



Preschool Teachers' Application of Visual Arts in Kindergartens

Ivana Rochovská¹, Monika Brozmanová²

¹ Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Faculty of Education, 13 Ružová St., SK-974 11 Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, ivana.rochovska@umb.sk

² Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Faculty of Education, 13 Ružová St., SK-974 11 Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, monika.brozmanova@umb.sk

Annotation. Research focuses on the application of visual arts in preschool education from the perspective of kindergarten teachers. The research instrument was a questionnaire constructed by the authors. Based on the self-reflection of kindergarten teachers, opportunities to acquire knowledge in visual arts were found to predict kindergarten teachers' attitudes toward visual arts. The attitude of kindergarten teachers toward the visual arts predicts the use of visual arts in preschool education.

Keywords: *interpretation of a work of art, kindergarten teachers, preschool education, visual arts.*

Introduction

Already in preschool education, emphasis is placed on the holistic development of the child's personality in the sense of building an interaction between a holistic approach to the education of the individual and a holistic view of the world. The main purpose is to raise an individual who will respect all other people, respect their differences, and value them. The perception of art education is still more on a partial level, i.e., that it contributes to the development of certain parts of the personality but has less ambition to develop the child holistically. The holistic view of art education of the child in the sense of education by art has two tendencies: 1. Education of the child's personality; the goal is the complex development of psychological processes (cognitive, socioaffective, and psychomotor); and 2. The completion of the topic, where the topic discussed in other

parts of the educational content will penetrate as a “problem” also in art education. In the artistic exploration of a given topic, children are given the opportunity to present a plurality of possible solutions and defend their view of the problem (Šupšáková, 2004). Research on the benefits of the visual arts for children has shown that including visual arts activities, specifically incorporating the interpretation of artworks into education, positively influences the development of children’s critical thinking skills (Bowen et al., 2014). In her research, Tomas (2019) verified the impact of experimental activities focused on contemporary visual arts on the development of children’s creativity potential, as well as their artistic skills.

Works of art represent visual communication that enters the communication framework from the author to the recipient. The only way the receiver can grasp it is by reciprocating it. Reception is the reception and perception of stimuli through the senses. The interpersonal dimension of dialogue is absent in the artefacts. The author of the work is represented in the form of the work itself, and the recipient makes contact through reading the work, understanding the visual language. In preschool education, the recipient is the preschool child, so the pedagogical mastery and competence of the teacher to work with the visual work have the greatest impact on the whole reception process.

The curriculum documents of preschool institutions around the world also include the basics of arts education and education through the arts. In the same way, university training for preschool teachers includes subjects devoted to the visual arts (Blasković & Novaković, 2013; Eckhoff, 2013; Andrieu et al., 2017; Bautista et al., 2018; Herzog et al., 2018; Vasikova, 2018; Yildiza & Coban, 2019; Guterres & De Melo, 2021; Novaković et al., 2022).

In the competency profile of a preschool teacher, the competencies are related to the educational process, to the child, and to self-education. In this way, self-reflection of the competences of preschool teachers in relation to the interpretation of visual arts, to which they lead children, can also be conceived. If a teacher wants to lead the educational process in art education, he/she must have knowledge in the field, also be able to use various innovative and, especially, in the context of works of visual art, related methods for improving the process of reception and, consequently, interpretation of works of visual art.

Research Problem

Inclusion of visual art stimuli has a positive impact on preschool children and brings multiple benefits (Bowen & Kisida, 2019; 2022; See & Kokotsaki, 2016). However, it must be led by a teacher who is competent pedagogically but equally competent artistically. Thus, one can ask whether kindergarten teachers feel competent in this regard (Rochovská, Švábová, 2021; 2022; Rochovská, Švábová, & Dolinská, 2023) and to what extent they incorporate visual art and its stimuli into educational activities in kindergarten. Therefore, the research problem has become the use of visual art in preschool education based on the self-reflection of kindergarten teachers.

The Aims and Hypotheses of the Research

The research problem was related to research questions and research hypotheses. Where the researchers do not have support in the literature, other research, or experience, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What is the status and frequency of the use of visual art in preschool education?
2. What were the opportunities for kindergarten teachers to acquire professional knowledge of visual art in their pre-service training or in other forms of education?
3. What is the relationship of kindergarten teachers to visual art?

Hypotheses were formulated on the basis of the researchers' field experience and previous empirical experience:

1. Kindergarten teachers' opportunities to acquire knowledge of visual art predict their level of relationship toward visual art.
2. The relationship of kindergarten teachers to visual art predicts the use of visual art in preschool education.

Research Methodology

Participants

Teachers who were willing to participate in the research were selected for the sample, that is, it was an available selection. A total of 366 questionnaires (via Google.Docs and in paper form) were evaluated by kindergarten teachers. Of these, 96.2% were women and 0.3% were men, which is consistent with the gender composition of the core sample. The age ranged from 20 to 64 years, with a mean age of 42.75 years ($SD = 11.79$). Half of the teachers in the sample are 42 years of age or under and the other half are over 42 years of age ($Mdn = 42$). The most common age is 50 years ($n = 16$). The number of years of teaching experience ranged from 0 to 46 years, with a mean of 19.64 years of experience ($SD = 14.29$). In the sample, half of the teachers reported the number of years of experience as 18 years or less and the other half reported more than 18 years of experience ($Mdn = 18$). The most common value of the number of years of experience is 1 year ($n = 22$).

The research sample consisted of 57.9% teachers in urban kindergartens, 36.3% teachers in rural kindergartens, and 5.7% of the respondents did not indicate the type of school with respect to location. Most of the respondents (91.3%) worked in state kindergartens, 2.2% in private kindergartens, 1.6% in religious kindergartens, and 4.9% of the respondents did not comment on the type of school with respect to the type. Of the total number of respondents, 6.6% had graduated in the field of visual art at a primary art school.

Instruments and Procedures

The research instrument, a questionnaire on the construction of the authors, was aimed at ascertaining the views of kindergarten teachers on the use of the interpretation of a work of art in preschool education. The questionnaire contained a total of 11 items related to visual art with an aggregate maximum score of 29 points¹. The questionnaire contained other items related to other types of art.

Individual items were scored. The first research question could be answered based on the responses to the first two items (Table 1). In part A, the first semi-closed item, the respondents answered whether they used any works of art, or their reproductions, in their educational activities with children. Respondents could score one point for each 'paintings, sculptures' answer given. Respondents were also asked to specify which paintings, sculptures, or reproductions of paintings, sculptures.

In the second single-choice item scored, the respondents indicated how often they included working with a work of art in their kindergarten educational activities, that is, in the area of visual art. They were given a choice of options, which also provided a score for the answers: a) every day (5 points), b) at least once a week (4 points), c) at least once a month (3 points), d) at least once every six months (2 points), e) at least once a year (1 point), f) not at all (0 points), g) other answer (they had to give a specific answer, which was individually scored with a maximum possible score of 5 points).

Table 1

Summary of Scores for Each Question in Part A – Status and Frequency of Use of Visual Art in Preschool Education

Number and Focus of Questions	Maximum Number of Points
1. The use of works of art: paintings, sculptures.	1
2. The frequency of including a work of musical art in education.	5
Total	6

For part B – Teachers' opportunities to learn/acquire knowledge of visual art, the respondent could score a maximum of 12 points in total (Table 2). The scoring of the answers in Part B of the questionnaire was designed in such a way that the more points the respondent gained, the more opportunities he had for learning in the field of visual art (knowledge, practical artistic activities, theoretical, methodological, and practical ideas for implementing activities with children in kindergarten related to visual art).

The first scored multiple-answer item focused on the respondents' self-reflection on their opportunities to gain knowledge of visual art during their studies. They chose from a range of options and scored their responses accordingly: a) excellent (4 points), b) very good (3 points), c) good (2 points), d) adequate (1 point), and e) inadequate (0 points).

¹ In order to quantify the individual variables, points were assigned for the responses.

The second multiple-answer item asked respondents to indicate whether they could recall any specific courses they had taken in secondary school or university in visual art. They were given a choice of options and scored accordingly for their answers: a) yes, during secondary school (1 point), b) yes, during university (1 point), and c) no (0 points), d) cannot remember (0 points).

The third semi-closed item scored was orientated toward finding out whether the respondents had acquired knowledge of the history and theory of visual art, even after completing pre-service training in the form of continuous, or nonformal, or informal education (various courses, workshops, conferences, etc.). They had to choose from a number of options, according to which they also received a score for the answers: a) yes, in the form of continuous education (1 point), b) yes, in the form of nonformal education (e.g., courses, workshops) (1 point), c) yes, in the form of informal education (spontaneously acquired knowledge) (1 point), d) no (0 points), other answer (they had to give a specific answer, which was individually scored with a maximum possible score of 1 point).

In the next item, the respondents were asked to indicate whether they had attended any courses, workshops or seminars aimed at familiarising themselves with visual art or practical artistic activities (e.g. ceramics, drawing courses, etc.). They were awarded one point for answering ‘yes’.

In the next item, the respondents were asked to indicate whether they had attended any courses, workshops, or seminars focused on theoretical, methodological, or practical ideas on how to implement activities with children in kindergarten that aim to learn about visual works of art. They were awarded one point for a ‘yes’ answer.

Table 2

Summary of Scores for Individual Questions in Part B – Opportunities for Kindergarten Teachers to Acquire Professional Knowledge From Visual Art and in Their Pre-Service Training or in Other Forms of Education

Number and Focus of Questions	Maximum Number of Points
1. Opportunities to gain professional knowledge in visual art.	4
2. Completion of disciplines during secondary school and university studies.	2
3. Acquisition of knowledge in the form of continuous, nonformal, and informal education.	4
4. Completion of courses, workshops, or seminars aimed at learning about visual art and practical artistic skills.	1
5. Completion of courses, workshops, or seminars focused on theoretical, methodological, or practical themes for the use of visual art in preschool education.	1
Total	12

For part C – The attitude of kindergarten teachers towards visual art, the respondent could score a maximum of 19 points in total (Table 3). The scoring of the answers in Part C of the questionnaire was designed in such a way that the more points the respondent scored, the more meaningful visual art is to him/her, and thus the more active he/she is in musical art and musical expression, not only passively as a receiver, but also actively.

In the first multiple choice item, the respondents answered if they considered visual art to be important in their lives. They chose from a range of options and scored their responses accordingly: a) very significant (4 points), b) significant (3 points), c) somewhat significant (2 points), d) mostly insignificant (1 point), and e) not significant at all (0 points).

The second multiple choice item focused on how often the respondents visit galleries and museums. They could choose from several options and scored their responses accordingly: a) at least once a week (4 points), b) at least once a month (3 points), c) at least once every six months (2 points), d) at least once a year (1 point), and e) never (0 points).

In the third semi-closed item, respondents were asked to circle the statements that best describe them: the subject of the scoring was the marking of the statement: ‘I have art paintings/sculptures or reproductions of them at home’. A point was awarded for marking this statement.

The fourth multiple choice item focused on whether the respondents were actively engaged in artistic creation, with respondents asked to mark one option for each question. For the question ‘Are you active in drawing/painting/sculpture?’ they scored a) yes, often (2 points), b) yes, sometimes (1 point), and c) never (0 points).

Table 3

Summary of Scores for Individual Questions in Part C – the Teachers’ Relationship Toward Visual Art

Number and Focus of Questions	Maximum Number of Points
1. The importance of visual art in the life of teachers.	4
2. Visiting galleries and museums.	4
3. Ownership of paintings/sculptures or reproductions of them.	1
4. Active artistic/aesthetic activity of teachers.	2
Total	11

In the form in which the questionnaire is constructed (its individual parts are not unidimensional and include several factors of the observed phenomenon, it is more focused on the description of the phenomenon), it is difficult to analyse its validity and reliability. On the other hand, with a questionnaire designed in this way focused on the description of the phenomenon, it is not even necessary to monitor its validity and reliability. Based

on the pre-survey, item analysis was applied, the quality of the items was assessed, and possible adjustments (which in this case were minimal) were suggested.

All procedures performed in the study involving human participants were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and national research committee.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out in the statistical programme, Jamovi 2.3.2. Descriptive statistics (absolute frequencies, relative frequencies, mean, standard deviation, median, minimum, maximum) were used. A linear regression analysis was chosen to test the hypotheses.

Research Results

Using Visual Art and Expression in Preschool Education

The respondents commented on the use of works of art or their reproductions in educational activities with children (Table 4). The question had multiple response options. A smaller proportion of teachers (40.7%) commented on the use of visual art/expression² compared to other types of art.

In the question, the responses of the respondents can also be considered from the point of view that 217 respondents (59.3%) did not comment at all on the use of paintings and sculptures. In kindergarten practice, the use of art work is more of an innovation, although it has been recommended in curriculum documents. It can be concluded that the material equipment of the kindergartens, in terms of didactic aids in the area under study, has some influence on the choice of answers. Today's technological possibilities (Internet resources, etc.) give the teacher opportunities to find and prepare material for use in his/her work with children, but not all teachers are equally creative and knowledgeable in the use of modern technology.

In the field of fine/visual arts, Slovak, Czech, and international works of various types were presented, whether paintings, illustrations, photographs, etc. Among the listed artists and works, there were not only those whose work is primarily dedicated to children, but also artists and works intended for adult recipients.

² In the specification of the responses of the questionnaire, not all listed works were within the so-called 'high' art, and therefore the terms visual art and expression are included in the interpretation of the results.

Table 4*Kindergarten Teachers' Comments on the Use of Works of Art/Reproductions in Educational Activities*

Works of art/Reproductions	n	%
Paintings, sculptures	149	40.7%
Musical compositions	296	81.4%
Theatre performances	220	60.9%
Literary works/texts	297	81.7%
Other	14	3.8%
No answer	4	1.1%

It can also be interpreted from the responses that these were mostly works of a figurative object character, with fewer non-figurative abstract works. The answers also show that the respondents do not use literature about art for children in education, which is currently well available on the Slovak market and is suitable for pre-school age. It is also evident that respondents only, to a low extent, considered illustration for children to be a work of art worthy of interpretation. Yet many children's books used in kindergarten contain illustrations by professional artists, which can appropriately shape the artistic sensibilities and tastes of the recipient. The respondents also commented on the frequency of using visual artwork in educational activities within the kindergarten (Table 5). This was a closed-ended multiple-response question. Based on self-reflection, teachers most frequently use a piece of visual art at least once a week (41.5%).

Table 5*Frequency of the Use of Working With a Work of Visual Art*

	Every day	At least once a week	At least once a month	At least once every six months	At least once a year	Not at all
n	49	152	78	33	17	11
%	13.4%	41.5%	21.3%	9%	4.6%	3%
25 teachers did not respond (7.1%)						

The current state of visual art use represented by the two questions (Table 1) was quantified into a single variable. On average, teachers use visual art more than the mean of the scale (Table 6).

Table 6*Descriptions of the Current State of the Use of Visual Art by Kindergarten Teachers*

n	M	Md	SD	min	max
366	3.60	4	1.58	0	6

Opportunities for Kindergarten Teachers to Acquire Professional Knowledge in Visual Arts Within Their Pre-Service Training or in Other Forms of Education

In the first item, teachers were asked to rate on a scale their ability to acquire professional knowledge in visual art (Table 7). Almost a third of the teachers (29%) rated their opportunities to acquire knowledge in visual art as very good, and another almost a third of teachers (30.3%) considered them good. What is worrying is that 6.3% of the respondents consider their knowledge of visual arts to be insufficient but practice as a kindergarten teacher.

Table 7*Respondents' Assessment of Opportunities to Gain Expertise in Visual Art Theory and History*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Sufficient	Insufficient
n	59	106	111	39	23
%	16.1%	29%	30.3%	10.7%	6.3%
28 teachers did not respond (7.7 %)					

The questionnaire also asked the respondents to indicate whether they remembered any specific disciplines focused on visual art in secondary school and university (Table 8). This was a multiple-response question.

Since in the subsequent analysis of the specific responses it was found that respondents did not only mention disciplines, but also various subjects and courses related to the arts, it is necessary to interpret the responses to the item in light of this. (Instead of disciplines, e.g., Theory and History of Fine Arts, many respondents gave the names of courses taken during their studies, mostly methodologically or practically orientated).

Respondents' self-reflection in terms of their knowledge of visual art theory and history is not portrayed in a positive light also because relatively high percentages of respondents indicated that they did not take disciplines focused on and art (6.8%), that they did not recall (14.5%), or that they did not comment on the question (9.8%), which can also be interpreted as not recalling.

Table 8

Respondents' Statements on the Disciplines/Subjects/Courses Taken in Visual Art During Their Studies

	Yes, during secondary school studies	Yes, during university studies	No	I don't remember, what the point was
n	182	125	25	53
%	49.7%	34.2%	6.8%	14.5%
36 teachers did not respond (9.8%)				

The respondents were asked whether they had acquired knowledge in visual art after their pre-service training in the form of continuous or nonformal, or informal education (various courses, workshops, conferences, etc.). This was a multiple-response question (Table 9). Gaining experience after completing pre-service training was either in the form of continuous education (21.3%), or nonformal education (20.2%) and especially informal education (27%), that is, these respondents relied more on self-study than on institutional learning.

Table 9

Respondents' Statements on Acquiring Knowledge of Visual Art Through Continuous, Nonformal, or Informal Education

	Yes, through continuous education	Yes, through nonformal education (e.g., courses, workshops)	Yes, through informal education (spontaneously acquired knowledge)	No
n	78	74	99	122
%	21.3%	20.2%	27%	33.3%
52 teachers did not respond (14.2 %)				

Respondents were asked to give the names of disciplines in art theory and history or their focus that they recalled in their continuing, formal, or informal education.

The respondents' answers indicated that they did not seem to fully understand the question posed, which was directed toward the acquisition of knowledge in art theory and history. In fact, not a single answer corresponded to the question posed, since most of the answers given were not disciplines but courses, and most of these courses and workshops were practical.

In the area of visual aesthetic activities and art education, the names of specific educational activities, seminars, courses, workshops were mentioned. They also mentioned the focus of the educational activities, e.g., on visual arts interpretation, music in visual arts, art therapy, and art techniques were also mentioned.

Several respondents also mentioned the lecturers of the mentioned educational activities. In the answers, it was not possible to find a priority focus on art theory and history in any of the mentioned educational activities (however, it cannot be ruled out that some educational activities contained hints of it. For example, the education entitled Dominic's Fun Briefcase was carried out directly in the gallery, where participants were briefly introduced to the artist's life; the Interpretation of Visual Art education also included brief information about paintings, different artistic movements, etc.).

The respondents indicated whether they had attended any courses, workshops, or seminars aimed at familiarising themselves with visual art or practical artistic activities (e.g., painting courses, ceramics). This was a closed question (Table 10). It can be stated that according to the respondents' statements, they had attended courses, workshops, or seminars aimed at familiarising themselves with visual art or practical artistic/aesthetic activities only to a low extent; the figures would have been even lower if only the relevant answers had been taken into account.

Respondents were asked to indicate the approximate title and focus of the course or what art it was related to, if they answered yes. This was an open question, and only 96 teachers (26.2%) responded in total.

The responses show a low level of understanding of the question by the respondents, as they were asked to indicate courses, workshops, or seminars that were aimed at introducing them to the arts or practical arts activities. There seemed to be little sensitivity on the part of the respondents to distinguish between theoretically, practically, and methodologically orientated courses, workshops, and seminars.

In the area of visual arts and aesthetic activities, respondents mentioned specific course titles focused on exposure to art or practical art/aesthetic activities, e.g., art education: creative workshops, interior design, ceramics, pottery, painting course, nontraditional painting, serviette technique. Courses were also mentioned where the title suggests more of a methodological focus, but it is possible that they also included practical aesthetic activities, e.g., graphomotorics in children's speech, Interpretation of artwork in the educational process, Revision of the content of preschool education – Art education, Development of graphomotor skills through art activities, Art education in kindergarten, Children's artistic expressions. Some respondents only recalled the focus of the courses in general, e.g., art therapy, art therapy, graphomotor skills, creativity development, art techniques for preschool, and others. They also mentioned techniques, activities, tools and materials, e.g., watercolours, dry pastels, silk painting, acrylics, painting Easter eggs, decorating gingerbread houses, painting mandalas, working with non-traditional materials, and fun photo shoots. Other answers could include, e.g., respondent's certification in art, art club, drawing and painting workshop, participation in various competitions, etc.

Table 10

Courses, Workshops, and Seminars Aimed at Familiarising Themselves With Visual Art or Practical Artistic/Aesthetic Activities Reported by the Respondents

Frequency			Relative Frequency %		
Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
68	128	196	18.6%	35%	53.6%

The respondents also expressed whether they had attended courses, workshops or seminars focused on theoretical, methodological, or practical ideas on how to implement activities with children in kindergarten with a focus on visual art and expression (Table 11). This was a closed question.

Table 11

Courses, Workshops, or Seminars Focussing on Theoretical, Methodological, or Practical Ideas on How to Implement Activities With Children in the Kindergarten Focussing on Visual Art and Expression

Frequency			Relative Frequency %		
Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
66	125	191	18 %	34.2 %	52.2 %

For the summary variable of kindergarten teachers' opportunities to acquire knowledge of visual art in their pre-service training or in other forms of education (Table 2), it can be stated that it is in the bottom half, lower than the average scale from 0 to 12 (Table 12).

Table 12

Description of Teachers Opportunities to Acquire Knowledge of Visual Art

n	M	Md	SD	min	max
366	4.10	4	2.29	0	10

Kindergarten Teachers' Attitudes to Visual Art

In the course of studies, within pedagogical practice and in everyday life, a kindergarten teacher meets art and develops a relationship with it. The respondents evaluated the importance of visual art in their lives (Table 13). This was a closed-ended multiple-choice question. Almost half of the teachers (45.1%) consider visual art to be important in their lives, and almost one-third of the teachers (28.7%) consider it to be very important.

Table 13*Kindergarten Teachers' Attitude Toward Visual Art*

	Very significant	Significant	Partly significant	Largely insignificant	Not significant at all
n	105	165	64	5	-
%	28.7%	45.1%	17.5%	1.4%	-
27 (7.4%) teachers did not respond					

In the next question, respondents commented on how often they visit galleries and museums (Table 14). This was a closed-ended multiple-response question. In interpreting the item, we assume that the respondents answered truthfully and tried to quantify the extent to which they visit galleries and museums. According to the responses, almost half of the teachers (44.3%) visit them at least once a year and almost a third (29.2%) visit them at least once every six months.

Table 14*Respondents' Responses on the Frequency of Attending Galleries and Museums*

Frequency of attending galleries and museums	At least once a week	At least once a month	At least once every six months	At least once a year	Never
n	2	37	107	162	19
%	0.5%	10.1%	29.2%	44.3%	5.2%
39 (10.7%) teachers did not respond					

The respondents indicated which statements regarding the ownership of art-related objects best describe them (Table 15). This was a closed-ended multiple-response item.

Interpretation of the answers to the question about ownership of art paintings and sculptures may be problematic due to the researchers' lack of knowledge about the particular respondent's orientation to the issue of "high" and "low art", his/her taste, and his/her ability to distinguish between art and kitsch. The specific answers of the respondents to the given question can help us.

Given the financial remuneration of preschool teachers, it cannot be expected that they would be collectors of 'high art', although this cannot be ruled out. The responses, which were very general, cannot be judged from this perspective. Teachers who are visual art lovers may, however, have secured reproductions of their favourite works or their own paintings of 'high' art by Slovak and Czech artists that were affordable to them. Some teachers gave the names of museums and galleries, so it is not clear whether they misunderstood the question or stated the places where they encounter (perhaps regularly) visual art.

Table 15
Respondents' Ownership of Art-Related Objects

Statements on the ownership of art-related objects	n	%
I have paintings/sculptures or reproductions of them at home.	135	36.9%
I have musical instruments.	240	65.6%
I have artistic literature in my library.	206	56.3%
I have video recordings of theatre performances.	53	14.5%
I have other art objects.	42	11.5%

Finally, respondents were asked whether they were actively engaged in artistic creation (Table 16). This was a closed-ended multiple choice question. Almost one third of the teachers (32.5%) said that they actively engaged in artistic creation occasionally and only 10.4% of them said that they engaged in artistic creation often.

For kindergarten teachers, it would be rather exceptional if they were both artists in the true sense of the word and practised art as a profession. It is clear from their answers to the previous questions that they did not quite distinguish between high and low art. For this reason, the item was evaluated in the context of the aesthetic activity of the respondents. The respondents were referring to aesthetic activities in the sense of leisure time activities, or aesthetic creation in the context of their own teaching practice, interior decoration of the school, etc.

Table 16
Active Artistic/Aesthetic Work of the Teachers

Answers to the question: 'Are you active in drawing/painting/sculpture?'	Yes, often	Yes, occasionally	Never
n	38	119	143
%	10.4%	32.5%	39.1%
66 teachers did not respond (18%)			

For the summary variable of the attitude of kindergarten teachers toward visual art (Table 3), it can be stated that it is in the lower half of the scoring scale from 0 to 11 (Table 17).

Table 17
Descriptions of Kindergarten Teachers' Attitudes Toward Visual Art

n	M	Md	SD	min	max
366	5.12	5	2.19	0	10

Testing Hypothesis H₁

A simple regression analysis was used to calculate the predictors of attitudes toward visual art by the kindergarten teachers' opportunities to acquire knowledge in visual art. A statistically significant effect was found ($F(1, 364) = 160, p < .001$) with $R^2 = 0,305$. The opportunities to acquire knowledge positively predict the attitudes of kindergarten teachers toward visual art ($t = 12,6, p < .001$). Hypothesis H₁ was confirmed (Table 18). If opportunities to acquire knowledge in visual art increase by 1 point, then the relationship will also increase by 0.528 points.

Table 18

Regression Analysis for the Possibility of Knowledge Acquisition as a Predictor of the Attitudes of Kindergarten Teachers Toward Visual Art

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Intercept	2.951	0.1963		15	< .001
The possibility of knowledge acquisition	0.528	0.0418	0.552	12.6	< .001

Testing Hypothesis H₂

A simple regression analysis was used to calculate the predictors of the use of visual art in preschool education through the level of attitudes of kindergarten teachers toward visual art. A statistically significant effect was found ($F(1, 364) = 42,3, p < .001$) with $R^2 = 0,104$. The relationship of kindergarten teachers to visual art positively predicted the use of visual art in preschool education ($t = 6.51, p < .001$). Hypothesis H₂ was confirmed (Table 19). If the relationship increases by one unit, then the use of visual art in preschool increases by 0.233 points.

Table 19

Regression Analysis for the Attitudes of Kindergarten Teachers Toward Visual Art as a Predictor of the Use of Visual Art in Preschool Education

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Intercept	2.411	0.1995		12.8	< .001
Relationship to visual art	0.233	0.0358	0.323	6.51	< .001

Discussion

Kindergarten teachers involved in the research had opportunities to gain knowledge about visual arts during their secondary school studies or during their university studies. Respondents who had completed a university degree in preschool and elementary education can expect to have encountered several disciplines focused on visual arts and expression as part of their studies. It is questionable whether in that study they were primarily concerned with knowledge about art or more with its didactic treatment and its potential for children's education.

In our research, most of the teachers rated the opportunities to acquire knowledge in visual arts as good to very good. Similar research results with preschool students in Croatia (Zagreb) showed that students rated their visual arts competence as good based on their previous studies (Blasković & Novaković, 2013).

This self-reflection shows that several respondents were aware of their low competence in this area. On the other hand, considering the secondary school and university studies of preschool pedagogy study programmes, it would be ideal if the graduates ended up with excellent knowledge of visual arts and were aware of this within their own self-reflection. Visual art has a high potential to develop creative and critical thinking in children, especially in integration with the contents of other areas. In kindergartens, the emphasis on basic literacy continues toward preparation for primary education (language and premathematical literacy). It would also be necessary to place the field of art and culture in an equal position in the undergraduate training of future kindergarten teachers at universities.

There was also a low percentage of responses in the items about completed courses, workshops, or seminars focused on visual art and expression. This may be due to respondents' lack of interest in further education in the field of visual arts. It is possible that the respondents who did not comment on the completion of the mentioned courses, seminars, or workshops were satisfied with the acquired knowledge in the field of theory and visual art methodology for the needs of their practice in kindergarten.

The most numerous categories of respondents' responses mentioned general names, and many respondents remembered specific names of subjects. Several respondents mentioned art techniques, others worked with different materials, different activities, games. From the given answers and their variety, it follows that familiarisation with conscience during the study left memory traces in them, which can be perceived positively, while they remembered specific subjects (lectures, exercises, courses), art techniques, materials, activities, etc. A relatively large number of respondents who were able to remember something specific related to the acquisition of knowledge in the visual arts during their studies can be perceived less positively. In addition, many respondents confused the terms art and aesthetic activity. On the other hand, research has also shown that if teachers completed elective courses in the art of aesthetics during their university studies, these courses

enriched them and had an impact on the inclusion of appropriate activities in preschool education (Seyhan & Karabay, 2018).

Maybe someone can add the findings of Leung et al. (2023) from Hong Kong, whose observations revealed that they still relied heavily on directive teaching to implement early childhood art education. A discrepancy was found between the professional knowledge of teachers in the field of visual arts and the integration of their pedagogical procedures in their pedagogical practice. The findings of this study in a local setting have the potential to significantly change the way in which preschool visual art teaching is conceptualised and discussed in an international context.

The integration of educational content is the most effective way of education from the point of view of a holistic approach to the development of a child's personality. It is visual art that contains components that can connect individual educational areas.

For a teacher to be able to use the potential of visual art, he must have a positive attitude toward it. Kindergarten teachers' relationship to visual art is also told by whether they look for art in their free time and want to meet it. They have the opportunity to meet "high art", especially in galleries and art museums. Almost half of the respondents said that they visit once a year.

Due to the financial evaluation of preschool teachers, they cannot be expected to be collectors of "high art", although this cannot be ruled out. The answers, which were very general, cannot be judged from this point of view. However, teachers who are lovers of visual art can secure reproductions of their favourite works or they own paintings of "high" art by Slovak and Czech authors, which were affordable for them.

Currently, the demands for the continued education of teachers in all fields are increasing. Considering the needs of the time in which we live, this request is relevant. The research confirmed that the possibilities of acquiring knowledge from visual art predict the attitude of kindergarten teachers toward this art. And at the same time, it was confirmed that the relationship to visual art predicts its use in preschool education.

If the goal of education is the all-round holistic development of the child's personality as a prerequisite for creating an interaction with a holistic perception of the world and the people in it, then visual art has the attributes to contribute to this process precisely with its potential to develop the emotional side of the child's personality. Without an emotionally mature individual, society will not achieve a peaceful global co-existence, the basic manifestation of which is the aforementioned holistic interaction. Emotional development in preschool age is also very important to allow the child to communicate about his emotions in various life situations. It is visual art that gives space for the child to find the identification of emotions that the author has put into the work in the tangle of visual language. In this process, he identifies the emotions contained in the work with his own, in the visual representation of various forms of the world and life, or its abstract expression.

Despite the advent of artificial intelligence, which can create various artistic images, the author's emotional contribution to visual art cannot be neglected. This emotional investment is primarily communicated to the receiver (a preschool child) through the reception mediated by the teacher. The teacher prepares and implements all successive steps: the reception of the work, i.e., the child's motivation for visual art, reading it, perception with the help of knowledge about the specifics of visual language, then decoding what the author of the work wanted to tell us, reflection, thinking about the work. Asking questions of the teacher helps children think about the work, which should be asked in such a way as to open up a broader concept of the work and create space for creativity, the child's imagination, or its application in solving problems raised by visual representation. The highlight of the reception stages is the child's interpretation of the visual work. Therefore, the teacher's personality and competence are, therefore, important determinants of effective art education. The teacher's competences depend both on knowledge and on the teacher's relationship to visual art.

The limits of the research lie in the fact that filling in the questionnaire was voluntary and it was probably filled in mainly by female teachers who are related to (visual) art and felt the need to express themselves on this topic. The real situation may be even less positive than the one found for the use of visual art and expression in kindergarten and the respondents' attitude towards visual art. Another limitation is that the respondents could give a socially desirable answer to several questions, that is, a kindergarten teacher is expected to have a relationship with visual arts.

Conclusions and Implications

Research has shown that the possibilities of acquiring knowledge of visual arts (which were below average based on teachers' self-reflection) predict the attitude of kindergarten teachers toward arts (which was also below average based on self-reflection). The relationship of kindergarten teachers to visual art predicts the use of visual art in preschool education.

The benefits and recommendations for pedagogical practice are derived from the research results. The first is to raise the awareness of kindergarten teachers about the possibilities of using visual art stimuli. As part of the study of future kindergarten teachers, more attention should be paid to the didactic use of visual art and more concrete stimuli should be applied to the didactic use of visual art in preparation for the profession. Kindergarten teachers received methodological guidelines and practical topics on how children in kindergarten can implement activities using visual arts. Based on the results of the research, it can also be recommended to implement elements of visual art in kindergartens educational programmes.

The impetus for further research is to carry out case studies of specific kindergarten teachers who successfully implement elements of visual art in their educational practice, resulting in the creation of methodological materials followed by applied research on their implementation into wider educational practice.

Acknowledgements

The research was carried out as part of KEGA Project No. 016KU-4/2022 Applying Creative Drama Methods in the Preschool Education Process.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

Ethical Approval

All procedures performed in the study with human participants were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and national research committees.

Data Availability Statement

The data sets generated and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

References

- Andrieu, A., Gomez-Pintado, A., & Lekue, P. (2017). Evaluation of the course syllabuses for the education in visual arts for teachers in training in the grades of preschool and primary education. *Observar*, 11(1), 75–96.
- Bautista, A., Moreno-Nunez, A., Koh, S. F. (2018). Arts-related pedagogies in preschool education: An Asian perspective. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 45, 277288. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2017.12.005>
- Blaskovic, J., & Novakovic, S. (2013). Early childhood and preschool education university students' views and assessments regarding visual art and music areas. *Croatian Journal of Education*, 15(3), 583–598.
- Bowen, D. H., Greene, J. P., & Kisida, B. (2014). Learning to think critically: A visual art experiment. *Educational Researcher*, 43(1), 37–44. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X13512675>
- Bowen, D. H., & Kisida, B. (2019). Investigating causal effect of arts education experiences: Experimental evidence from Houston's arts access initiative. *Houston Education Research Consortium*, 7(4), 1–28.
- Bowen, D. H., & Kisida, B. (2022). Investigating casual effects of arts education. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 42(3), 624–647. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.22449>

- Craw, J. (2015). Making art matter-ings: Engaging (with) art in early childhood education, in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Journal of Pedagogy*, 6(2), 133–153. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jped-2015-0018>
- Eckhoff, A. (2013). Conversational pedagogy: Exploring interactions between a teaching artist and young learners during visual art experiences. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 41(5), 365–372. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-012-0567-0>
- Guterres, I. D., & De Melo, J. C. (2021). The teachers' knowledge and practices in preschool: An analysis in the context of visual arts. *Humanidades & Inovacao*, 8(33), 143–155.
- Herzog, J., Susic, B., & Benic, M. Z. (2018). Pre-service early childhood and preschool education teachers' self-assessment of competences in visual arts and music. *Nova Pristnost*, 16(3), 579–593. <https://doi.org/10.31192/np.16.3.10>
- Leung, S. K. Y., Wu, J., Lam, Y., & Ho, T.H. (2023). An explanatory study of kindergarten teachers' teaching behaviours in their visual arts classrooms. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 124(2023), 104018. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2023.104018>
- Novaković, S., Blasković, J., & Tomljenovic, Z. (2022). Educating students at teacher education faculties in art fields (visual arts and music) in the online environment. *Proceedings of 27th ATEE Spring Conference: Social Justice, Media and Technology in Teacher Education*, Florence, Italy, 136–148.
- Rochovská, I., & Krupová, D. (2016). Visual art in nursery schools. *Multidisciplinary Journal of School Education*, 2(2), 69–87. <https://czasopisma.ignatianum.edu.pl/jpe/article/view/782>
- Rochovská, I., & Švábová, B. (2021). The use of the interpretation of works of art in pre-school education. *Problems of Education in the 21st Century*, 79(6), 956–970. [HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.33225/PEC/21.79.956](https://doi.org/10.33225/PEC/21.79.956)
- Rochovská, I., & Švábová, B. (2022). Dramatic art and dramatic expression through creative drama methods in preschool education. *AD ALTA: Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, 12(1), 142–150. <https://doi.org/10.33543/1201>
- Rochovská, I., Švábová, B., & Dolinská, E. (2023). The use of works of musical art in preschool education: A Slovak Perspective. *Educational Process: International Journal*, 12(3), 79–102. <https://doi.org/10.22521/edupij.2023.123.4>
- See, B. H., & Kokotsaki, D. (2016). Impact of arts education on children's learning and wider outcomes. *Review of Education*, 4(3), 234–262. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3070>
- Seyhan, G., B., & Karabay, S. (2018). Early childhood pre-service teachers' views about visual arts education and aesthetics. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 73(2018), 131–148. <https://doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2018.73.8>
- Šupšáková, B. (2004). *Vizuálna kultúra a umenie v škole* [Visual culture and art in school]. Digit.
- Tomas, I. (2019). Searching for agreement. On the difficulty in assessing artworks – own research report. *The New Educational Review*, 55(1), 121–131. <https://doi.org/10.15804/tner.2019.55.1.10>
- Vasikova, J. (2018). Interpretation and use of visual art in preschool education. *Proceedings of 10th International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies (EDULEARN)*, Mallorca, Spain, 4579–4579.

Yildiza, C., & Coban, A. E. (2019). Pre-service preschool teachers' views, experiences and approaches about children's drawings. *Cukurova University Faculty of Education Journal*, 48(1), 498–530.

Ikimokyklinio ugdymo mokytojų vizualiųjų menų taikymas vaikų darželiuose

Ivana Rochovská¹, Monika Brozmanová²

¹ Matej Bel universitetas Banská Bistricoje, Edukologijos fakultetas, Ružova g. 13, SK-974 11 Banská Bistrica, Slovakija, ivana.rochovska@umb.sk

² Matej Bel universitetas Banská Bistricoje, Edukologijos fakultetas, Ružova g. 13, SK- 974 11 Banská Bistrica, Slovakija, monika.brozmanova@umb.sk

Santrauka

Vizualiųjų menų stimulų įtraukimas į ugdymo procesą daro teigiamą poveikį ikimokyklinio amžiaus vaikams, tačiau tam turi vadovauti pedagogiškai meniniu požiūriu kompetentingi mokytojai. Šio tyrimo problema yra vizualiųjų menų taikymas ikimokyklinio ugdymo procese. Šiai problemai spręsti buvo suformuoti šie tyrimo klausimai: 1) kokia yra vizualiųjų menų taikymo ikimokykliniame ugdyme būklė ir dažnumas; 2) kokios buvo ikimokyklinio ugdymo mokytojų galimybės įgyti profesinių vizualiojo meno žinių; 3) koks ikimokyklinio ugdymo mokytojų santykis su vizualiuoju menu. Kartu buvo suformuluotos ir šios hipotezės: 1) Ikimokyklinio ugdymo mokytojų galimybės įgyti vizualiojo meno žinių prognozuoja jų santykio su vizualiuoju menu lygį; 2) Ikimokyklinio ugdymo mokytojų santykio su vizualiuoju menu lygis prognozuoja vizualiųjų menų taikymą ikimokykliniame ugdyme.

Tyrimui buvo naudojamas pačių autorių sudarytas klausimynas. Klausimyną užpildė 366 ikimokyklinio ugdymo mokytojai. Ikimokyklinio ugdymo mokytojų savirefleksijos rezultatai parodė, kad vizualiųjų menų kūrinų taikymo lygis yra šiek tiek aukštesnis nei vidutinis. Ikimokyklinio ugdymo mokytojų galimybės įgyti žinių apie vizualiųjų menų teoriją ir istoriją, taip pat ikimokyklinio ugdymo mokytojų požiūris į vizualiuosius menus buvo žemesnis nei vidutinis lygis. Nustatyta, kad galimybės įgyti vizualiųjų menų žinių prognozuoja ikimokyklinio ugdymo mokytojų požiūrį į vizualiuosius menus, o ikimokyklinio ugdymo mokytojų požiūris į vizualiuosius menus prognozuoja vizualiųjų menų taikymą ikimokykliniame ugdyme.

Esminiai žodžiai: *meno kūrinio interpretacija, ikimokyklinio ugdymo mokytojai, ikimokyklinis ugdymas, vizualieji menai.*

Gauta 2023 11 30 / Received 30 11 2023
Priimta 2024 04 12 / Accepted 12 04 2024