

Artivism: Art for Social Transformation and Critical Ability Development

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ABSTRACT. This mixed-method study made use of 87 curated students' artivism artworks. Data that were generated were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Artivism was used as one of the creative engagement activities in teaching art appreciation and contemporary issues. The outputs were graded. The perfect score was 20, the lowest score was 17. Descriptive statistical techniques were employed. The frequencies were used to determine the student's critical ability. The correlation between students' social transformation engagement and art critical ability scores was determined using the Pearson Correlation Coefficient set at alpha .05. Results showed that students' critical ability was 'very high' as an entire group and when grouped according to sex. No significant differences were noted in the student's critical ability and artivism engagement. Analysis, interpretation, and judgment of student's critical ability in artivism engagement are significantly related. The study contributes to the field of general education by expanding the existing knowledge base.

1.0. Introduction

In teaching art, having students engage in artistic activities without letting them get in touch with the world's actual conditions while stimulating their imaginations may be an aimless pursuit. Art can become an aimless enterprise. Art must be rooted in the realities of the society. It must also be a way to celebrate the beauty of the unity and harmony of people with the environment. Art can change people's minds. As Talley (2023) stresses, art has the power to move people and evoke emotions that even words can never do justice to. It also inspires them to take on different perspectives and reimagine their worlds. It is how an artist expresses his or her ability to change the individual psyche profoundly and undeniably. In artivism, it is the artist's business to change the collective mind and shy away from presently employing art. Artists with activist aims, like activists, must examine their work's efficacy in inspiring the change they imagine.

Camus (1961), the French Philosopher, states that it is not surprising that intellectuals and artists have been considered the initial victims of the so-called modern tyrannies, may be Right or Left. In the words of Camus (1961), tyrants know there is an emancipatory force in the work of art, which is considered mysterious only to people who do not revere it. In this proclamation, one thing that

unquestionably validates the effect of visual arts upon society is how they are managed by those who want to gain domination. Art is a unifying element. Tyranny, on the other hand, separates. The human mind is susceptible to the persuasive power of images. In many instances, many artists believe in the influence of art on humankind. As Camus (1961) puts it, the aim of art is the aim of life. This statement can only be the realization of freedom and responsibility seen in every man and the world. And no amount of force has to suppress man's freedom.

It is said that the language of artivism is varied and procreative. It goes beyond fixed standards. In the work of Abarca (2006), it was pointed out that the free nature of artivism among urban artists neglects the limits mandated by private property that establishes where they can or cannot act. This practice is similar to how artivism is used in the classroom. Setting a work of art can consecutively cover two or more adjacent surfaces belonging to different owners. In this context, therefore, it ignores the disagreement of space and is restricted by monetary measures.

This paper is also based on the theory of Feldman (1970). According to Subramaniam et al. (2016), before 1970, Feldman, in his work *Becoming Human Through Art*, a method for the criticism and evaluation of works of art was shown. In this study, art appreciation in art education textbooks designed for the use of art teachers reflected some theoretical accounts of how art is evaluated and criticized. This framework may also be utilized in other subjects, specifically at the tertiary level. Criteria or standards

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for evaluating works of art were very brief (Clark & Hurwitz, 1975).

To understand his theory, a thorough reading is needed. In this theory, Feldman (1994) describes how the student may use this framework. They can first scrutinize the object of art for its thematic and utilitarian significance before its description. After that, they can investigate the “pervasive quality” or style of the artwork. They then explore for indicators to compartmentalize information relating to the art object. Feldman’s philosophy comprises four approaches: factual accuracy, formal order, emotion, and fantasy. Using this routine, the student starts associating the work with one of the four approaches.

The Feldman system of criticism uses the inductive process to deduce inferences for an initial group of facts. This model of criticism translates to the four stages in creating accounts about a certain work of art. Teachers of art appreciation, for instance, may utilize it with the fundamental assertion that students who grasp this method can articulate and rationalize intelligently about art. Feldman asserts that if students can engage in discourse about the art, they will understand and appreciate it better (Feldman, 1994).

Discourses about art are considered central to the essential experience and interpretation of any work of art. Feldman underscores the importance of interpretation in the elucidation of the artwork. Feldman likewise emphasizes that “in the process of Interpretation, challenges may arise. It is the most significant part of the critical activity. To explain the work of art, discovering its meanings and discussing its relevance to people’s lives and the present human condition in general” (Feldman, 1994, p. 476).

2.0. Framework of the Study

Feldman’s method of criticism model for the students is used in art-critical performance. In this framework, it has to be noted that the students may utilize Feldman’s framework to refer to their artwork in the context of activism. The method includes three steps. The first step in Feldman’s framework for critiquing art (Feldman, 1994) is *Description*. In this stage, critics usually make criticisms or observations about what they observe. Such interpretations must be unbiased. They must be spontaneous or unstructured and free from inferences or expressions of opinion. The next step is *analysis*. In this part, the art critic communicates their judgments about the artwork’s significance. The analysis hinges on the critic’s perception of the elements of art and design principles to interconnect the information observed in a certain work of art in a more experienced manner. This step also expresses how the work is developed as a complete masterpiece. The third step is *Interpretation*. The art

critic verbalizes their opinions about what the artist tries to express by deliberating what the artwork means to them. This step also expresses how it makes the critic feel. The final step is *Judgment*. This is the last step in the framework (Feldman, 1994). During this stage, the art critic expresses their opinion about the work of art.

Activism (a blend of art and activism) has developed as a universal expression. It emerged from urban and graffiti art and situationism, a form of creative forms from the twentieth century (Ardenne, 2008; Abarca, 2006; Szmulewicz, 2017). Teaching at the tertiary level, specifically in general education, helps teachers explore the ability of students to develop their artistic ability concerning the social realities around them. There are a lot of strategies that teachers utilize to enhance students’ artistic and critical knowledge at the same time. In teaching art appreciation, for instance, they are exposed to art activities and criticism, among others. Through art criticism, students can examine their work and those of others to make a systematic judgment about it.

Meanwhile, tertiary students addressed the meaning and significance of their work right after being exposed to the hybrid form of art and activism most popularized by the teachers as possessing educational potential and a new strategy for accomplishing social engagement using innovation and artistic creation. Activism has become a new paradigm integrating art criticism and social transformation through artistic empowerment. The study contributes to the field of general education by expanding the existing knowledge base.

Therefore, the study intends to engage students in activism through artistic engagement. Using Feldman’s method of art criticism – description, formal analysis, interpretation, and judgment, students evaluated their activism experience. The following questions are addressed: 1) What is the students’ art critical ability in the activism engagement regarding the artwork’s description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment? 2) Is there a significant difference in the student’s critical ability in the activism engagement in the different categories? 3) Is there a significant relationship between student’s art-critical ability and their activism engagement? and 4) What social relevance is reflected in the students’ curated artworks?



Figure 1. The Framework of the Study

3.0. Methodology

This study utilized the mixed method type of research. This study made use of 87 students' artivism outputs. Artivism was done as a strategy in the class. Quantitative treatment includes using descriptive statistics on frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviation to determine students' art critical skills in their artivism engagement. Mann Whitney U test was utilized to compare student's critical ability in artivism engagement. In addition, the Pearson correlation coefficient was utilized to establish simple predictions about the possible dimensions of art criticism that may correlate with students' engagement with artivism. The level was set at alpha .05. The qualitative design of the students' outputs on artivism was visually analyzed to establish their social relevance based on how they were presented.

This study is also exploratory. The sample was deliberated as a case and not a representation of the population from which the findings can be deduced. The students in this study were given the activity on artivism as one of the creative engagement activities in teaching art appreciation and contemporary issues.

The students' outputs in the artivism output were graded. The perfect score was 20, and the lowest score was 17. Table 1 shows the distribution of students' scores in the artivism activity. The distribution is shown based on the percentage of students getting grades from A (Superior) to F (Inferior). Of the 87 students, 33.3 (29) attained grade A, and only 17.2% (15) attained A-. Some students got grades B+ with a percentage of 26.4% (23). While 8.0% (7) of the students achieved B- and 5.75% (5) attained C+. None of the students scored C, D, and F grades.

Table 1
Grade percentage obtained by students in Artivism

Grade	Percentage
A	33.3
A-	17.2
B+	26.4
B-	9.2
C+	8.0
C	5.75
D	0
F	0

The same sample of students was also made to answer the art critical ability scale by Feldman (1994). Having gotten the general students' performance in their art criticism, it is motivating to examine this performance with reference to the four dimensions according to Feldman's Model of Art Criticism: description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment. Table 1 displays the mean score of students' critical

analyses exercise as shown by the bar graphs on dimensions. The total score of each dimension is 20.

The participants of the study are enrolled during the second semester, 2021-2022. The researchers picked the students' names from the online class record using simple random sampling, and then their outputs were chosen for visual analysis during their engagement in artivism. Twelve other artivism outputs were done by students who opted to submit two outputs for this activity.

In compliance with the ethical standards in research, the researchers asked the students for their informed consent, ensured their voluntary participation, and informed them of the right to withdraw at any point in the research. The researchers also assured the respondents of the full confidentiality of the data they provided and the anonymity of their identity as respondents. It was also assured that the material that contains the raw data and other pertinent documents about this study will be properly disposed of after the study has been presented at a conference or after publication.

4.0. Results and Discussion

Critical Ability in Artivism Engagement in Terms of the Artwork's Description, Analysis, Interpretation and Judgment

When taken as a whole ($M=4.63$, $SD=0.39$), the student's critical ability in artivism engagement regarding the artwork's description was rated VERY HIGH when grouped according to sex. The male ($M=4.70$, $SD=0.32$) and female ($M=4.59$, $SD=0.43$) respondents also rated critical ability in artivism engagement in terms of the artwork's description as VERY HIGH.

When taken as a whole ($M=4.60$, $SD=0.47$), the student's critical ability in artivism engagement in the artwork's analysis is rated VERY HIGH when grouped according to sex. The male ($M=4.70$, $SD=0.35$) and female ($M=4.54$, $SD=0.52$) respondents also highly rated critical ability in artivism engagement in the artwork's analysis.

When taken as a whole ($M=4.62$, $SD=0.43$), the student's critical ability in artivism engagement regarding the artwork's interpretation was rated VERY HIGH when grouped according to sex. The male ($M=4.71$, $SD=0.34$) and female ($M=4.57$, $SD=0.47$) respondents also rated critical ability in artivism engagement in terms of the artwork's interpretation as VERY HIGH.

When taken as a whole ($M=4.59$, $SD=0.44$), the student's critical ability in artivism engagement regarding the artwork's judgment was rated VERY HIGH when grouped according to sex. The male ($M=4.64$, $SD=0.43$) and female ($M=4.56$, $SD=0.45$)

respondents also rated critical ability in activism engagement regarding artwork's judgment as VERY HIGH.

Table 2
Students' critical ability in terms of description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment when grouped according to sex

Sex	Mean	N	SD	Description
Description				
Entire Group	4.63	75	.39	Very High
Male	4.70	29	.32	Very High
Female	4.59	46	.43	Very High
Analysis				
Entire Group	4.60	75	.47	Very High
Male	4.70	29	.35	Very High
Female	4.54	46	.52	Very High
Interpretation				
Entire Group	4.62	75	.43	Very High
Male	4.71	29	.34	Very High
Female	4.57	46	.47	Very High
Judgement				
Entire Group	4.59	75	.44	Very High
Male	4.64	29	.43	Very High
Female	4.56	46	.45	Very High

Legend: 1-1.8 – Very Low 1.81-2.6 – Low 2.61-3.4 Average 3.41-4.2 – High 4.21- 5 – Very High

Difference in the Student's Critical Ability in Artivism Engagement

Results show that there was no significant difference in the student's critical ability in activism engagement in terms of the artwork's description (U=597.000, p=0.428), analysis (U=576.500, p=0.307), interpretation (U=621.000, p=0.605) and judgment (U=597.000, p=0.433) when grouped according to sex. The probabilities of 0.428, 0.307, 0.605, and 0.433 are more significant than the level of significance, which is 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis must be accepted. The student's critical ability in the artwork's description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment does not vary when grouped according to sex.

Table 3
Students' Critical Ability in terms of Description, Analysis, Interpretation and Judgement when Grouped According to Sex

sex	N	Mean Rank	U	p-value	Interpretation
Description					
Male	29	40.41			
Female	46	36.48	597.000	.428	Not Significant
Total	75				
Analysis					
Male	29	41.12			
Female	46	36.03	576.500	.307	Not Significant
Total	75				
Interpretation					
Male	29	39.59			
Female	46	37.00	621.000	.605	Not Significant
Total	75				
Judgement					
Male	29	40.41			
Female	46	36.48	597.000	.433	Not Significant
Total	75				

Relationship in the Student's Critical Ability in Artivism Engagement

Results of the study show that there was a strong positive relationship between analysis and description (rs = 0.794, p=0.000); between interpretation and description (rs = 0.790, p=0.000); between judgment and description (rs = 0.762, p=0.000) of student's critical ability in activism engagement. The probability of 0.000 is less than the significance level, which is 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis must be rejected.

Results show that there is a very strong positive relationship between analysis and interpretation (rs = 0.862, p=0.000); between analysis and judgment (rs = 0.821, p=0.000); between judgment and description (rs = 0.762, p=0.000) of student's critical ability in activism engagement. The probability of 0.000 is less than the significance level, which is 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis must not be accepted. The analysis, interpretation, and judgment of student's critical ability in activism engagement are significantly related.

Table 4
Relationship in the students' critical ability in activism engagement; between analysis and description; between interpretation and description; between judgment and description

	Description			Interpretation
	r _s	p-value	Description	
Analysis	.794**	.000	Strong Positive	Significant
Interpretation	.790**	.000	Strong Positive	Significant
Judgment	.762**	.000	Strong Positive	Significant

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5
Relationship in the students' critical ability in activism engagement; between judgement and analysis; and between interpretation and analysis

	Analysis			Interpretation
	r _s	p-value	Description	
Interpretation	.862**	.000	Very Strong Positive	Significant
Judgment	.821**	.000	Very Strong Positive	Significant

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6
Relationship in the students' critical ability in activism engagement; between judgment and interpretation

	Judgment			Interpretation
	r _s	p-value	Description	
Interpretation	.857**	.000	Very Strong Positive	Significant

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In the context of social relevance in the students' curated artworks

To address RQ4, the activism outputs of the students were gathered and analyzed. In this strategy, the students reflect on activism as their way of socially communicating. A semantic mechanism is attached to using art to create change and social transformation. The activism outputs were looked into and based on the visual presentations as accomplished by the students. The following dimensions were generated in terms of social relevance: Record and communicate experience. Social commentary, Call to action, Enrichment of humankind, and Powerful (Political) Tool. The power of activism is reflected in this investigation through student engagement. Otherwise known as the social impact of the transformative aspect of the activism output, social relevance is established. This component involves translation and knowledge transformation processes (Carllile, 2004). The activism engagement aims for the students to express themselves to transform society. Nossel (2016) stresses that there is a tendency for art to change people's minds. This occurs when they take different perspectives and reimagine their worlds. In activism, the experience of art becomes transformative. This drive is to change the individual's psyche and propel them to change the collective mind.

In this analysis, Feldman's framework was

utilized as grounding. Gianetti (2004) suggests that activism is a form used to serve a social and educational function. In this rich way of expression, art is used to channel ideas. The individual or collective artist, anonymous or identified, regains the function of rectifying a social imbalance (Gianetti, 2004). Feldman’s framework generated the following social dimensions from the 87 curated artworks.

a) Record and communicate experience (RCE).

The artwork reflects various human experiences. It is a form of communication between the artist and the world. Twelve out of 87 activism artworks were curated. Carey (2020) states that art allows people to examine what it means to be human. This shows how they voice, express themselves, and bring their ideas together. As people rise beyond the challenges of the new normal, they make their experiences into creative expressions through art. Students’ emotions, moods, and feelings are also communicated through art. Below are the representative outputs.

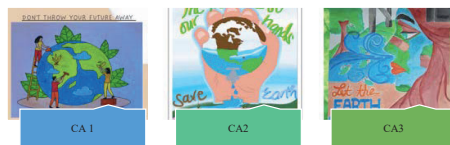


b) A Social commentary (SC). This category provides students with identification and understanding of how they view society. Fuller (2022) emphasizes that social commentary can be either direct and literal or figurative. Such commentary may be done through symbols, images, or stories, setting the interpretation of the message up to the reader or viewer. When social commentary is made through visual art, film, literature, and music, it is most often an incidental form and analysis to comprehend. She adds that art can be a reflection of the criticism that an artist has for society. The purpose of doing art is to foster awareness of specific social issues. Twelve out of 87 activism artworks were curated, as shown in some of the artworks below.



c) Call to action (CA). This category refers to the artwork’s intention to prompt viewers to perform a specific action. It is a venue to raise people’s awareness for various causes. A view of artwork can bring people to do something about a cause or an act to bring the people as a community. Carey (2017), in her “Artist’s Role in Society,” stresses that artists

bestow joy, interaction, and inspiration to society and give thoughtful engagements to create actions toward social progress. In the curated artworks, 23 out of 87 represent a call to action, as shown in the following artworks.



d) Enrichment of humankind. Art can help transform people’s lives. One student shares that through art, she can gain a deeper understanding of herself and make her connect with her inner self. She feels enriched through her creative expression. By allowing students to reflect on their lives through activism, they could incorporate art into what they wanted to express. Through art, they are enriched. Activism has become their visual expression and transformed their lives in satisfying and exhilarating ways. In the curated artworks, 14 out of 87 represent the enrichment of humankind, as shown in the following artworks.



e) Powerful (Political) Tool. Simoniti (2021) posits that art is devoted to radical causes. He asserts that art impacts something unique in political discourse. Such discourses reflect the insights of political science and philosophy. He further asserts that art is imperative to political discourse by establishing debates about artistic cognitivism and art as a foundation of knowledge. The role of art is essential to convince people to make decisions, which may be in politics, among other things. In many studies, art has been proven to be a political medium. It is used as a way of conveying powerful messages to inform society. As to Simoniti’s (2021) investigation, he asserts that during the first half of the twentieth century, the understanding of political content in art had to be championed—for instance, in Du Bois’ (1926) argument of anti-racist or Benjamin’s (1934; 1999) justification of ‘tendentious art’ and the responsibility of the author as ‘producer’—at the moment, art has become an undisputably a kind of political forum. When activism was done in the class, it was after the national elections. This is the reason why the majority of the art outputs have electoral subjects. In the curated artworks, 12 out of

87 represent powerful political tools, as shown in the following artworks.



f) Gender Sensitivity. According to Mouffe (2007, p. 5), activism generates obviously what the dominant consensus inclines to obscure and eradicate. Aply put, this means that artworks, which take on multiple forms, intend to 'give a voice to all those who are silenced within the framework of the existing hegemony.' Gender disparity is a pressing problem in the 21st century (Chzhu, 2021). It is, therefore, the advocacy of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2021) on *Gender and Creativity: Progress on the Precipice* highlighting the power of transformative gender policies and measures to increase the visibility of women and gender-diverse artists. Results in the students' curated artworks exemplified this representation. This classification likewise shows the artist's expression of their gender representation, characteristics, and features. In the curated artworks, 14 out of 87 represent the enrichment of humankind, as shown in the following artworks.



5.0. Discussion

It can be seen from the results that the critical ability of the students in their activism engagement is Very High in terms of the artwork's description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment when they were grouped according to sex. This simply means that judging the particular value of art is a universal manifestation and is not influenced by one's sex. Regardless of their sex, how they look at the value of the work of art depends on their imagination, specifically in establishing and finding the meaning in the work.

In the context of Feldman's framework, the results further show that analysis, interpretation, description, judgment, and description of student's critical ability in activism engagement are significantly related. This means that perceiving the work of art involves a systematic way of looking at a particular work, considering a balance among all these components.

The student's critical ability in the artwork's description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment does not vary when grouped according to sex. Whether male or female, judging the value of the work of art requires a basic aspect of criticism and the best use of one's knowledge and the powers of the human imagination through observation.

The relationship in the student's critical ability in activism engagement with all the components shows a strong positive relationship. Feldman's framework is a rich way of expression. Art is used to channel ideas. The individual or collective artist sees an opportunity to express or show a social imbalance. Gianetti (2004) asserts the role of activism to serve a social and educational function. In this rich way of expression, art is used to channel ideas.

6.0. Conclusion

Activism engagement influenced the student's critical ability, specifically in the art appreciation course. The strategy has offered them the opportunity not only to develop their critical ability but also to understand themselves, others, and the world.

Art is considered universal. The student's critical ability in activism engagement is not enhanced by whether they are male or female. The ability to engage in artistic activism or activism provided the impetus for students to cultivate their advocacy and social awareness.

The activity made a difference in the student's critical ability in a positive and significant manner. Students' knowledge of art proved their ability to create and advocate. Trying to explore activism as a pedagogical strategy has allowed them to express themselves and how they can be able to transform their community.

Activism has proven to be socially relevant in many aspects. Through their artwork, they expressed their social awareness and other expressions that showed a deep connection to themselves and the community.

To address RQ4, the activism outputs of the students were gathered and analyzed. In this strategy, the students reflect on activism as their way of socially communicating. A semantic mechanism is attached to using art to create change and social transformation. The activism outputs were looked into and based on the visual presentations as accomplished by the students.

7.0. Limitations of the Findings

This research is limited to the activism outputs of the students, specifically on their experiences in their engagement with it. Although the study aimed to include more student outputs to validate the activism experience, this study was only limited to 87 curated

artworks. Should there be more activism outputs, the results would have been different. The study was also done in one activity only. Although there are other art outputs, these were done during the activism engagement. Other curated outputs not involving activism were excluded from the analysis.

8.0. Practical Value

The results of this study are beneficial to art appreciation teachers, specifically on how to enhance their teaching of the subject. This study serves as a baseline data to provide an avenue for teachers to learn from. The findings can also be used to inform students how activism becomes an opportunity for them to express their creativity and send a message to the art spectators. This activism engagement also allows them to develop their critical thinking skills to become empowered and active citizens of the country and find a strategy to voice out their opinions through art. Further, the results can be used to inform and inspire other teachers and students who engage in art to take it as an opportunity for social transformation and criticism.

9.0. Directions for Future Research

The current study suggests that future researchers may explore other strategies besides those included in the study. Future researchers can also undertake similar studies, specifically on how art can be utilized to project how art can redress inequities, reflect their voices, and push society forward.

10.0. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors regarding the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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