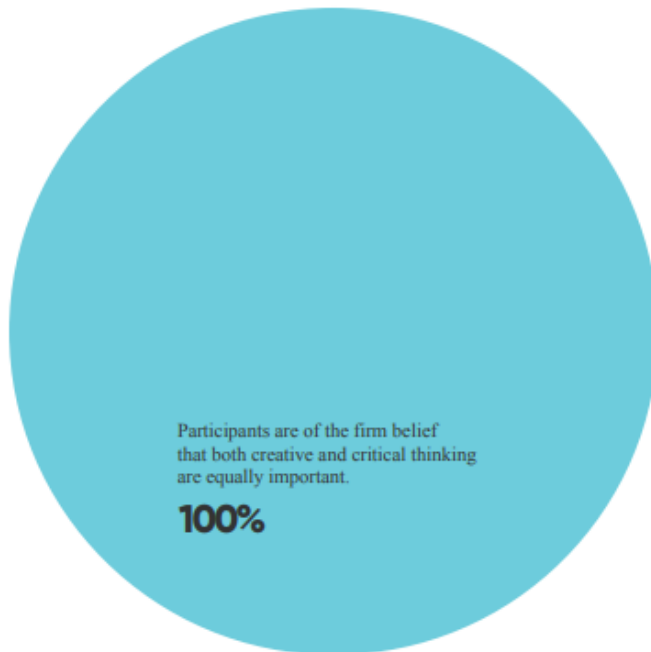


Figure 3

**2. Should creative and critical thinking co-exist or be separated?
Please give a reason for your answer.**

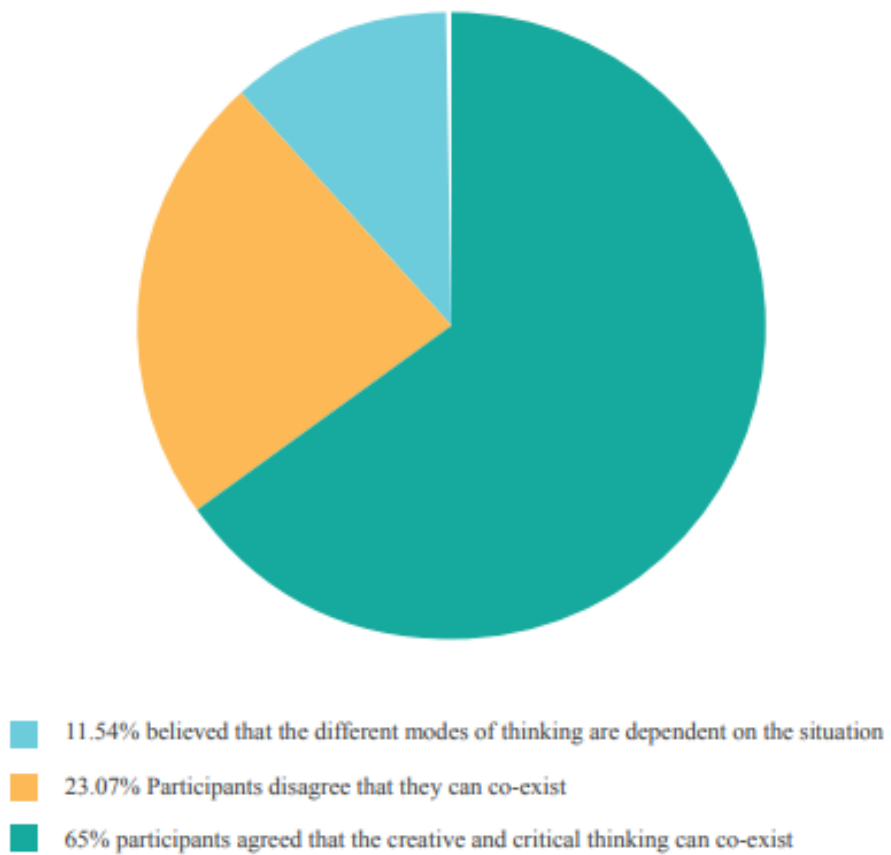
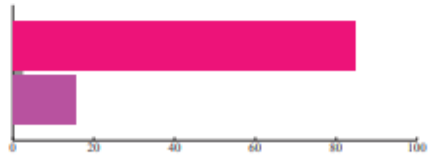


Figure 4

3. With regards to the previous questions, do you believe the Arts promote both types of thinking? Please give a reason for your answer.



- 84.61% agreed that the arts promoted both types of thinking.
- 15.38% argue that the arts fail to promote both types of thinking.

Figure 5

4. Should the Arts remain in schools' curriculum and why?

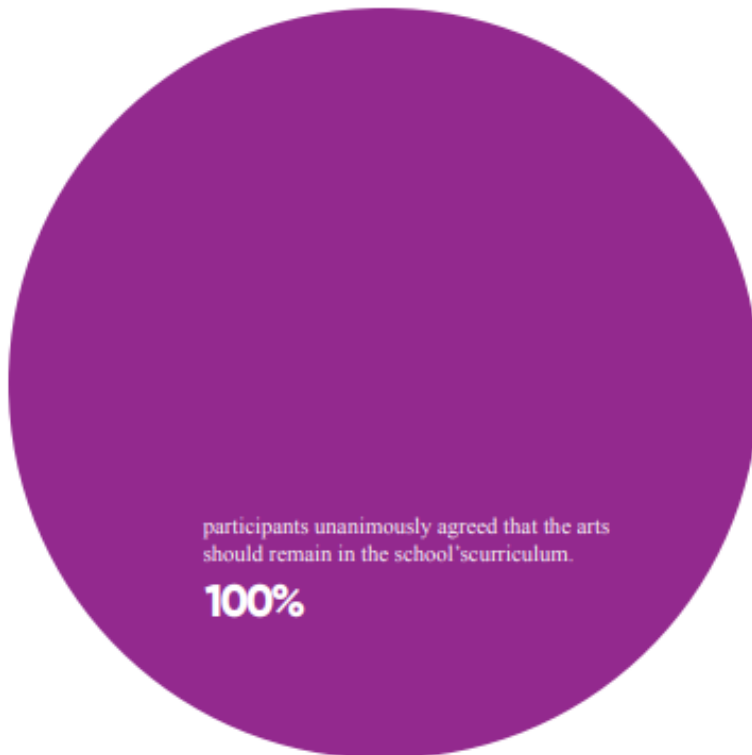
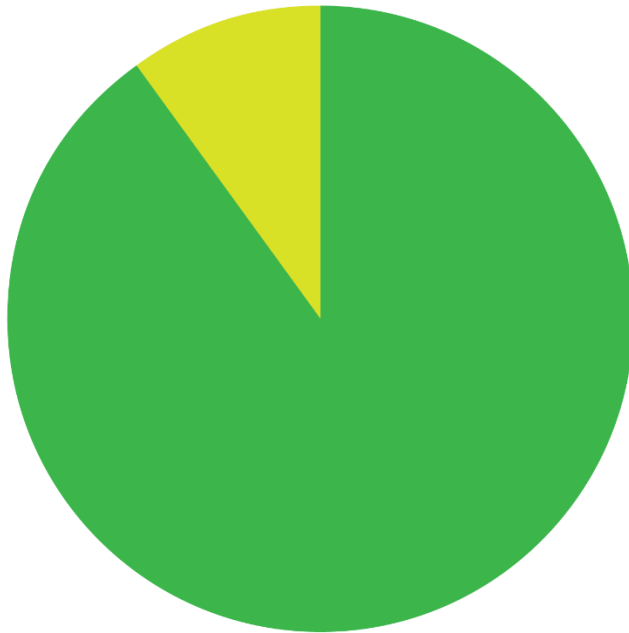


Figure 6

5. What are the benefits of VAPA education?

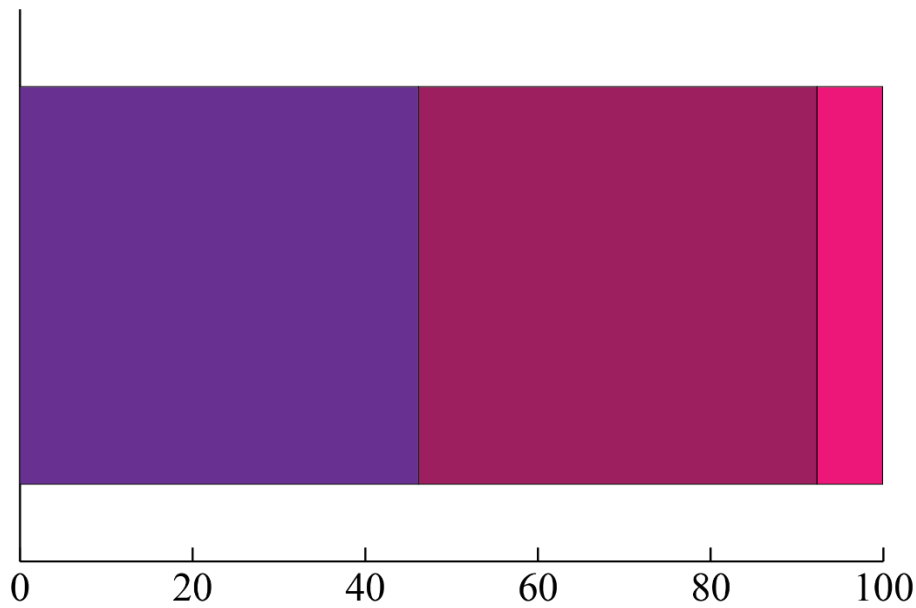


■ 90% of the participants spoke on the educational and individual benefits of Vapa has on persons and a society

■ 10% speak on the therapeutic benefits of VAPA

Figure 7

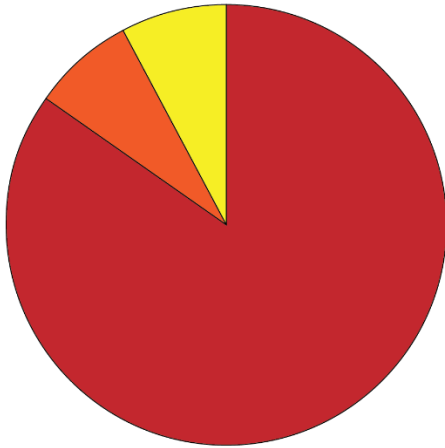
6. “Persons involved in the Arts have a higher interest in school” True or False?
- Please give a reason for your answer.



- 46.15% of the participants believed that people involved in the Arts have a higher interest in school.
- 46.15% of the participants proclaimed that people involved in the Arts don't have a higher interest in school.
- 7.6% of the participants were undecided.

Figure 8

**7. “The link between the Arts and other subjects, increases the educational interest in students as students can use what they have learnt in VAPA to aid in other subject areas. E.g. Creativity in presentations and assignments and offering different perspectives in topic discussions.” – True or False?
- Please give a reason for your answer.**



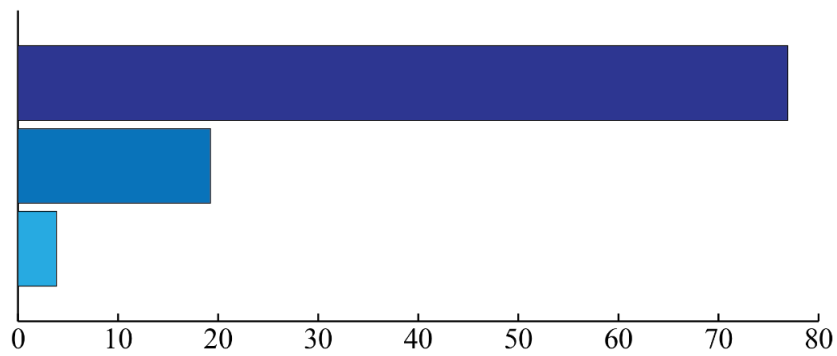
■ 84.61% of the participants expressed that the statement is true.

■ 7.69% of the individuals disagreed

■ 7.69% were undecided.

Figure 9

8. What are your thoughts on including the Visual and Performing Arts as a foundation course at the university level?



- 76.92% of the applicants believe that a VAPA course should be a foundation course at the university level.
- 19.23% disagreed
- 3.85% undecided

Figure 10

**9. Do you believe the Arts create a medium for persons to express themselves?
If yes how?**

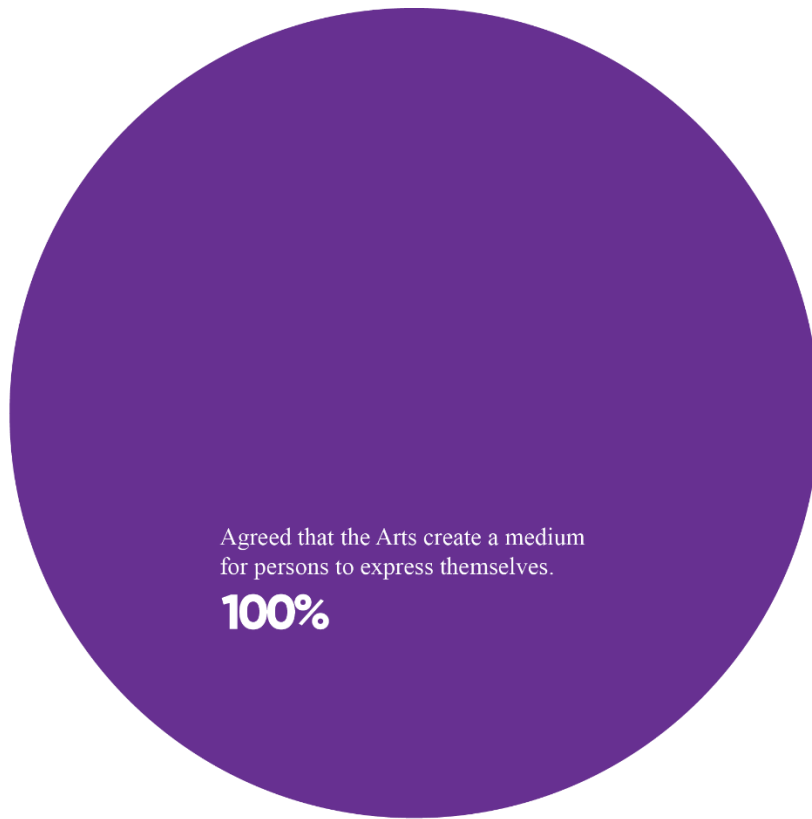
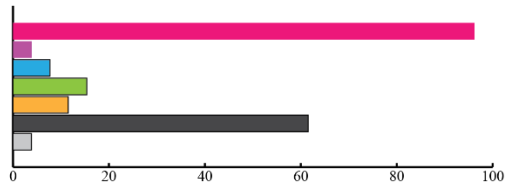


Figure 11

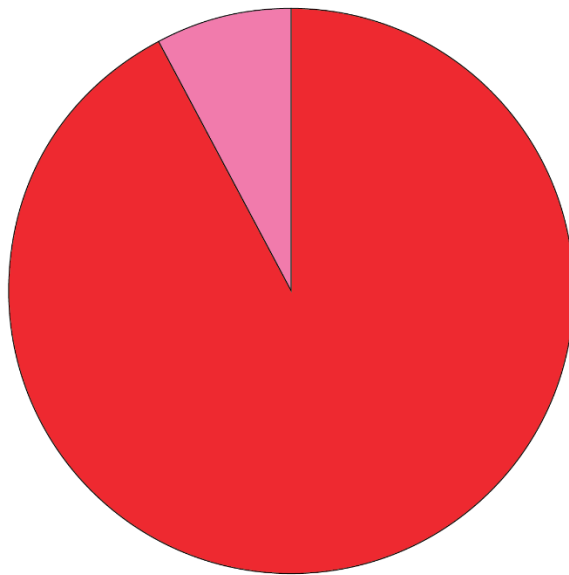
**10. Have you ever used the Arts to express yourself?
If yes, which art form(s) did you use and how?**



- 96.15% have used the arts (music, dance, theatre and visual arts) to express themselves.
- 3.85% did not use the arts to express themselves
- 7.69% used a combination of all 4 art forms
- 15.38%.Used 3 art forms
- 11.53%Used 2 art forms
- 61.54%. Used 1 art form
- 3.85%.Used none

Figure 12

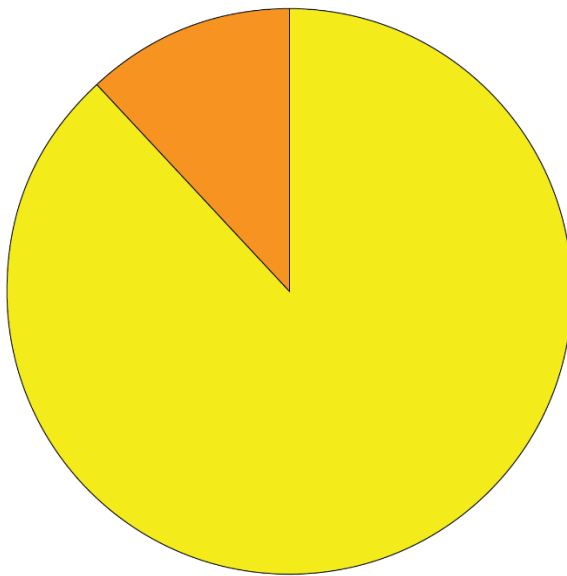
11. Do you think the Arts are therapeutic? Please give a reason for your answer.



- 92.30%.believe the Arts are therapeutic
- 7.69%. are uncertain

Figure 13

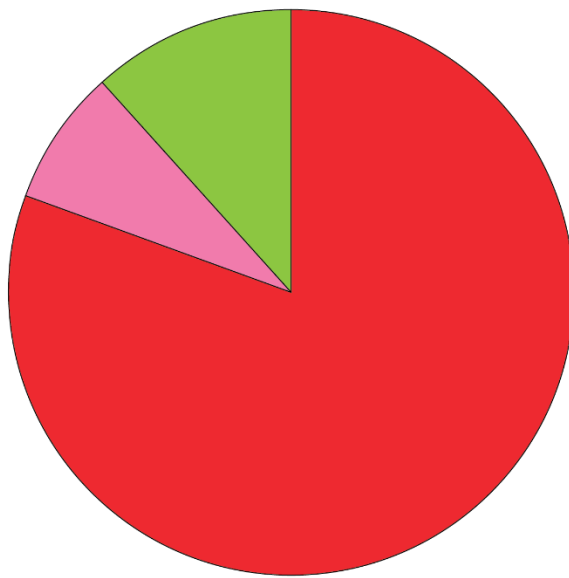
15. Do you think the Creative Arts speak about historical facts, societal, political, and environmental issues? Please give an example.



■ 84.61% agree
■ 11.53% are undecided

Figure 14

16. With regards to the previous question do you think it effective? If yes, how?



- 80.77%. Agree that it is effective
- 7.69% disagree
- 11.53% uncertain