Perceptions of Art Education: An Exploration of Perspectives held by Critical Stakeholders
Regarding the Value of Art Education.


Dissertation


Submitted to Northcentral University

School of Education

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION


by

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La Jolla, California

August 2020


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Approval Page

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Abstract

School systems across the US have significantly reduced or even eliminated art education programs and positions. Art education has enormous benefits cognitively, emotionally, and socially for students within the general education system and contributes to implementing a well-rounded education for all student learners. Therefore, it is critical to explore the perspectives of critical stakeholders regarding art education and reveal factors that influence the standing of art education within the general education curriculum. A qualitative multi-site case study was used to examine the participants' perspectives regarding the value of art education. Critical stakeholders of two elementary schools in the southwestern US, which included administrators, parents, and art educators, participated in semi-structured interviews, and a focus group discussing their assessment and opinions of art education. Eight themes were identified as influencing stakeholders' value of art education within a general education curriculum and their reasoning behind the decrease of art education programs and art education positions in individual school districts in the US. These themes included: (a) well-rounded, (b) curriculum, (c) Fine Arts Education Act (FAEA), (d) art integration, (e) learning and understanding, (f) creativity and self-expression, (g) budget and, (h) play. One major implication of the study was that the fact that the participants revealed that they considered art education to be significant part of the general educational curriculum. Future research studies related to this topic should be conducted with schools from different school districts, as there may be significant differences in terms of funding and support for art education from one district to another.

Keywords: art education, well-rounded, perspectives, qualitative, critical stakeholders, the general curriculum.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I must express my most profound appreciation to my husband and my best friend, Morgan. Without his unwavering love and support, this massive undertaking would never have happened. My son Justin, who has motivated me to demonstrate to him; that he should never give up on his dreams, no matter how long it takes for him to achieve them. Moreover, I would like to thank my friends, and my entire family for their constant support. Especially my mother Mary, and my brothers Ricky, and Jason for their encouragement, and for instilling in me a desire to learn, grow, continuously improve, and realize my full potential. Finally, I would like to extend exceptional gratitude to my academic advisor Dr. Belle Booker-Zorigian, for her patience, expertise, and guidance through this entire dissertation process. In this, the most trying of times, the proficiency of Dr. Booker- Zorigian, and education specialists: Dr. DuMez, Dr. Rodriguez, and Dr. Jenkins were resolute and very much appreciated.

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**Chapter 1: Introduction**

Art education refers to learning and instruction based upon the visual, tangible, and auditory arts (Hamlin & Fusaro, 2018). Art education includes the performing arts, visual arts, and design (Roth, 2017). Art is an enormous part of any culture, as it identifies different cultures and provides a deeper understanding of emotions and self-awareness (Mathewson, 2015). Art education, therefore, can be utilized to extend beyond the boundaries of academic learning and influence societies by changing opinions, instilling values, and translating experiences (Kulinski, 2018). Many studies (e.g., Baxter, 2015; Briggs, 2016; Coats & Clyne, 2017) have demonstrated the remarkable benefits of art education.

Most importantly, art education has been deemed a central part of a well-rounded educational curriculum for decades. Culp (2015) explained that it is essential to encourage students to become autonomous learners, apply creativity, and critical thinking to their decision making in everyday life. However, the regard for the discipline of art education may be changing (McCarthy et al., 2015). Despite the many and varied advantages of art education, there has been a substantial elimination of art programs, art classes, and the loss of art education positions all over the country (Workman &Vaughan, 2017). Decreases in financial support and policy at the federal, state, and local levels have caused art education to be downgraded or even eliminated from public schools (May & Brenner, 2017).

As art education is not subject to standardized testing, art education programs are often the first programs removed when schools experience periods of financial difficulty (Wendler, 2019). Many schools across the country are reducing or eliminating their art programs due to budget restrictions, academic accountability, and other factors (Halsey-Dutton, 2016). Vatsky (2016) stated that Philadelphia public schools attempted to compensate for a $304 million budget

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deficit by eliminating funding for art and music programs. Chicago Public Schools fired over one thousand art education teachers because of school budget issues. Public schools in Los Angeles, New York, and Washington DC also faced budget deficits and were forced to eliminate funding for art education in favor of essential subjects such as math and science (Vatsky, 2016). Furthermore, the Oklahoma public school system eliminated 1,110 art education programs between 2014 and 2018 during a period of severe state budget cuts (Wendler, 2019). The trend of eliminating or significantly reducing art education programs has continued in public schools all over the country.

This study explored the value of art education from the perspective of critical stakeholders. It is the responsibility of Critical stakeholders, such as administrators, parents, and art educators to provide a high-quality art education programs as part of a comprehensive academic curriculum (Kraehe, 2018). This study intended to fill the gap in the existing literature that does not explore the perspectives held by critical stakeholders regarding the value of art education. Engagement with critical stakeholders and developing an understanding of stakeholder perspectives regarding art education is crucial, as critical stakeholders may influence important decisions regarding student involvement and access to art education in their schools (Hunter-Doniger, 2018).

It is essential to encourage students to become more autonomous learners who apply creativity and critical thinking to their decision-making (Jones, 2015). Leysath and Bronowski (2016) maintained that art education aids in fostering creativity and sustains the natural creativity of young children. In their study, May and Brenner (2017) discussed the complexities involved in allocating funding for art programs as local school districts in states across America have resorted to changing the school curriculum and limiting the number of art education programs to

demonstrate annual progress and retain federal funding. Regardless of the argument that art is among the most intriguing aspects of human life, and art appreciation and production are collective aspects of all societies (Schabmann et al., 2016).

Other than a few studies (e.g., Hanawalt, 2018; Leysath & Bronowski, 2016; May & Brenner, 2017), few researchers have addressed all critical stakeholders' perceptions regarding their value and appreciation of art education. Although still not deemed a core subject in individual states, applying art education across the general curriculum demonstrates how art education could connect the other disciplines and act as a catalyst for stimulating learning, growth, and the accumulation of knowledge (Coats & Clyne, 2017). However, Kay (2016) argued that participating in art education can be very costly, occupy a significant amount of space in a school, and could take valuable time away from students that need to study for state-mandated tests. This study explored the value placed on art and general perspectives held by critical stakeholders regarding art education as a part of the public education system.

**Statement of the Problem**

The problem addressed by this study was that art education programs and art education positions have been significantly reduced or eliminated from schools all over the U.S. (Elliott & Clancy, 2017). Many research studies (e.g., Culp, 2015; Elliott & Clancy, 2017; Gates, 2017; Workman & Vaughan, 2017) have shown that considerable participation in art education has a positive effect on the cognitive and social development of students. Despite the many advantages of art education, art education programs have been eliminated from many schools across the country (Gaztambide-Fernández, Nicholls & Arráiz-Matute, 2016). There is a literature gap that does not provide all critical stakeholder perspectives on the value of art education, and the educational impact art education has on the educational system (Marshall, 2016).

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After a decade of research involving art integration to the general curriculum Coats and Clyne (2017) determined that art education can reach learners at any level and provide a myriad of ways for students to express knowledge and understanding. Schools need to be prepared to accept and respond to the diverse need of students today. Thus, it is essential to understand the perspectives of critical stakeholders' decisions regarding funding and support for the academic program. A critical stakeholder in this circumstance can be defined as an individual, or group or individuals that have a vested interest in the decision making of the elementary schools they are involved with (McFarland & Currie, 2017).This study paid attention to critical stakeholders' perspectives on the value of art education for students, and society in the general education curriculum.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative multi-site case study was to discover the perspectives held by critical stakeholders regarding the value of art education. This study filled the gap in the existing literature regarding the motivation behind the elimination of art education programs around the country from the perspective of critical stakeholders (Mathewson, 2015). The knowledge attained from this study may provide valuable insight into the opinions and views regarding the value of art education within the educational system (Arts Education Partnership, 2018). An in-depth research analysis may further enhance the understanding of critical stakeholders' decisions to ensure that students receive a high-quality, well-rounded academic curriculum.

Concerning school improvement efforts, stakeholder perceptions can produce positive change in schools (Baer, 2017). Significant studies (e.g., Jones, 2015; Kay, & Wolf, 2017; Knight, 2017; Marshall, 2016) have shown that art education should be an essential and viable

part of the educational system. Some proponents of core subject teaching, such as STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, and math), believe that those subjects alone are necessary to meet the needs of today's students (Liao, 2016). Conversely, initiatives, such as Art in Action, believe that STEAM best prepares students with the skill set they need to become successful, well-rounded thinkers (Patton & Knochel, 2017). There has been much debate over curriculum development, as it requires collaboration and leadership to ensure that it incorporates comprehensive instructional plans for learning and development, implementation and evaluation of those plans, and effectiveness of the programs on the learning experience (Buck & Snook, 2016).

The findings in this study were significant as they led to the discovery of the positions and opinions held by critical stakeholders regarding the value of art education in the educational system. Schools need to identify and actively engage all stakeholders in fulfilling their mission to provide a comprehensive educational curriculum for all students. This study investigated critical stakeholders' perspectives related to the value of art education in two elementary schools in the southwestern US. Conducting this study was achieved by organizing semi-structured interviews and a focus group of twelve critical stakeholders, six from each of the schools. The critical stakeholders included two principals, two assistant principals, four parents, and four art educators. The two schools chosen for this study were pivotal to explore an interesting phenomenon occurring in this, and other school districts around the country. The phenomenon involves two elementary schools in the same school district, have the same administrative and teaching staff, and have a remarkably similar school population. One of the elementary schools received an A rating for academic achievement, and the other school received an F rating for academic achievement (Department of Education, 2019).

Thus, allowing the critical stakeholders of both schools involved in the study to present a broad perspective on the value of art education within each school's curriculum. The objective of the semi-structured interviews and the focus group was to gather insight from the perspectives held by critical stakeholders regarding the value of art education at each of the schools involved in the study (Hamlin & Fusaro, 2018). Immediately after the semi-structured interviews and the focus group had taken place, time was taken to transcribe, and member check all the information collected carefully. During the analysis of the data, it was then necessary to categorize or code the found data to identify themes or patterns that recurred in the found information (Yin, 2017).

**Conceptual Framework**

Two frameworks were used for this study, first, the conceptual framework of social constructivism (e.g., Piaget, 1976; Thompson, 2015; Vygotsky, 1978). Social constructivism demonstrates how people in society construct ideas or concepts from experiences (Thompson, 2015). Social constructivism was applied to understand how opinions and thoughts develop through interactions with others (Schlemmer, Carpenter, & Hitchcock, 2017). The conceptual framework of social constructivism also involves exchanging thoughts, ideas, and understandings as the result of experiences, relationships, and events occurring in society (Diaz-Leon, 2015). Social constructivism demonstrates how people in society construct ideas or concepts that may not exist without people or a language to support such concepts (Thompson, 2015). Constructivist philosophy and practice associate with forms of art education that accentuate choice, and student participation. This study employed a social constructivist framework to frame the problem statement, purpose statement, and the research question as the research findings were based on the participants' knowledge and personal experiences related to art education (Lincoln, & Hoffman, 2018).

The second, more narrow lens of the New South Wales (NSW) art education curriculum's conceptual framework and the frames (Board of Studies NSW, 2013), was used in conjunction with the social constructivist framework. The New South Wales (NSW) art education curriculum's conceptual framework was an effective way to engage participants in meaningful and evocative conversations that involve conceptual, critical, and historical information beyond basic artistic knowledge. The framework consists of subjective, structural, cultural, and postmodern and each frame represent a different theoretical lens through which participants could observe, discuss, and create art (Board of Studies NSW, 2013). The frames were then examined through the theoretical lens of four agencies: The world, audience, artist, and artwork. Both frameworks are defined, described, and discussed, revealing how each was used as a lens through which to view this study. During the analysis of the collected data, theoretical ideas and connections were found and expanded. Finally, a discussion of how these lenses were used as a framework to shape the study's analysis was presented.

**Nature of the Study**

Art educators play an essential role in inspiring students and guiding creativity, innovation, and imagination during a student's endeavor to understand the world (Garnet et al., 2018). The National Association for Music Education (1907) stated that anyone who has concerns regarding the quality of art education should develop an understanding of its value and importance and should support art education in schools all over the country. Therefore, it was necessary to apply effective research methodological techniques to understand further the phenomenon of the reduction or even the elimination of art education from educational systems regardless of the benefits to students. This study involved discovering the perspectives of critical stakeholders and the value and appreciation regarding art education in the educational system.

That meant employing qualitative research methods, including semi-structured interviews, and a focus group, to explore the participants' ideas and opinions.

Employing a qualitative multi-site case study design was the most effective method for understanding complex issues related to the value of art education. The research question intended to uncover rich descriptive data from perspectives held by critical stakeholders concerning art education; this was the first step that led to an analysis of the value of art education within the general education system. This study investigated the schools by conducting semi-structured interviews, and a focus group of twelve critical stakeholders, six from each of the two schools. The schools chosen for this study were in the southwest US for the researcher's accessibility and to explore an interesting phenomenon occurring in this and other school districts around the country. The phenomenon involved two schools that are in the same school district have the same amount of administrative and teaching staff and have a similar school population.

The elementary schools involved in the study received vastly different ratings for academic achievement. The school academic rating system measures schools on proficiency, using performance on state assessments across grades and subjects. The schools were given a 1-10 grade, which later become a letter grade rating for each school (The National Association of American Educators, 1994). A fundamental question asked of the participants included, in what way art education contributed to the general school curriculum as a standalone subject or integrated into other subject matter areas. By discovering the perspectives held by critical stakeholders regarding the value of art education, this aided in determining the standing of art education in the general curriculum of both schools.

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**Research Question**

In this study, the researcher investigated the perceptions of critical stakeholders regarding the value of art education. The following overarching research question pinpoints what was to be discovered through the research and give the study a clear focus and purpose. This research question guided the study:

**RQ1.** What are the perspectives held by critical stakeholders regarding the value of art education?

**Significance of the Study**

Art education connects people to their history, traditions, heritage as the arts have a beauty and influence unique to each individual culture (Jones, 2015). Studies have shown that learning, applying, and the creation of art have the unique ability to allow students to communicate ideas and emotions effectively (Kraehe, 2018). Art education provides significant intellectual advantages and reinforces academic achievement, beginning at an early age and continuing through a student's time at school (Grodoski, Willcox, & Goss, 2017). Creating art is a natural human behavior, as children instinctively make art their artmaking develops in distinctive stages from pre-school to high school as was explored by Lowenfeld (1947) in, Creative and Mental Growth.

Art can be an effective form of communication to share thoughts, ideas, and visions that may not be able to be articulated any other way (Douglas, & Jaquith, 2018). Despite the many advantages of art education, there has been a substantial elimination of art programs, art classes, and the loss of art education positions all over the country (Vatsky, 2016). The significance of the study was to provide a deeper understanding of the perspectives held by critical stakeholder regarding the value of art education. Specifically, exploring the value placed on art education within the school curriculum, and potentially the reasoning behind education policy decisions

has dramatically reduced or eliminated art education (Sabol, 2017). A critical challenge for art education has been a lack of investigative evidence that demonstrates the value held by all critical stakeholders, especially school principals. Therefore, this study discovered critical stakeholders' perspectives on the value of art education and the reasoning behind art education no longer being considered a vital subject to retain in a school curriculum.

**Definition of Key Terms**

**Art integration:** Art integration (AI) is a different approach to traditional art education, as it includes both the arts disciplines and the more traditional academic subjects such as math and science (Marshall, 2016).

**Discipline based art education:** Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE) endorses four disciplines of art education: aesthetics, art criticism, art history, and art production (Mannathoko, 2016).

**Inquiry-based:** Inquiry-based teaching (IB) is an method of teaching that highlights the student's role in the learning process, rather than the teacher informing students of what they need to know, students are persuaded to investigate materials, ask questions (Hamlin & Fusaro, 2018).

**Intrinsic motivation:** Intrinsic Motivation usually involves the pride and joy a person feels after completing a job well done. A sense of personal satisfaction and a sense of purpose compel a person to continue to make good choices or work hard (Gates, 2017).

**Learner-centered:** Learner-centered (LC) classrooms support the primary indicators of inquiry, connection-making, and self-directed learning for students in the art room (Douglas & Jaquith, 2018).

**Project-based learning:** Project-based learning (PBL) is also a dynamic classroom approach where students have productive investigations and use compelling questions as the facilitator to explore real-world problems (Hunter-Doniger, 2018).

**Social inclusion:** Social inclusion (SI) is a term given for improving the conditions on which individuals and groups take part in society. The role of the educator is changing concerning new student requirements, as it will become necessary to develop collaborations with new students to understand their needs (Garnet, Sinner, Walker, Esmat & Yi, 2018).

**Visual culture art education:** Visual Culture Art Education (VCAE) is an interdisciplinary field of study and practice within art education that advocates integrating visual culture into other areas of study (Lewis, 2016).

## Summary

This chapter introduced the problem that this research study explored: the decline of art education programs and art education positions in public schools all over the country. This chapter also investigated the background and context of art education within the educational system. This study employed two frameworks, first, the conceptual framework of Social Constructivism (Piaget, 1976; Thompson, 2015; Vygotsky, 1978). The second conceptual framework was the New South Wales (NSW) art education curriculum's conceptual framework and the frames (Board of Studies NSW, 2013). This chapter explored the purpose of this study to examine the research question: What are the perspectives held by critical stakeholders regarding the value of art education? Stakeholder perceptions can promote innovation, creativity, and positive changes that can affect school-wide improvements (Hare, 2018). The primary significance for stakeholders is to ensure that schools provide their students with the best possible learning environment to acquire and retain knowledge (Knight, 2017). This chapter also

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explored the rationale for this study, which examines the value of art education by identifying the perceptions of critical stakeholders that may affect the standing of art education in the educational system.

**Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This research study explored the perceptions held by critical stakeholders regarding the value held for art education. The knowledge attained provided valuable insight into their opinions and views regarding the value of art education within the educational system (Arts Education Partnership, 2018). The more critical stakeholders are engaged and involved in developing an understanding of the necessary components of a student's cognitive and social development, the higher the realization perhaps of the necessity of art education (McFarland & Currie, 2017). Critical stakeholders can provide the requirements needed to determine whether art education remains a vital part of the educational curriculum.

Ploof and Hochtritt (2018) demonstrated how art educators offered appreciated collaborative ideas for both curriculum and professional development. Many studies (e.g., Alekseeva, 2018; Andrelchik, & O'Neill-Schmitt, 2015; Kay, & Wolf, 2017; Koch, & Thompson, 2017) explored the value of art education from the perspective of art educators and students through observations of art projects. Employing observations and discussions of student art projects were useful for the researchers to generate a rich understanding of student experiences and beliefs regarding art education (Wagner, & Vermeersch, 2019). However, few studies (e.g., Elis, 2018; Steinbach, 2016) explored the perspectives of critical stakeholders, such as administrators and parents.

Robinson (2011) stated that creativity is a significant contribution to intelligence; as the more complicated the world becomes; the more creative people will need to be to meet its challenges. Individuals who work in the field of art education know that creativity relates to more than just artists; creativity is essential for a student's development, as creativity thrives when students think divergently, play, make mistakes, and embrace uncertainty (Gates, 2017).

Numerous research studies have shown that involvement in art education has a constructive effect on the cognitive and social development (May, & Brenner, 2017). Workman and Vaughan (2017) showed that through art education, students are accountable for their comprehension of information and contribute to the creation of knowledge.

Coats and Clyne (2017) found that the advancement of dedicated support regarding the value of arts integration provides students with multiple ways to express knowledge and understanding. Further, Noel, and Liub (2017) demonstrated that art and design education could instruct students to use the design process to solve challenges. Yet, regardless of all the benefits of art education, reductions in funding at national, and local levels have caused art education to be relegated or even eliminated from public schools (May, & Brenner, 2016). Critical stakeholders, such as, school principals, assistant principals, parents, and art educators play a crucial part in securing high-quality art education programs as part of a comprehensive academic curriculum.

This study intended to fill the gap in the existing literature that does not explore the perspectives held by critical stakeholders, such as principals, and parents. The research study included investigating critical stakeholders' perspectives involved in the establishment or elimination of art education as a fundamental subject of the educational system. McFarland and Currie (2017) pointed out that when critical stakeholders become involved in supporting school programs, this ensures that schools receive support for art education programs from endowments, scholarships, and outside donations. Vatsky (2016) maintained that there was never a time when the role of the arts in society was not discussed, and the effect art has on people have not been at the center of intense debates. One of the primary outcomes of receiving government funding for the arts is the public arguments regarding the value of art.

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This study concentrated on discovering the perspectives held by critical stakeholders regarding their value of art education within the educational system (Brewer, Xu, & Diket, 2017). The literature review was organized using several databases through Northcentral University's (NCU) library, which included: Academic Search Complete, ProQuest, Sage Journals online, ERIC, and Google Scholar databases. Research articles were evaluated regarding relevance and suitability to determine if each item would contribute to the study's context and understanding. Obtaining literature produced within the past five years (2015-2020) was of primary consideration in preparing the literature review.

The search terms of these databases required a variety of keywords that pertained to this study including: art education, art integration, art curriculum, art application, creativity, critical thinking, value, importance, art funding, art support, visual culture, inquiry, imagination, innovation, pedagogy, and art assessment. However, academic articles and books beyond these five years were necessary for complete insight into the history and context of art education. Leading peer-reviewed academic journals used in the literature review include: Art Education, International Journal of Education and the Arts, Journal of Learning through Art, Journal of Education and the Future, and Art Studies in Art Education.

**Conceptual Framework**

Two frameworks were used for this study: the conceptual framework of social constructivism (Piaget, 1976; Thompson, 2015; Vygotsky, 1978) and the conceptual framework of the New South Wales (NSW) art education curriculum's conceptual framework and the frames (Board of Studies NSW, 2013). In this section, both frameworks were defined, described, and discussed, revealing how each was used as a lens through which to view this study. Finally, a

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discussion of how these lenses were used together as a framework to shape this research study was presented.

       **Social constructivism.** John Dewey (1933) is often considered to be the theoretical founder of the constructivist approach, while Bruner (1985) and Piaget (1976) are also considered to be the leading theorists among cognitive constructivists (Sandu, & Unguru, 2017). Vygotsky (1978) was a significant theorist among social constructivists. All theorists have their own unique and valuable contributions to the conceptual framework of constructivism. Guterman (2006) determined that although both constructivism, and social constructionism support an individual view of understanding; constructivism accentuates the cognitive processes, whereas, social constructionism is developed through social interactions. Dewey (1933) rejected the view that schools should focus on memorization techniques for learning and proposed a method where students would engage in practical excises, where they would demonstrate their knowledge through creativity and cooperation. Influenced by Vygotsky (1978), Bruner (1985) emphasized the importance of the instructor's role in the language used, methods of instruction, and encouraged the learners to engage in reflection.

      Bruner (1985) indicated that learners utilize different learning methods during problem-solving and that social interaction among students is vital for constructive learning. Piaget (1976) proposed that learning is an active process involving individuals adapting to reality, where learners form knowledge by analyzing the world around them. Roth (2017) investigated the work of Vygotsky (1978) who believed that the basic principle of constructivism is that students; learn by performing an action rather than merely observing it, as they bring prior knowledge and experience into the learning environment where they must assess and re-asses their understanding of information. Vygotsky believed that learning takes place within the zone of

proximal development, a period in which intellectual growth can only fully develop with the support or collaboration of other individuals (Vygotsky, 1978).

Constructivism also involved the development and exchange of thoughts, ideas, and understandings as the result of experiences, relationships, and events that occur to us and in society (Diaz-Leon, 2015). Researchers that employed a social constructivist framework develop interpretations of the findings from research based on their own experiences. In turn, researchers interpreted and deciphered, meaning that others have of the world around them (Lincoln & Hoffman, 2018). Through social constructivism, social constructs are established; an example of a social construct is money, as people in society have decided to give it importance or value, while other more provocative social constructs may include, race or gender. People in society construct ideas or concepts that may not exist without people or a language to support such concepts (Thompson, 2015).

There are weak and strong constructs. Weak constructs rely on fundamental facts that are difficult to explain or understand, such as the essential elements that are the building blocks of all matter and that are called "quarks" (Diaz-Leon, 2015, p. 1140). Strong social constructs rely on individual perspective and understanding that does not just exist but is constructed by society, such as knowledge. Similarly, the theories and practices are that are associated with art education emphasize student choice, interpretation, and creation that is defined by their personal experiences and situation (Thompson, 2015). A social construct can include values and beliefs regarding something, such as art (Diaz-Leon, 2015).

Social constructivism is a "sociological theory of knowledge," where individual social development is established, and understanding is formed through interactions with other people (Creswell, 2014, p. 25). The process of social constructivism typically begins with developing a

system of investigation or "paradigms of meaning and significance" (Lincoln, & Hoffman, 2018, p.15). Social constructivism is employed for those who wish to understand the world further and how opinions and thoughts are developed through interactions with others. This requires examining life and reality, then developing an understanding of individuals' varying perspectives depending on societal and cultural differences. Constructivism also involves finding the commonalities in meaning, relationships, change, and experience.

The value that is held for art very often depends upon the views of society (Thompson, 2015). During the Renaissance, for example, Italians had the highest respect and reverence for artistic creation and instruction, where the writings, philosophy, art, and architecture of the ancient Greeks and Romans were revered and began to see antiquity as a golden age; which held the answers to bolstering their society (Bauer, & Schwan, 2018). Today, art is everywhere, in clothing and the designs of the latest technology; whether it is realized or not, art will always be relevant and necessary. For this study, social constructivism was used as a broad lens through which to view the perceptions of principals, assistant principals, parents, and art educators regarding the value of art education and its relevance in the educational system. The information collected provided valuable insight to fill the gap in the existing literature that does not explore the perspectives held by all critical stakeholders.

**New South Wales (NSW) art education curriculum's conceptual framework and the frames.** The practice of aligning learning to standards ensures that a higher level of knowledge is attained, and guides educators in the process of instruction and assessment (Kent, Courtney, & Thorpe, 2018). The National Visual Arts Standards (NVAS) presented standards for art education that relate to art, and artmaking in the way in which it is created and presented. These

standards provide the framework for art educators to promote the creation of evocative artwork, engage students in critical analysis, and explore social issues.

Given the importance of standards in art, the New South Wales, art education curriculum's conceptual framework and the frames were used for this study (Board of Studies NSW, 2013). The framework engages students in expressive and evocative artmaking that involves conceptual, critical, and historical knowledge beyond necessary artistic skills. The Frames recognizes that information can be observed and understood in more than one way, and supports students in developing complex theories regarding art. The framework assists students in reflecting on relationships between the: artwork, the artist, the audience, and the world.

Figure 2.1 displays the arrangement of each of the elements of the framework in relation to one another.

*Figure* 2.1 *Art education curriculum's conceptual framework and the frames* (Board of Studies NSW, 2013).
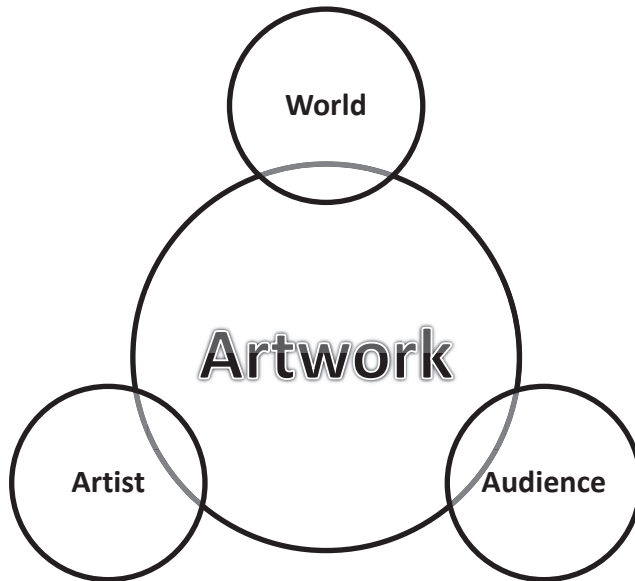
The frames of the conceptual framework consist of subjective, structural, cultural, and postmodern, and each frame represent a different theoretical lens through which students can observe, discuss, and create art (Board of Studies NSW, 2013). The subjective frame investigated experiences, feelings, and emotions. The structural frame interpreted the symbols and signs fixed in works of art. The cultural frame reviewed ideologies and identities and concentrated on issues of race, gender, and economics. The postmodern frame explored art as writing using assumption and irony. The frames can then be examined through the theoretical lens of four agencies: The world, audience, artist, and artwork.

The world encompasses the cultural setting in which art is created and how art education is dependent on the changing social values within and outside society. The audience revealed how different audiences experience, understand, and value artworks differently. The artist considers the role of the artist, who they are, what they do, and how and why they do it. The artwork was the inspiration for developing assumptions. Figure 2.2 indicated the arrangement of the frames and the agencies and how they associate with one another. For example, observing the agencies through a subjective lens, the artist could be naturally talented, a genius, or emotionally compelled to create.

The artwork could be interpreted as records of emotional expressions or seen as highly evocative personal memories. The world in which the artwork was built came from personal experience, imagination, and fantasy. Finally, observing the audience through a subjective lens could be individuals that interpret the significance and value of art concerning their personal experiences. The artwork section can also be a bridge between the artist and the audience, as it conveys the ideas and conventions of the artist. It displays the objects shaped by inspiration, meaning, ideas, or beliefs. The artwork could also convey the challenges and triumphs of

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artmaking process. The conceptual framework demonstrates how reliant each agent is on the others in order to survive in the world and changes radically over time depending on the artist, the artwork, and the time it is being produced (Board of Studies NSW, 2013).

*Figure* 2.2 *art education curriculum's conceptual framework and the frames* (Board of Studies NSW, 2013).

| Frames | Artist | Artwork | World | Audience |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Subjective Frame | Naturally talented, geniuses or emotionally compelled | Records of emotional outpourings, highly evocative personal memories. | The realm of experience, imagination, fantasy of the subconscious. | Viewers who interpret the meaning and value of art in relation to personal associations that can be made. |
| Cultural Frame | Social agents that are influenced by and contribute to social and economic conditions. | Forms of cultural capital that reflect social community and cultural interests. | Shared and competing community interests and issues. | Consumers, patrons, sponsors, collectors, and the public. The value of art lies in its social meaning. |
| Structural Frame | Those who know how to utilize systems and signs to communicate meaning. | Symbolic objects that operate within the conversations of visual language to commutate meaning. | Codes, symbols, and convention form a commonly understood visual language that acts as a referent of the world | Visually literate, read art as symbols and signs and the meaning is coded within a formal structure or visual language understood by the audience. |
| Post Modern Frame | Prevailing views about what is of value in art. | Configurations of previous texts that mimic other ideas in art to revel hidden assumptions. | The world lacks logical conditions that lead to the reassessment of what is known. | Skeptical persons who are aware of power relations within the art world. |

Studies conducted by Brown (2015) and Briggs (2016) investigated and employed the conceptual framework and frames and found the process beneficial to art students for applying, understanding, and critiquing artwork. The conceptual framework and frames were used to educate students about the world they live in, the history of the past and philosophical ideas that are explored during that process (Brown, 2015). The theories specified in the frames and the

conceptual framework of New South Wales provided useful strategies for art educators to utilize in their everyday teaching practices (Briggs, 2016).

For this study, the art education curriculum's conceptual framework and frames were utilized and modified to discover critical stakeholders' perspectives on the value of art education for students and society. The agency of artwork was replaced with art education in the conceptual framework and frames, which is indicated in Figure 2.3 art education, in the framework, represented ideas for retaining art education programs, including the personal responses from critical stakeholders (subjective), and views of society regarding art education (cultural) and symbolic interpretations (structural).

*Figure* 2.3 (Modified) art education curriculum's conceptual framework and the frames, (Board of Studies NSW, 2013).
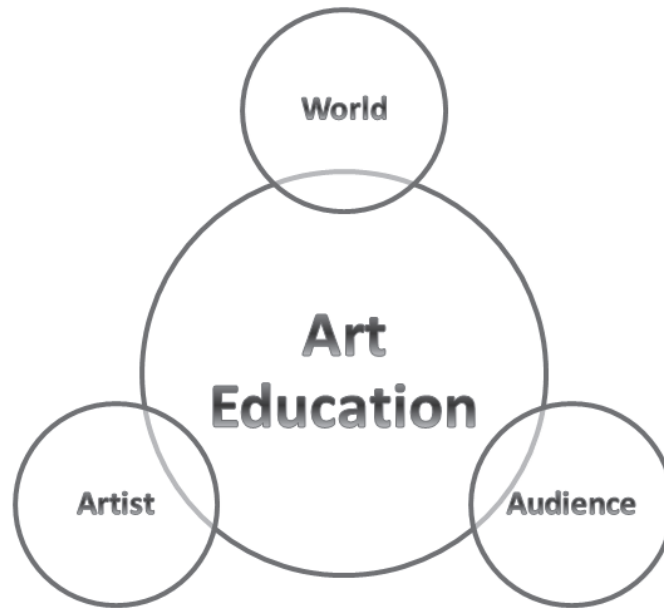


**Summary of conceptual framework.** Two frameworks were used for this research study: first, conceptual framework of social constructivism (Piaget, 1976; Thompson, 2015;

Vygotsky, 1978). Second, a modified of the New South Wales (NSW) art education curriculum's conceptual framework and the frames (Board of Studies NSW, 2013) were used. Social constructivism was an explanatory framework used to understand how individuals develop meaning that corresponds with their experience (Thompson, 2015). The NSW (2013) conceptual framework and frames was a system used to highlight and present found information and ideas related to art education. Through the conceptual framework of social constructivism, the participants formed their own understanding and knowledge of art education by reflecting on their experiences. Those experiences in turn were organized into individual categories using the NSW (2013) conceptual framework and frames template. Together the two conceptual frameworks played an essential role in guiding the collection, and interpretation of data toward understanding the phenomenon of the value that is held for art education by critical stakeholders in the educational system.

**Themes in the Literature**

This review presents the literature that lays the foundation for this study, which is an investigation of critical stakeholder's perceptions of the value of art education within the educational system. The review provided empirical findings regarding the history of art education, value of art education, art education today, and the perspectives of individual stakeholders regarding art education. This review also provided empirical findings regarding the evolution of the art education curriculum, and art education instruction, including the national organizations that are vital for the promotion of art education.

**History and philosophers of art education.** School programs specializing in the art education began in the 1930s and began to develop through vocational programs across the United States in the 1960s and 1970s (Gaztambide-Fernández, Nicholls, & Arráiz-Matute, 2016).

Such art programs provided focused instruction in the "fine arts" disciplines such as music, visual art, dance, theater, and film, and the programs were only available for an exclusive group of students who had undergone a rigorous audition process for entry into the programs. Opportunities for art education in schools around the country have significantly increased because of the endorsement of educational philosophers.

John Dewey's (1933, 1934, 1939, 1949) extensive progressive education theories promoted the understanding that students must interact with their environment to adapt and change. Dewey was a strong advocate for integrating the arts programs into the educational system and maintained that the arts should be a fundamental part of any school curriculum. The practice of art develops creativity, individualism, and an appreciation of how others express themselves (Dewey, 1933). One of John Dewey's first publications described Leon Winslow, who taught The Integrated School Art Program (1939), incorporating the arts with other subjects. For the remainder of the 20th century, art education in public schools has been favored and unflavored, depending on the country's political and financial position (Dewey, 1933).

Dewey's (1933) legacy in art education spanned decades and influenced the work of Eisner (1994), as he stressed the importance of the way children should be educated. This philosophy is in keeping with John Dewey's concern for students receiving a quality education and always contributing to society (Dewey, 1933). Eisner, a professor of art and education at the Stanford Graduate School of Education, also firmly advocates the necessity for extensive research to support the many ways in which art education contributes to the growth and development (Eisner, 1994).

Eisner (1994) stressed that schools should inform students of the importance of critical thinking, reflection, partnership, and public service. Eisner (1994) also dismissed the perception

that the practice of art education is academically unchallenging and only concentrates on emotion rather than being an intellectual activity. Eisner (1994) argued that complex systems of reasoning and assessment occur when students have an opportunity to work on meaningful creations or have a chance to examine them (Komandyshko, 2018). Eisner (1994) believed that by failing to appreciate the significance of art properly, most schools were offering a seriously unbalanced approach to education.

Eisner (1994) stated, after Dewey (1933), a philosopher of art education that has significantly contributed to the theory and practice of developing children's creativity in art; was Viktor Lowenfeld (1950). Lowenfeld's (1950) Creative and Mental Growth became the single most instrumental textbook in art education. Through his research, Lowenfeld (1950) provided evidence of the visual, intellectual, and emotional growth indicated in children's artwork. Lowenfeld (1950) described how artmaking encourages self-expression, independence, creative thinking, social interactions, and general well-being. It was observed, however, that an adult social environment is a corrupting influence on children and urged teachers not to suppress or influence children's natural creativity by using a child-centered approach to artistic discovery and expression.

**The evolution of art education curriculum.** During the 1950s and 1960s, Dewey's (1933) theories regarding the artistic expression and experience had become unfamiliar to many art educators, as Lowenfeld's (1950) isolationist theories of art education became more recognized. Through involvement at the federal level, the general education curriculum was changed in the schools around the country. As a result, art education was demoted to the bottom of the list of subjects of importance. Art education was not a product of a specific situation but of governmental controlling agencies such as the back-to-basics movement in the 1960s, which

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resulted in a reevaluation of the K–12 curriculum and a shifted to core subject-centered areas as opposed to art education.

In the 1970s, funding, and support for arts in education were still inadequate and differed in individual states (Brewer, Xu, & Diket, 2017). Local school boards typically decided whether art education would be provided in schools or not, where art education was accessible; it involved art programs organized by cultural organizations outside of the school and was not incorporated into the general classroom curriculum. In the next few decades, because of budget cuts, art teachers, art programs, and the integration of art content into subjects of any kind were largely eliminated to retain core subjects.

**The evolution of art education instruction.** Eisner (1994) was a strong advocate for discipline-based art education (DBAE) as it endorsed four disciplines of art education which include aesthetics, art criticism, art history, and art production. Among the objectives of DBAE, it was to parallel art education with other academic disciplines and create a standardized structure for the evaluation process. Art integration was pioneered as an alternative method of art instruction in schools, as it merged the visual and performing arts and incorporated them into the general curriculum (Marshall, 2016). Applying art education across the curriculum demonstrated how art could connect the other disciplines in the educational system and act as a catalyst for stimulating learning, growth, and the accumulation of knowledge (Coats, & Clyne, 2017).

Learner-centered art classrooms incorporate artistic learning methods to facilitate better students' learning capability (Douglas, & Jaquith, 2018). Learner-centered classrooms support the primary indicators of inquiry, connection-making, and self-directed learning for students in the art room. Project-based learning is also a dynamic classroom approach where students have productive investigations use compelling questions as the facilitator to explore real-world

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problems (Hunter-Doniger, 2018). Art education instruction that employs visual thinking strategies with enriching visual text strengthens multicultural knowledge and awareness (Lewis, 2016). Using visual thinking strategies encouraged the capacity to understand diverse perspectives and cultures by encouraging students to participate in discussions.

Social justice art integrated into an art curriculum, and instructional practices allow students to develop a greater awareness of the relevance of art education in their schools (Katz-Buonincontro, 2018). Developing focused art education initiatives that support creative endeavors; inspire students and parents to build greater awareness of the value of art education in their communities. When educational practices are implemented in connection with creativity and innovation, they become a form of socially conscience art applied, which inspires a curriculum that integrates social justice viewpoints (Katz-Buonincontro, 2018).

Inquiry-based teaching is a method of learning which emphasizes the student participation in the learning process, rather than directly instructing, students are encouraged to explore materials, ask questions, and communicate knowledge (Hamlin & Fusaro, 2018). Inquiry-Based instruction was successful for art education, as students could embrace the artmaking process while perhaps revealing a more extensive scope of ideas and opinions (Bolin, & Hoskings, 2015). Inquiry-based instruction involves two essential characteristics in the art teaching process: having the materials and space needed to practice art successfully, and encouraging student collaboration (Vaughan et al., 2017).

**National organizations.** Art education advocacy groups and organizations have been and remain necessary to communicate the purpose and value of art education on a national, state, and local level (National Art Education Association, 1994). The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) is one of the many organizations advocating and advancing art education in the US. Since

its establishment in 1965, the NEA has directed efforts to incorporate the arts as a part of the general education curriculum for students (Roth, 2017). This would include collaborating with both public-private donors to provide funding for programs in art education.

During 2008, the NEA awarded over "200 grants, totaling $6.7 million" for art programs that allowed students to learn with art educators and independent artists (National Art Education Association, 1994, para. 2). The NEA has introduced other arts education projects and programs, which include: The Arts Education Partnership (AEP), The Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) and The NEA Education Leaders Institute (ELI). There has been and will continue to be a need for advocacy groups that continually petition for support.

**Federal support and guidelines**. For the promotion and inclusion of art education in the general academic curriculum, art education must be supported by national educational standards, assessments, and funding (National Art Education Association, 1994). The National Visual Arts Standards (NVAS) Goals 2000: Educate America Act was developed to establish legal endorsement for art educators. However, the Act only incorporated standards and guidelines for individual states and did not establish art education as a component of the general curriculum. Sabol (2017) affirmed that the visual arts were originally our first form of communication and are responsible for individual originally and personal identity. One of the outcomes of receiving government subsidizing for art education is the consistent debate regarding the value and importance of art education in the educational system (May, & Brenner, 2016). Regardless of the extensive research that has been completed and national standards and guideline that have been established, the main issue involved with the art education model, is that it does not adequately depict both the intrinsic and instrumental value and the necessity for art education to a student and society (Vatsky, 2016).

**Art education today.** There is much evidence to indicate that involvement in art education influences the development of children; yet, reductions in-school support for art education have contributed to art programs being reduced or even eliminated from public schools (May, & Brenner, 2016). Critical stakeholders, such as school principals, and parents, play a significant part in ensuring students receive an excellent art education as part of a well-rounded academic curriculum. Critical stakeholders must become involved in supporting school programs that ensure schools receive funding for arts education programs from school grants and outside donations.

For art education to be taught successfully, some researchers contend that an atmosphere designed to assist in the development of students as expressive, creative, and productive individuals must be established (Sabol, 2017). During the practice and application of art, students could convey thoughts and feelings from their personal experiences (Culp, 2015). Art education may focus on students creating art, learning to analyze or appreciate art, or a combination of them all. There are also fundamental factors that must be considered during art education instruction, which include; the fact that art application is an instinctive experience for a student, the content that is being taught, and the values of the society in which the instruction takes place (Vatsky, 2016).

**STEAM subjects (science, technology, engineering, art, and math).** Studies (e.g., Gess, 2017; Ravitch, 2016; Segarra, & Holmes, 2018; Sullivan, & Hafeli, 2017) such as these highlights the federal and state policies that have been established that are aimed at turning the education system into completion for higher test scores in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) subject areas, although testing always favors that advantaged over the disadvantaged (Ravitch, 2016). Many educators and researchers are promoting STEA (arts)M

subjects in education as the primary approach of learning practices to facilitate the next generation of students (Gess, 2017). STEAM learning incorporates the philosophies of art and design into STEM subjects and is becoming recognized as educators' endeavor to encourage creativity, innovation, collaboration, and critical thinking skills in their instruction (Ravitch, 2016).

STEAM education is an approach to teaching where students exhibit innovation, critical thinking, and creative problem-solving (Dell'Erba, 2019). STEAM education employs arts integration as an instructional practice for inquiry-based learning. This approach to learning encourages students to ask questions, investigate, invent, and innovate to solve real-world problems. Henriksen (2017) believed that presenting the concept of STEAM as exclusively about arts integration; could become challenging for science teachers that do not have artistic training. Similarly, arts instructors may also not have the ability to incorporate STEM subjects into the arts. What is required is a broader and more comprehensive understanding of STEAM. It is necessary to view STEAM subjects that focus more broadly on interdisciplinary teaching, creativity, and real-world learning.

**Value of art education.** The National Association for Music Education (1907) stated that anyone who has concerns regarding the quality of art education should develop an understanding of its value and importance and should support art education in schools all over the country. To maintain art education in schools; would require Pre-K-12 students to have comprehensive art programs available. The programs should be taught by qualified educators and designed to provide students with knowledge of the arts following national standards. Kraehe (2018) demonstrated that learning, applying, and the creation of art have the unique ability to allow students to communicate ideas and emotions effectively. Art education connects people to their

history, traditions, heritage as the artwork has a beauty and influence unique to each induvial culture (Jones, 2015). Research indicated that art education provides significant intellectual advantages and reinforces academic achievement, beginning at an early age and continuing through a student's time at school (Kraehe, 2018).

  **The effects of budget cuts.** Researchers insist that art education is an essential part of comprehensive training, yet, as a school survey conducted by the US Department of Education revealed that millions of American students, particularly in high schools, have insufficient access to the arts (Buckley, 2019). To disregard the learning opportunities found with art education, researchers believe; is to fail to benefit from proficiencies that are essential to success today, including creativity; identifying and solving problems; innovation, and mastering a vast array of communication skills. The Association of American Educators (1994) contended that all schools country had been affected by the recession in one way or another, and it has become compulsory to make exceedingly difficult budget decisions.

  While schools must come to terms with new financial situations, a new US Department of Education Survey (2018-2019) reports that art education is undergoing the most change, particularly in high-need communities. While the funding has remained unchanged for many suburban districts, urban district programs have declined sharply, as the report found that music and art classes are still inaccessible low-income urban school districts. Shaw's (2018) case study investigated how one urban school district in Lansing, Michigan eliminated its elementary art education program due to a combination of policy decisions that facilitated budget cuts which including; decreasing enrollment, budget hindrances, and time is taken away from arts educators for test preparation.

**Creativity.** Research indicated that art education has the potential to encourage creativity and innovation, which involves seeing something in a new way, it requires risk-taking, experimenting, and refining, and it is often collaborative and can contribute to reflective pedagogical practices (Savva, & Erakleous, 2018). Creativity can be used to solve problems, for inspiration and motivation, and for sharing through images, and tasks (Jones, 2015). Art education can create a learning environment that nurtures individual creativity, autonomy, and collaborations with other students. Robinson (2011) affirmed, creativity is about making associations and is motivated by collaboration than by single efforts. Creativity involves the exploration of other environments, which broaden a student's definitions of art, understanding that art is fundamental to everyday life (Roth, 2017).

Robinson (2011) suggested that the very environments in which students work should be open, inviting, and encourage collaboration as it can affect a student's imagination, creativity, and innovation. Unfortunately, the promotion of creativity and innovation often seems to be contradictory to the direction of many of the current education proposals (Jones, 2015). It is concerning to think that specific educational disciplines are assessed as more fundamental or more important than others, where a mandated curriculum and standards have students working on the same material, taking the same tests, to meet the same benchmarks (Rolling, 2016). As Robinson (2011) stated, that creativity is as important now in education as literacy, and it should be treated with the same status. Creativity is a necessary attribute for students to thrive in the future. Creativity will also become essential to develop innovative solutions to retain art education in schools across the country.

**Critical thinking.** A common question that has been asked regarding art education is, does art education affect critical thinking? (Noel, & Liub, 2017). The reason the question is

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asked; is that consequences of art education are not easily measured with standardized tests and other assessments, unlike accomplishments in math and science. Douglas and Jaquith (2018) discovered that learner-centered art classrooms incorporate critical thinking as a continuous process; that can enhance students' wide-ranging understanding capabilities. In turn, Hochtritt, Thulson, Delaney, Dornbush, and Shay (2015) determined that project-based art classrooms create constructive investigations where students enthusiastically use compelling questions to explore actual problems, as it encourages students to search for answers and discover meaning through solutions.

The unique benefit of art education is learning how to foster and use innovative ideas in an instructed manner, allowing students to work independently or in teams to brainstorm ideas and help each other to investigate many solutions (Patton, & Knochel, 2017). The level of critical thinking achieved in art education may depend on the age of the students, as increasing age is associated with a more significant variety of factors affecting art appreciation and application (Schabmann et al., 2016). As critically thinking involves formulating a student's own opinions and drawing their conclusions, art education allows for an increased engagement for students to recognize, express, evaluate, and construct conclusions (Mathewson, 2015).

**Funding.** Exposure to art education strengthens student demand for art involvement, as it creates experiences that can encourage careers in the arts or related fields, enhancing creativity and elevate the culture of societies (National Art Education Association, 1994). Grodoski, Willcox, and Goss (2017) affirmed that a careful understanding of the values and networks within art education research is vital in understanding and creating the means to have art become a significant aspect of the general academic curriculum that warrants funding and support. Every

state in the country can support students by insisting that quality arts programs be an indication of quality education.

Studies have indicated that partaking in the arts has a positive effect on the development of children, and later young adults yet, reductions in federal and state funding have caused art education programs and art education jobs to be significantly reduced or eliminated from public schools (May, & Brenner, 2016). Critical stakeholders, such as school principals and parents, play a significant part in safeguarding that every student receives a high-quality art education as part of a well-rounded academic curriculum. Critical stakeholders must become involved in supporting school programs that ensure schools receive funding for arts education programs from any means necessary, including grants or outside donations.

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) is an independent agency of the United States federal government that provides financial support for art ventures that display artistic distinction (Knight, 2017). Regarding the financial budget of 2018, President Donald Trump ordered the dismissal of cultural organizations, such as the NEA (Kennicott, & McGlone, 2017). The decision to eliminate programs such as the NEA could have a disastrous effect on many art organizations and their ability to provide art programs (Knight, 2017). Critical stakeholders of schools must become more active as a rural area of the US, and low-income urban areas will suffer the most by abolishing the NEA, as these areas depend entirely on foundation and grant money.

**Art integration.** Yet, art classes often become the place for students with behavioral difficulties, as school officials acknowledge the benefits of artmaking and presume that the art room could be a haven for challenged students (Alekseeva, 2018). However, art educators are not equipped to handle the complications posed by challenging students, especially in a school

environment that does not provide a professionally trained person to assist them (Kay & Wolf, 2017). Social interaction with colleagues is vital to create an environment for educators and other professionals; to practices new arts integration strategies that improve instruction and give students the support, they require (Koch, & Thompson, 2017).

Vygotsky (1978) theorized that learning development occurs primarily through social interactions. Art integration encourages change in school curriculum policies as it fosters teacher collaboration, resulting in active and cohesive student-centered learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Art integration differs from traditional art education by including both the arts disciplines and more traditional subjects such as math and science (Marshall, 2016). Applying art education within a general curriculum displays how the subject of art can join the many components of the educational system and act as an incentive for motivating learning. The function of art education and the art educator has altered in recent years to meet the needs and expectations of new students; it is necessary to understand and communicate their needs, which may include new digital art technology (Garnet, Sinner, Walker, Esmat, & Yi, 2018).

For students to have the benefits of art education in a general curriculum, art educators may need to concentrate on art integration across the curriculum if education is to be influenced by art (Buck & Snook, 2016). Classroom approaches used in art education can be applied to other subject matter as a form of art integration. For example, Hunter-Doniger (2018) posed questions to students about existing problems that students could explore and acquire a deeper understanding of both literature and visual imagery. Coats and Clyne (2017) found that the increase of support for the value and importance of art integration; provides multiple ways for students to express knowledge and understanding.

**Critical stakeholders' perspective.** Support from school leadership, parents, and students plays a crucial role in the success of any art education program. Engaging the school principal, for example, not only helps ensure the stability of art education programs but can also help address unanticipated or direct needs of the art program (Andrelchik, & O'Neill-Schmitt, 2015). However, schools cut art education programs because of budget deficits, funding for school programs have completely changed our culture, and have become an enormous part of the financial discussion making process of any school (Garcia, Jones, & Isaacson, 2015). Art education programs are expensive to maintain, and very often, they are the first to be eliminated as they are not the most apparent means to generate money for a school in the same way that, for example, sporting events can.

**An art educator's perspective.** Art educators seem to find themselves in a position where they must continuously validate and substantiate the advantages of art education; to educate and inform (Kay, & Wolf, 2017). The responsibilities of an art educator are many and varied, including, the design and develop art curriculum and course materials; delivering lectures to students on arts and its many forms and traditions; teaching students to express themselves too through arts and assess, evaluate and grade students' performance in an arts subject, among other responsibilities (McCaffrey, & Lovins, 2019).

Koch and Thompson's (2017) comprehensive qualitative research case study included the various issues that affect art educators, in terms of professional development, curriculum design issues and the support that is required to educate successfully. Professional development issues include in-depth knowledge of art, art development and performance; improving art lessons; and staff training. The curriculum design issues include the stages undertaken by teachers toward changing in their attitude and patterns of behavior and improvement to curriculum design, which

must happen for all educators in their classrooms. However, the intensive support necessary is both time-consuming and labor-intensive for curriculum design changes.

Many issues were addressed in the Koch and Thompson (2017) study regarding the necessary support for art educators including, the amount of assistance required to establish substantial change, and shared experiences in learning and reflection should be taking into account when implementing lessons plans and activities. This assistance stimulates the skills necessary for effective collaboration (Koch, & Thompson, 2017). Art educators often endeavor to create a safe classroom environment where students can have freedom of expression, and this is achieved through classroom management strategies, cooperative learning practices, and advocating the necessity for open dialogue and discussion (McCaffrey, & Lovins, 2019).

**Parents' perspective.** Many parents intuitively recognize the value of the arts and include them in our children's lives at an early age by encouraging toddlers to sing, dance, and use crayons for their first artistic creation (Kim, & Jung, 2017). Carmen (2016) also indicated that parent's perceptions regarding art include references to creativity, personal growth, imagination, innovation, self-expression, and individual identity. However, as time goes on and their children become students, a parent's perception of the value of art in their child's life changes drastically, as parents are led to believe that their children should only take STEM subjects, as this could lead to financial stability, and this dictates the educational decision-making process (Segarra, Natalizio, Falkenberg, Pulford, & Holmes, 2018).

While demand for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) related personnel continues to grow, some challenges compromise their ability to employ, instruct, and retain such staff (Segarra et al., 2018). One way the problem is being solved; is by using the arts in the training of scientists, which includes the use of STEAM (science, technology, engineering,

arts, and math) programs in science outreach and professional development. Buck and Snook (2016) revealed that to provide students with the benefits of art education in a general curriculum, critical stakeholders may need to focus on incorporating the arts across the syllabus.

There are many ways in which parents can encourage students to continue to be involved in art and retain art education as a part of their curriculum. The Center for Arts Education (1996) offered the Parents as Arts Partners Program, an education program involving students and parents in interactive arts education activities. The program strives to improve parent engagement and involvement in public school's art programs and their children's education, creating shared experiences that support a classroom curriculum.

**Art education in collaboration with schools.** While many schools do have a strong appreciation for art education, they cannot provide a full art education department within the schools, incorporating the arts into the current curriculum (Rolling, 2016). Instead of establishing the arts as a distant and significant subject area concerning other academic subjects, programs such as these integrate music, the visual arts, and performance art into traditional subjects like science, math, and language (Marshall, 2016). When executed appropriately, these programs are eagerly received by students. The value and appreciation that critical stakeholders hold regarding art education have a strong influence on how art education is preserved.

Andrelchik, and O'Neill-Schmitt (2015) conducted a study regarding the perceptions held by high school students regarding their success. It was discovered that the students' artwork functioned to communicate their challenges and goals. The study also revealed that the students often imitated opinions held by society regarding success in art, indicating that students valued the opportunity to express their personal feelings through artwork. Yet, students struggled in identifying art education as an essential base on societal influences.

**Students' perspective**. Saygi-Gerçeker (2018) found that older students' attitudes toward art education significantly varied depending on issues such as: gender, grades, parent's educational level, income level, and how often they attended art events. Alternatively, students' attitudes towards art education did not vary considerably based on the high school they attended, their parent's educational level, the area they grew up in, employment status, or if they had received a grant. It is imperative for critical stakeholders such as principals, assistant principals, parents, and art educators, develop an understanding for the benefits art education, as their approach towards art education, is reflective of the support it receives, and the perception of its value (Milbrandt, Miraglia, & Zimmerman, 2018). Coats and Clyne (2017) study found that the development of strong support for the value of arts integration; reaches all kinds of learners, providing multiple ways for students to express knowledge and understanding.

**Student success.** During their time at school, students can develop exchanges that could positively influence their future careers, such as establishing relationships between educators and students (Garnet et al., 2018). Students should strive to become autonomous learners and perfect their critical thinking and reflective skills, which will assist them in future decision-making (Workman, &Vaughan, 2017). The role art educators especially are changing relative to the needs and requirements of new students, and they must work in collaboration with students and organizations devoted to art education to understand and respond to student needs (Garnet et al., 2018). With the right support, art education can assist students in developing accountability for their learning and enthusiastically participate in the building of knowledge, which is an essential element in student success (Workman, & Vaughan, 2017).

**Success inside of the US.** The Arts Education Partnership (AEP) (1995) was established through a unique inter-agency agreement between the National Endowment of the Arts and the

US Department of Education. This organization provides support for the AEP as the leading association for persons and organizations dedicated to making great arts education programs accessible to all students. Arts Education Partnership works to encourage opportunities for arts-integrated learning possibilities for all students. The AEP includes applications such as Everyday Arts for Special Education, The San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory's Community Opus Project, How Educators Make the Arts Work for Kids in Utah, Perpich Arts Integration Project, JumpStart Theatre – Fostering Creativity for Future Success, and the Digital DELTA – Linking Learning and the Arts.

Several studies (e.g., Kennicott, & McGlone, 2017; May, & Brenner, 2016; Nevanen, Juvonen, & Ruismäki, 2015) showed that art education programs had experienced years of being overlooked. There are drop-in art programs in schools around the country to accommodate teachers that need to prepare for standardized testing and part of an effort to balance school budgets (Perille, 2016). The lack of funding and consideration has particularly affected urban areas as students from low-income backgrounds have been unreasonably affected by the decline in art education. However, several cities across the country have worked to combat this trend: by forming partnerships with school networks, cultural organizations, and local governments toward retaining art education for all students. These new art programs have ranged from city-initiated endeavors such as The Creative Advantage in Seattle, Ingenuity in Chicago, Big Thought in Dallas, and the Boston Public Schools Arts Expansion (BPS-AE), which is both a private and publicly funded nonprofit organization. These four cities' endeavors stem from the belief that by investing in students' creativity today, they are cultivating the entrepreneurs, inventors, legislators, and socially committed citizens of the future (Perille, 2016).

**Success outside of the US**. Considering successful art education programs outside the US, since 2013 Finland, has appointed the Ministry of Education and Culture to be responsible for early childhood education and the care of children; therefore, new pioneering legislation concerning early childhood education has been approved by all critical stakeholders (Nevanen, Juvonen, &  Ruismäki, 2015). In Finland, more than 98% of children attend preschool, incorporating various art projects as part of their standard curriculum, which helps increase the aptitude of children. In Helsinki, an art education project that targeted students from three to nine years old, the results indicate that the art programs inspired children and aroused their problem-solving skills and understanding. It offered students opportunities to experience artistic accomplishments, which increased their self-confidence and motor skills. The Nevanen, Juvonen, and Ruismäki (2015) study, among the others in this literature review, supports this research study, which is how critical stakeholders perceive the value of art education in the educational system.

**Methodological themes in literature**. There are three main types of research methodology: qualitative and quantitative, and mixed-methods research (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Qualitative research is used to explore ideas and opinions as it provides insights into problems or helps develop ideas or hypotheses (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020). Quantitative research methods vary using techniques of gathering and analyzing numeric data obtained from different sources (Stratford, & Bradshaw, 2016). Lafortune, Rothstein, and Schanzenbach (2018) conducted a quantitative study that indicated an increase in student achievement in statewide assessments with an arts integration teaching model.

Mixed methods research is a methodology for organizing research that involves collecting, analyzing, and integrating both quantitative and qualitative research. Grodoski,

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Willcox, and Goss (2017) used a mixed-method research design to compile an analysis of a network of authors, research questions, paradigms, and research methods within art education research. For this study, a qualitative research design was the most effective, as quantitative research methods are used to study human behavior, opinions, and motivations (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2020). The four main types of qualitative research design include phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, and case study (Creswell, & Clark, 2017). Phenomenology is employed to describe the substance of experience, and it is used to study many individuals that have experienced the same events. For example, Elliott, and Clancy's (2017) study indicated that while students were participating in the Artful Thinking program, they learned to think creativity which requires them to truly focus on a particular piece of artwork, as this practice provides students with a framework for thinking and to assist them to develop more persuasive thinking skills.

Ethnography is an approach to the study of the customs of individual peoples and cultures, and it is used to interpret shared patterns or behaviors found within cultures from all over the world (Stratford, & Bradshaw, 2016). For example, in the Shaw (2018) case study of an urban school setting, the researcher had previously worked at the research site. As a result, the researcher lent both insight and empathy for the research report. However, the researcher also recognized that the ethnographic study helped him further his understanding of the local culture, customs, and values. Grounded theory, on the other hand, is used to examine emerging patterns grounded in data, which will generate approaches from the data extracted from the field of research (Stratford, & Bradshaw, 2016). Students in the Hamlin, and Fusaro (2018) study, for example, participated in the creation of their own socially conscious art projects, expressed

strong opinions and perspectives regarding social issues they commonly cared about, which in turn raised essential questions and theories regarding their future as adults in an unknown future.

A case study design is applied to research when developing an in-depth analysis of individuals engaged in an event, a program, or activity (Stratford & Bradshaw, 2016). For example, in the Andrade, Hefferen, and Palma (2015) case study, the qualitative research methods of observations and interviews were employed to discover that, when students become their teachers and explain artistic techniques to each other, they exhibit attributes that are most desirable for learners, including self-assessment and critical thinking. The Hunter-Doniger (2018) case study compiled a significant amount of qualitative research data through the observations of 10 educational professionals working on a project-based learning (PBL) curriculum for grades K-12.

The Hunter-Doniger (2018) case study revealed that project-based learning (PBL) is a self-motivated classroom teaching method, in which students explore everyday problems and concerns while acquiring a more in-depth understanding through productive inquiries. Briggs (2016) also conducted a critical case study that examined the New South Wales (NSW) art education curriculum's conceptual framework and the frames (Board of Studies NSW, 2013). The Briggs (2016) study of the art curriculum, involved obtaining responses and opinions through interviews and open-ended class discussions. Observations and analysis of artwork projects have been successfully used by (Brown, 2015; Briggs, 2016; Roth, 2017). Observations and discussions of student art projects are useful for generating a rich understanding of student experiences and beliefs regarding art education (Wagner, & Vermeersch, 2019).

The Saygi-Gerçeker (2018) study, which involved observations of students during an art project, and their observational discussions after, revealed that the students' attitudes towards art

played a crucial role in their choices regarding art education. Moderating students' observation during an art project involves coloration with a practicing art teacher and the venue for the project. It is essential to provide the familiar setting of their art room, where the students are comfortable and at ease to share their opinions. Interviews and observations are effective methods of data collection in qualitative research, where depth, insight, and understanding of perceptions are required (Machi, & McEvoy, 2016).

Researchers using qualitative research methods, including observations, interviews, and class discussions, have been an effective method to investigate student opinions (Andrelchik, & Schmitt O'Neill, 2015). After reviewing many qualitative research studies, semi-structured interviews were employed for this research study. This study consisted of several key questions that allowed the interviewees to pursue an idea or response in more detail (Creswell, & Clark, 2017). This interview method was greatly beneficial, as the semi-structured interviews involved discovering the perceptions of critical stakeholders, which include principals, assistant principals, parents, and art educators regarding their value and appreciation of art education.

**Limitations to the current body of literature.** To ensure the accuracy of a research study, it was necessary to critically examine the limitations found in studies, which may have impacted the results and conclusions (Stratford & Bradshaw, 2016). While quantitative research is mainly used to gather numeric data, qualitative research is primarily exploratory research used to understand the fundamental reasons, opinions, and motivations of participants that are being researched (Machi, & McEvoy, 2016). The most useful research method for this study was qualitative research, as it involved revealing the perspectives of critical stakeholders. During the investigation of numerous qualitative research studies, certain limitations were discovered

regarding the research methods that were used, including concerns regarding stakeholder perspectives, generalizability, the location of the study, and bias of the researcher.

**Lack of critical stakeholder perspectives.** The first limitation found in the examined studies were gaps in existing literature which do not consider the perspectives of critical stakeholders specifically, principals, assistant principals, parents, and art educators and the value they have for art education. Many studies include the perspectives of students and teachers regarding the value and application they have regarding art education (Saygi Gerçeker, 2018). For example, Gaztambide-Fernández, Nicholls, and Arráiz-Matute (2016) explored mission statements provided by art educators that give a more precise representation of the thoughts and philosophies that structure art programs. As the study revealed, the teachers intended to foster public discussions concerning the purpose and value of an education.

Andrelchick (2015) investigated the teachers' perspective regarding the importance of art education in facilitating students to be visually knowledgeable as an effective and appropriate activity. The teachers involved in the study affirmed that term literacy now includes many forms of literacy such as: digital, cultural, oral, textual, and visual (Andrelchick, 2015). Similarly, Culp (2015), using the student journals as inspiration for art projects, can help students communicate personal experiences and difficulties they may be experiencing. The study suggested that students should understand that creativity is not only for the artistically gifted. Students are intrinsically motivated to engage in tasks only when the job matches their skill level.

Andrelchik, Schmitt, and O'Neill (2015) interviewed high school students to learn their perspectives regarding how they defined success in art, school, and life. The students' statements are a valuable tool for understanding the more important ideas that society may be presenting to our students regarding art education. However, Milbrandt, Miraglia, and Zimmerman (2018)

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discovered gaps that exist in the literature that could be filled with a more balanced reporting of explanatory, investigational, and theoretical research about art education. Gaps in existing literature include a lack of empirical studies that include the perspectives of parents, principals, and other administrative personnel regarding the value held for art education. This study endeavored to discover the perspectives of all stakeholders with a qualitative multi-site case study research design. The research study gained a deeper understanding of all critical stakeholders' everyday experiences in the decision-making process regarding the position and importance that art education holds in the academic curriculum (Creswell, & Clark, 2017).

**Lack of generalizability.** The second limitation found in the investigated studies was generalizability, which is usually defined as, the extent to which the results of a study can signify the results obtained from the sample population. (Creswell, 2014) The purpose of qualitative research is typically directed toward providing in-depth explanations and meanings rather than simplifying findings, which was the purpose of this study. For example, Szekely (2015) was limited to the small number of privileged students involved in the Art Spark program to examine, which was expensive to attend, and held in a museum in a metropolitan city. Such a program would not be feasible for students in a rural setting with a limited budget and would not allow for a generalized opinion of the program.

Another example where generalizability was an issue involved Schabmann et al. (2016), where, although the results were interpreted with caution, they might reflect a step of student development where observations and interpretations of artwork become less subjective. This study was used to compare responses to artworks of children of different ages as children mature; however, they are exposed to outside influences regarding art, which may influence their opinions rendering their responses less subjective. Art appreciation is often an example of highly

individual experiences for students, so although this research is not generalizable, it led to an increased understanding of its nature.

Generalizability is a means of drawing broad implications from observations, and it is acknowledged as a quality standard in quantitative research; but is not the intended purpose in qualitative research (Stratford, & Bradshaw, 2016). For example, Nevanen, Juvonen, and Ruismäki (2015) conducted a comprehensive study in Finland, and much can be learned from its findings as it revealed that art education is included in every school curriculum in the country. Art education programs of this nature motivate children and stimulate their interest in reasoning, problem-solving, and learning. Yet, skeptics may argue that due to the smaller population of Finland, and significant differences in government structure compared to the US, implementing such art programs broadly in an American educational system is unfeasible.

Another limitation found that was associated with generalizability was the scope of the study. Klugman, and Beckmann-Mendez (2015) included an exceedingly small number of participants, a total of 19 students that contributed to the Art Rounds art education program, which, for a research study, is not a substantial number of participants. For qualitative studies, it is common to have a smaller number of participants; however, for quantitative studies having a small number of participants or sample sizes may decrease the power of a study. For example, if the purpose of a study was its ability to discover a consequence of an event or action, the chance to identify that consequence is significantly increased with more participants in a study (Glesne, 2016). Roth (2017) found that although there was a great deal of comprehensive literature regarding the decline of art education, few studies have examined the art education requirements for students at higher education levels.

Over the past ten years, education legislation has progressively focused on high stakes testing in the areas of science, technology, English, and math and has neglected the field of art education, presenting only general assessments and educational criteria (Segarra et al., 2018). Quantitative Research, on the other hand, is typically used to quantify a problem by using numerical data and generalize results from a larger sample population (Glesne, 2016). Davis (2016) discovered that students and their families increasingly consult a set of evaluations when making decisions regarding art colleges. Although the college evaluation system employs specific criteria, there is considerable skepticism that it measures the right educational quality of the art college. Davis concluded that the evaluation system only offers a generalized assessment for what the colleges have to offer.

**Location of a study.** The third limitation is the location of a study, which also has significance to the findings of a study, as the researcher conducted an in-depth investigation of an individual, a group, or event to explore the causes of fundamental theories (Glesne, 2016). Common research sites include schools, universities, hospitals, research institutes, and field research locations. Brewer, Xu, and Diket (2017) presented a descriptive analysis of arts education initiatives that have taken place at six different locations in specific metropolitan areas. The six sites we used as case studies, each with a rich art culture of museums, theaters, and galleries. However, because of the type of research design, and the large scope of the study, each site was given only a generalized evaluation and description. A more meaningful and evocative understanding of the arts education initiatives could have been presented if the study had been of a single site.

Gates (2017) limited the study to the number of people involved in a single classroom. Through involved observations and interviews regarding the procedures and practices, the study

uncovered that intrinsic motivation and student interest found in art education are central to creative problem finding and solving. The research study revealed three relevant concepts that fueled inherent motivation for the artists: environmental, social, and cultural. Shaw (2018) was also was limited to the research of one urban school that eliminated its elementary arts specialists. The information gathered does not necessarily pertain to any other urban or rural elementary school locations, but it does give valuable information about that school district. From the investigated studies, a phenomenological qualitative research study with a limited number of participants in a single location; provides an in-depth account of how participants view a phenomenon, in this instance, art education (Glesne, 2016).

**Researcher bias.** The fourth limitation found in the research studies was the bias of the researcher. By following the correct research practices of ensuring high-quality data, including a non-biased opinion, researchers improved the quality and validity of the research (Glesne, 2016). The limitations of qualitative research are sometimes outside the researcher's control, and it was essential to ensure that personal biases and preconceived philosophies did not influence the researcher. Vaughan et al. (2017) displayed a biased opinion in the findings, as some of the researchers were employed by the university being researched, and the study only addressed the key moments, successful projects, and accomplishments that emerged from a historical review, never addressing any of the difficulties that were involved over a long period.

Kraehe et al. (2015) also displayed bias as the study was conducted only from four high school art teachers and their desire to engage students in critical consciousness art projects in classrooms. Based on the opinion of the art teachers alone, it was suggested that it is of no benefit to students to soften or eliminate any socio-economic-racial content from their curriculum or classroom discussions without considering school leaders' point of view, other

teachers or the opinions of the students themselves. Bias can occur unintentionally in research, as was the case in the Hunter-Doniger (2018) study where the researcher unmistakably believed that an art infusion with STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, and math) to create STEAM subjects was the only way to retain art education in the educational system.

Overby, and Jones (2015) displayed bias by affirming that as technology is the way of the future, and the only method to retain art education in schools; was to incorporate technology in the art programs. The researchers proposed that this would be achieved by having computers in the art room that would expose students to digital and pixel art only. In turn, this type of art should become the focus of the art curriculum, justifying the retention of art education programs in schools (Overby, & Jones, 2015). Sabol (2017) also demonstrated bias through the belief that without access to art education, students would not have any other opportunity to learn the complex language of communication and expression. Other researchers (Andrade, Hefferen, & Palma, 2015) stated that, is not necessarily true as all subjects taught in schools can use methods to allow students the opportunity to communicate ideas and express those ideas orally.

Methodological issues arise from an in-depth investigation of numerous intrinsic studies; this includes limitations or restrictions on research design or methodology; these factors may impact the findings of a study (Glesne, 2016). It is essential to address any potential limitations a study may have as they may affect the results and conclusions. This section addressed five inherent limitations of this study, which included a lack of stakeholder perspectives, a lack of generalizability, the location of the study, and bias of the researcher. Every precaution was taken to ensure that the limitations were addressed.

However, limitations can arise from situations relating to the research methods of study that are out of the researcher's control; for example, this study involved interviewing critical

stakeholders, such as, principals or parents whose views may not have previously been taken into consideration and they may be reluctant to offer an opinion. Other practical limitations of this study included, having limited access to critical stakeholders, the data gathered from semi-structured interviews was often time-consuming as was the analysis of that data, and the need for precautions to ensure the interpretation of results was not biased because the researcher's perspective had influenced it.

## Summary

The literature review of the value of art education held by critical stakeholders revealed a gap in the existing literature. Current studies in this area have focused on applying the arts, art teaching methods, art integration approaches, or the views and opinions of one group of critical stakeholders at a time. For example, Low (2015) revealed that when used effectively, students' opinions regarding art education promote student ownership in artmaking by encouraging students to introduce originality to their work. A more comprehensive investigation of the value of art education held by all critical stakeholders, including principles, assistant principals, parents, and art educators together was needed to give a broad perspective of the issue. It was necessary to determine if it is feasible to change sources of academic funding, and curriculum design to ensure that art education remains a consistent aspect of the general education curriculum.

Chapter 2 provided a review of informative literature regarding the topic of the value and significance of art education. Marshall (2016) demonstrated that when applying art education across the curriculum, it can join many components of the educational system together, and act as a catalyst for stimulating learning and observing knowledge differently. Kulinski (2018) explored art education strategies, where students could see and express who they are and

communicate these findings in visual, verbal, and written form. Additionally, Koch and Thompson (2017) successfully provided teachers with information and the means to integrate the arts into the general education curriculum, and inclusion classrooms with children with learning disabilities.

Kay, and Wolf (2017) revealed that presently art teachers have successfully learned to adapt alternative methods of tolerance, support, and encouragement for students through art as there has been an increase in the amount of distress and violence in our schools. Similarly, Halsey-Dutton (2016) revealed that participation in the arts, which includes: literature (drama, poetry, and prose), performing arts (dance, music, and theatre), and visual arts (drawing, painting, filmmaking, architecture, ceramics, sculpting, and photography) is a vital aspect in building student confidence and conviction (Culp, 2015). Art integration is essential for students to acquire the skills needed to incorporate art into their future general curriculum. Art techniques can become a mechanism to communicate personal experience, social issues, and a means to convey what students are thinking and feeling. This study suggested that students should change their preconceived notion; that creativity is only for people that are artistically gifted and develop an understanding that all students should embrace art.

Garnet et al. (2018) determined that the role of art educators was adapting to the expectations and requirements of new students; art educators need to appreciate and adjust their syllabus to meet these needs. Therefore, it was necessary to determine student's obligations concerning academic, social, and cognitive development and establish if art education was an essential aspect of that progress. Milbrandt, Miraglia, and Zimmerman (2018) maintain that gaps in the existing literature could be enhanced with more experimental and philosophical research.

This study acknowledged the individual beliefs of critical stakeholders regarding art education and reflected upon those beliefs in assessing the position of art education today and in the future.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

The problem addressed by this study is art education programs have been significantly reduced or eliminated from schools all over the U.S. (Elliott, & Clancy, 2017). Some researchers, such as Jones (2015), contend that it is necessary to support and appreciate art education, and it should be maintained in schools. By integrating art education across the curriculum, educators could provide multiple ways for students of different educational and ability levels to express knowledge and understanding (Savva, and Erakleous, 2018). The purpose of this qualitative multi-site study was to discover the perspectives held by critical stakeholders regarding the value of art education. As the value that was placed on art education is reflected in the support and encouragement that was received from the critical stakeholders (McFarland, and Currie, 2017).

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology and design utilized for this study, which is a qualitative research study using a multi-site case study design. This chapter also describes the research population and sample, including the instrumentation used to gather and present the data. This chapter describes the procedures followed for the data collection and analysis. It was also important to recognize, and accurately describe issues or concerns that occurred during the research study, such as, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations (Johnson, and Christensen, 2019). Lastly, the chapter described the ethical assurances made by the researcher regarding this research study. Ethical principles included, obtaining consent forms from the participants, protecting their anonymity, and avoiding misleading or dishonest practices (Marshall, and Rossman, 2015).

**Research question.** This study explored critical stakeholders in schools that intuitively established an academic curriculum that included art education, or if critical stakeholders in schools felt inhibited by issues such as, accountability of student academic achievement.

However, a gap exists in the literature that does not represent all critical stakeholders' views regarding art education (Baer, 2017). Thus, a critical challenge for art education has been a lack of investigative evidence that demonstrates its' value. Therefore, the main research question of the study was:

**RQ1.** What are the perspectives held by critical stakeholders regarding the value of art education?

**Research Methodology and Design**

Qualitative research is usually exploratory in nature, and the main aim is to provide a complete description of the research topic being explored (Yin, 2017). Qualitative research involves observing participants in their natural setting in this study that involved two elementary schools. Direct data collection comes from a product or performance that can be evaluated in this example that includes the schools. This research study was guided by rich narrative descriptions from critical stakeholders, as the participants of two elementary schools in the southwest described their experiences through their own stories during a focus group and the semi-structured interview process.

A case study design was employed for this study. A case study design is applied when developing an in-depth analysis of an individual or group of individuals engaged in an event or an activity (Knight, 2017). Case studies allow a large amount of detail to be collected. Other research designs would not quickly obtain that. The data collected in a case study is usually is more abundant and of greater depth than can be found through other experimental designs. An example of a compelling case study is the Bostan (2016) study. This study collected a wealth of data from parents of secondary education students in many schools across the country. The study

involved concepts and practices aimed at schools that must support arts education as a critical competence, cultural awareness, and expression (Bostan, 2016).

      **Multi-site case study**. A qualitative multi-site case study has the intent to fully appreciate a particular issue from many points of view of understanding and perspective (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 2018) This study had a multi-site case study design and the main issue explored was the perspectives held by critical stakeholders regarding the value of art education. This multi-site case study involved investigating the phenomenon of the decrease or elimination of art education positions and programs in these schools. This was achieved by conducting research involving participants from two schools, focusing on their insights and perceptions regarding the value of art education (Marshall, & Rossman, 2015). A multi-site case study presents an in-depth analysis of an issue through the qualitative collection of data. For this study, the data collection included conducting a focus group that included eight of the twelve participants, and semi-structured interviews with all twelve of the participants. Six of the critical stakeholders participated from each school, twelve participants in total. Semi-structured interviews are effective instruments for data collection in a multi-site case study, as they can help better understand the participants' opinions and experiences (Marshall, & Rossman, 2015).

      While quantitative research uses methods such as, statistical data to draw conclusions, qualitative research relies more on a participant's narrative (Silverman, 2016). The qualitative multi-site case study design was the most appropriate for this research project as it was effectively used to gain a deeper understanding of fundamental perceptions of critical stakeholders concerning art education. Qualitative research methods, such as conducting interviews, provide an opportunity for participants to voice their personal opinions and experiences about art education (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 2018). Employing two research

sites for a multi-site case study also allowed the research question to be addressed from a broad perspective. This, in turn, uncovered various patterns of thought, and opinions that shed light on the phenomenon of the reduction or elimination of art education positions, and art education programs all over the country.

**Population and Sample**

**Population.** The study population is comprised of critical stakeholders of two elementary schools from the same school district in the southern US, which included administrators, parents, and art educators. The study population was chosen because their knowledge and experience could provide valuable insight regarding the value of art education. As the study population represents only a portion of the target population, the researcher carefully selected a sample that fit the objectives of the study. Out of all the schools that were examined in this district, some have established art education programs, and other schools that have significantly reduced or eliminated art education from their curriculum. The Arts Education Partnership (2019) summarized the policies issued for art education across all fifty states and the District of Columbia in the study Art Scan at a Glance, 2017-2018. This study indicates that the arts are only recognized as a core academic subject in twenty-nine states and are not acknowledged as a core academic subject in twenty-two states. The school district in the state examined in this study does recognize art as a core subject (Art Scan at a Glance, 2017-2018).

Further, all fifty states require school districts or schools to provide instruction in one or more arts disciplines at the elementary school level (Arts Education Partnership, 2019). The school district in the southern US that was examined has an academic achievement rating that is one of the lowest in the country. According to Herrera (2019), the Judicial District Judge detailed the regrettable insufficiencies of the state's public-school system and contended the state has

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failed to provide public schools with adequate funding to provide a sufficient education for its students. This deficiency is a violation of the state's constitution, which pledges that all students will have access to an adequate and appropriate educational system. The Public Education Department (2019) stated that individual schools are in danger of closing, as they have received an academic achievement rating of F in the last five years in a row. However, out of the twenty elementary, middle, and high schools of potential research participants from a school district in the southern US, four schools have received an academic achievement rating of A, five schools have received a B rating, two schools have received a C rating, three schools have received a D rating and six schools have received an F rating (The Public Education Department, 2019).

For this research study, a city in the southern US that have a history of promoting and encouraging art and culture was examined. This southern school district is an area where artists and artisans from various cultural backgrounds, including Mexican, Spanish, and Native American, thrive and succeed. This school district serves a total of nearly 8,000 students from grades pre-Kindergarten to 12th grade. See Table 3.1 for a breakdown of demographics by grade level. For example, concerning student gender, the school district has a nearly equal ratio distribution of female and male students. (The Public Education Department, 2019). For students' race and ethnicity, the school district serves a diverse population.

Table 3.1 indicates the student demographic for the school district used in the study.

Table 3.1

*Student Demographic Information for the School District (The Public Education Department, 2019).*

| Gender | Ethnicity | Student Teacher Ratio |
|---|---|---|
| Female 49% | American Indian 2% | 15:1 |
| Male 50% | Asian 1% | |
| | African American 1% | |
| | Caucasian 15% | |
| | Hispanic 79% | |

Table 3.2 indicates the teacher demographic of the southwestern state involved in the

multi-site case study.

Table 3.2

*Teacher Demographic Information for the State (The National Center for Education Statistics, 2011-2012)*

| Gender | Ethnicity | Student Teacher Ratio | Average age of Teachers | Average New Teacher Salary | Percentage of New Teachers expected to qualify for Penton | Number of Public Schools in the State |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Female 49% Male 50% | American Indian 2% Asian 1% African American 1% Caucasian 15% Hispanic 79% | 15:1 | 45 | $58,598.00 | 33% | 21,700 |

Table 3.3 indicates the student demographic for School #1.

Table 3.3

*Student Demographic for School #1 (The Public Education Department, 2019).*

| Gender | Ethnicity | Student Teacher Ratio | Percentage of Teachers with 3 or more years of Experience | Students from Low Income Families | School Academic Rating | Total Number of Students |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Female 49% Male 51% | American Indian 1% Asian 2% African American 1% Caucasian 10% Hispanic 80% | 16:1 | 74% | 69% | A | 545 |

Table 3.4 indicates the student demographic for School #2.

Table 3.4

*Student Demographic for School #2* (The Public Education Department, 2019).

| Gender | Ethnicity | Student Teacher Ratio | Percentage of Teachers with 3 or more years of Experience | Students from Low Income Families | School Academic Rating | Total Number of Students |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Female 50% Male 51% | American Indian 2% Asian 1% African American 1% Caucasian 7% Hispanic 90% | 14:1 | 71% | 85% | F | 564 |

**Sampling Methods**. The sampling method used for this study was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling focuses on characteristics of a population of interest, in this situation, critical stakeholders' perspectives of art education (Kay, 2016).The purposive sample was a group of individuals that were selected from the target population given the sampling process used in the study. The characteristics of the sample included critical stakeholders that have knowledge, and experience regarding the value of art education; either relating their profession, or to their children's participation. Given that the sample represents only a portion of the target population, the researcher carefully selected a sample that fit the purposes of the study. As mentioned previously, all the participants were located within two school sites. The chosen schools involved in the study have been assessed with the same school rating system from the Department of Education (2019). The two schools that were examined include School #1 (Table 3.3) and School

#2 (Table 3.4). School # 1 received and an A rating, and School #2 has received an F rating from the school rating system from the Department of Education (2019). Both were elementary schools located within four miles of each other in the southern school district examined. Both schools also had a similar number of students and have similar demographics, yet each school received drastically different school ratings.

The participants chosen for the semi-structured interviews were critical stakeholders from two schools in a southern district of the U.S. The participants, which first included, two principals, of two different schools, were chosen from the department of education website in the southwestern state. The selection of the two schools was based on their location, and results received from the school rating system from the Department of Education (2019). After permission was granted from the school superintendent of schools, each of the school principals was e-mailed by the researcher. Their e-mails were indicated on the department of education website. The e-mails provided detailed information regarding the study, proof of IRB approval, and a list of the other participants that would be required to complete the study, which included: assistant principals, parents, and art educators.

**Sample.** The sample included twelve participants altogether, 6 participants from each school (see Table 3.5):  principals, assistant principals, parents, art educators from each school. This study explored the perspectives of critical stakeholders regarding art education through a focus group and the interview process. As seen in Table 3.3 and 3.4, two schools were examined (School #1 and School #2). At School #1, the principal was a Caucasian female, and the assistant principal was a Hispanic female. In School #2, the principal was a Hispanic female, and the assistant principal was a Hispanic male.

Each of the schools employs two art educators who specialize in different areas of art. School #1 has two art educators; one was a Hispanic male, and the other a Caucasian Female. In School #2, the art educators included one Hispanic female and one Caucasian male. Additional demographic information about these participants, such as years of administration and teaching experience, was gathered during data collection.

**Instrumentation**

With every research design, the instruments chosen for the collection of data must be valid and reliable before they can be utilized as an acceptable measure (Weller et al., 2018) Validation involves collecting and analyzing data to assess the instrument (Booth, Colomb, &Williams, 2018). Internal and external validity are fundamental to any research study, and researchers should be aware of compromising issues that may interfere with the study's validity or trustworthiness (Silverman, 2016). The strength of the internal and external validity of a study can help assess the importance of the findings and provide a valid reason to keep the information in the study. To establish validity throughout this study; trusted research methods such as member checking was employed.

The instruments included semi-structured interview questions and focus group questions that were based on the art education curriculum's conceptual framework and frames (Board of Studies NSW, 2013). Before utilizing the framework for this research study, permission was granted from the NSW education standards Authority for the right to alter the framework. The original conceptual framework and frames include the central agency of artwork, which was replaced with art education for its purposes. The conceptual framework and frames' adjusted organization inspired personal responses from critical stakeholders and their views regarding art education. With permission from the NSW Education Standards Authority (Appendix C), the

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conceptual framework and frames agencies of artwork now art education, artist, world, and audience were used as a guideline for this study to construct semi-structured interview questions (Board of Studies NSW, 2013).

The agency of art education represents the availability of art education at the relevant schools being investigated, and inspired the interview question, "Do you feel that the students receive an adequate amount of art education at the school?" The agency of artist; is represented by the student participating in art education and inspired the interview question, "Does incorporating art education help or hinder your child's student's learning?" The agency of the world represents how art education may or may not prepare students for the world outside of school, and informs the interview question, "Do you feel that the present curriculum provides the criteria needed for a well-rounded education?" The agency of audience represents for whom art is created and informed the question, "Do you feel that it is important to have art education at this school?"

Semi-structured interviews were an effective way to gather qualitative data on the issue explored, which was critical stakeholders' perspectives on the value of art education. The overall purpose of the interview process was to provide the participants with the opportunity to express their views on the issue explored. Interviews were particularly useful for discovering a participant's understanding and experience related to the research topic. In turn, the focus group was a valuable way to follow-up the interview process as it allowed the participants to expand on their previous responses. The interview questions were open-ended questions that clearly articulated the issue that was being addressed. However, there were occasions where follow up questions were necessary as some participants may only provide noticeably short, concise answers.

Conducting interviews and a focus group was the most effective qualitative research methods as they establish guidelines for participants to explain and explore the research question. Interview questions are usually open-ended questions so that the research participants can provide in-depth information. The Jones (2015) qualitative study involved interviewing over fifty art educators worldwide, including the US, Canada, France, and Norway. Through an in-depth interview process, the study revealed that the use of collective intelligence could be successfully used to solve problems and for student inspiration and motivation.

**Employee interview protocol**. The participants were employees of the two schools included: principals, assistant principals, art educators. The questions for the employees can be found in Appendix A. The fifteen interview questions for the participants explored the amount of time they have worked at each school, their interpretation of a well-rounded education, and if art education plays a role in that interpretation. The interview questions continued to explore the school's curriculum, and if art education was an essential part of the general education curriculum. The interview questions ended by discussing the issues that impact decisions made concerning art education.

**Parent interview protocol.** The participants were parents of students attending the two schools that were being investigated; they were asked fifteen interview questions that can be found in Appendix B. The interview questions were directed towards their thoughts and feelings regarding their child, rather than school issues, such as budgeting. First, the interview questions addressed the length of time their children had attended the school. The questions continue to explore parents' perspectives on art education inside and outside the school environment, investigating if parents find art education a significant aspect of their child's education. The questions ended with investigating if parents would or would not foster art education as a part of

their child's future curriculum beyond the elementary level. The Baer (2017) study revealed that parental engagement is a purposeful component in the success of any school program; this study specifically examined parent involvement in art education.

To assess the trustworthiness of the interview questions, members of my dissertation committee were asked to assess the interview questions' suitability in Appendix A and B. The interview protocol was developed based on the opinions and expert judgments of the academic committee. All the interview questions were presented to the academic committee for review. The committee suggested that supplemental questions such as, why, and explain should be added to the existing interview questions. As this research study was qualitative in nature, the addition of supplemental questions encouraged the participants, to provide rich detailed descriptive responses.

During the interview process it was also decided that a pilot interview was not necessary as the interview questions were both based upon preexisting research studies (e.g., Brown, 2015; and Briggs, 2016), contributing to the validation process. Trustworthiness and dependability are fundamental to any research study, and researchers should be aware of compromising issues that may interfere with the trustworthiness of the study (Silverman, 2016). The strength of the dependability of a study can help assess the importance of the findings and if there is a valid reason to keep the information in the study. To establish trustworthiness throughout this study, trusted research methods such as member checking was employed.

**Focus group protocol**. The overall purpose of the focus group was to allow the participants to expand on their interview responses. The focus group was intended to run between 30 and 60 minutes. The key attributes of each participant were that each of the participants was critical stakeholders of the two elementary schools involved in the study, and

they would have previously participated in a semi-structured interview. The protocol for the focus group, including a suggested attendance time, and the location were communicated to the participants via e-mail. It was decided that it would be more convenient for the participants involved to conduct the focus group virtually via Web-Ex. Eight of the participants attended the focus group and offered additional information regarding their perceptions of the value of art education.

The collected data from the focus group was transcribed and sent via e-mail to all participants for member checking. The focus group protocol was developed based on the opinions and expert judgments of the academic committee. The five proposed focus group questions and were presented to the academic committee for review, and they were approved. The committee suggested that the focus group's location should be at one of the schools involved in the study, and the option for participating online should also be offered to the participants. Including the research instrument of a focus group provides a more in-depth insight into the research topic and collects additional information that may not have been shared during the interview process.

**Study Procedures**

This study received approval from NCU's Institutional Review Board before data collection. Permission was then given by the Internal Review Board, and the Superintendent of Schools of the state involved in the study. Preceding the interview process, the participants were provided with written consent forms explaining the purpose of the study, participation in the study was voluntary, and that participants could withdraw from the study at any time. Participants also received a copy of their consent form. To ensure the confidentiality of participants, all identifying information was removed, and a combination of letters and numbers

was used to identify the participants. The interviews and focus group were conducted by the researcher and at the convenience of the participants. All data collected from the research study from both the interviews, and the focus group will be kept in a password protected file for three years.

**Interview process.** Each of the school's principals chose the interview locations, and the meetings took place at the convenience of each participant. The participants were welcomed, and the purpose and context of the study were explained to them. All the participants were informed that all information provided would remain confidential, and they were asked to sign a consent form. The participants were then told that the interview would be recorded for transcription and analysis later. The intention was to have all twelve participants attending the interviews, which included two principals, two assistant principals, four parents, and four art educators from two different schools in the southwestern US. Each of the participants was asked fifteen interview questions, as seen in Appendix A and B.

The researcher acted as the facilitator, asking all the approved interview questions and follow up questions if needed. The interview questions explored themes such as experience, curriculum, art education, and school involvement. The interview process took 20 to 30 minutes depending on each interviewee, as some participants provided exceptionally long detailed answers while others provided noticeably short, concise answers. The follow-up questions were used to encourage the participants to provide rich, detailed data. After the interviews, the participants were thanked, and the researcher informed the participants that they would each receive an e-mail of their transcribed interviews for member checking, the researcher's contact information was provided explaining how the data would be analyzed and shared.

**Focus group**. The researcher suggested a location and time for the focus group to the participants; however, it is necessary to give participants the option of participating via remote access, for example, WebEx or Zoom meeting. The researcher acted as the facilitator, enabling the discussion to keep going, ensuring that all participants had an opportunity to be heard. At the beginning of the focus group, all participants were welcomed, and the purpose and context of the focus group were explained. Introductions were made, and all participants were informed that all information provided would remain confidential. The researcher can guarantee privacy/confidentiality (as outlined in the consent form); however, privacy cannot be guaranteed due to the nature of group sharing. If a participant chooses to share a personal experience that they do not want to link themselves or others to, the participants were asked to speak about it in general or non-specific terms.

The participants were also informed that the focus group was recorded for transcription when conducting the focus group, the researcher set a positive tone, made sure all the participants were heard, probed for more complete answers, and monitored the questions and the time carefully (Guest, Namey, & McKenna, 2017). After the focus group, the participants were thanked, and the researcher's contact information was provided, explaining how the data would be analyzed and shared. The focus group data were transcribed immediately after the focus group, and the researcher also wrote up a summary of her reactions and impressions of the focus group.

## Data Collection and Analysis

This research study was process orientated as it involved defined procedures, rules, and steps that were followed to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. Inductive data analysis was employed to develop theories and identify themes during the research process (Johnson, &

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Christensen, 2019). The first step in the research data collection process was the receipt of an Institutional Review Board approval this indicated that the research design of the study had passed a formal ethics review. Permission from the review board determined that the research design complied with current federal regulations for research involving human subjects. Without an approved IRB, a researcher is not permitted to recruit participants or collect data for the study.

The research review committee, of the educational department involved in the study required that all research studies must to be evaluated and approved. Obtaining approval from the research review committee permitted the research study to be conducted in the southwestern school district involved in the study. Evaluation and approval of the research proposal had to take place before any potential participants could be contacted, or any prospective schools could be visited. For the study to be considered, the research proposal had to include: a detailed narrative of the study, a proposed timeline, all consent forms, and an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval letter. After approval was granted from the research review committee, permission had to then be granted from the superintendent of schools. Approval for any research study has duration of one year, before the study is re-assessed by the research review committee. This study included a set of semi-structured interview questions and a focus group for the critical stakeholders that allowed each participant to express their individual experiences and feelings regarding their value of art education.

Depending on the availability of each participant, this study intended to conduct all the interviews of each school one at once. After receiving permission from the Research Review Committee and Superintendent of Schools, appointments were made to meet with the critical stakeholders through each school's secretary. This first included the principal, the assistant principal, two art educators, and lastly, two parents of each of the two schools investigated.

Recruitment of parent participants involved inviting and selecting candidates that were willing to share their thoughts and experiences regarding the value of art education. The participants were then asked to sign a consent form before the interview process. The data collection for this study included taking field notes and recordings of the interviews for transcription and analysis later.

**Semi-structured interviews.** The interview process began by explaining the research involved and informing the participants that all information given was for academic purposes only. The participants were informed that their identity and the identity of the school would remain anonymous. The participants were also told that the interview process would take up to 20 minutes. Consent forms would have been previously signed by all the participants before the interview begin. A digital voice recorder with a playback feature was brought to the participant's attention. The interview process started by asking warm-up questions first, such as how long the participant has been associated with the school; as a means of creating a comfortable and relaxed setting.

Subsequently, using the interview questions as a guide to move on to more focused questions, allowing the participants to elaborate on their responses if they wished (Travers, 2019). Immediately after the interview, time was taken to check that the recording device was functioning correctly. During the semi-structured interview process, several fundamental questions were asked, allowing the interviewees to pursue an idea or respond in more detail (Travers, 2019). The semi-structured interviews involved discovering the perceptions of critical stakeholders regarding their value of art education.

**Focus group.** The focus group began by reminding the participants of the purpose of the research and informing them that all information given was for academic purposes only. The participants were informed that their identity and the identity of each of the schools involved in

the study would remain anonymous. The participants were also told that the focus group would take up to 30 to 60 minutes. All the participants would have previously signed consent forms before the focus group began. The focus group took place in an office of one of the schools involved in the study. Five participants were present at the focus group location, and an additional three participants communicated via WebEx. Not all twelve participants took part in the focus group.

The focus group began by introducing everyone by their occupation as a means of creating a comfortable and relaxed setting. Subsequently, the focus group questions were used as a guide to move on to more focused interactions among the participants. This allowed the participants to expand on their responses (Kumar, 2019). Immediately after the time allotted had expired, time was taken to check that the recording device was functioning correctly. During the focus group process, five questions were asked, allowing the participants to pursue an idea or respond in more detail (Kumar, 2019). The focus group involved learning additional information regarding the perceptions of critical stakeholders regarding their value of art education.

**Triangulation**. For this study, triangulation of resources included applying viable research resources, and carefully collecting all data from the participants ensuring the trustworthiness of the research. Finding credible sources for research is particularly important as it affects the reliability of your findings. Methodological triangulation is a process of collecting data on the same topic from different sources (Abdalla et al., 2018). For this study, triangulation was achieved by using multiple data collection methods. Rich, descriptive data were collected through the focus group and semi-structured interviews of critical stakeholders to discover their perspectives regarding the value of art education. Specifically, the experience and knowledge of

each of the critical stakeholders regarding the value of art education was collected as a means of understanding the phenomenon explored.

**Analysis.** Data analysis in qualitative research is defined as the process of systematically examining and organizing the interview transcripts, observations, and discussion notes to further understand the research (Yin, 2017). For this study, it was necessary to collect data during the interview process and the focus group. This was achieved by first recording and then transcribing each stakeholder's responses during the interview process and the focus group. Secondly, each semi-structured interview and focus group commentary was then transcribed to individual word data documents where they were assigned pseudonyms. It was essential to become familiar with each interview's detailed knowledge by creating field notes and reading and re-reading the transcripts (Travers, 2019).

Thirdly, from the recorded and transcribed semi-structured interviews and focus group commentary, patterns were identified from the data, and relevant connections were made to find explanations and clarifications to the research questions presented in the research study (Abdalla et al., 2018). There are two main approaches to coded analysis, which is a grounded method or inductive reasoning, and a start list method which is deductive reasoning (Saldaña, 2016). Inductive reasoning changes from specific instances into a generalized conclusion and deductive reasoning move from generalized principles to outcomes. For this study, there was a combination of both approaches. Close attention was paid to the collected data and the patterns that emerged from the data, although it was approached from a constructivist point of view.

Fourthly, the data gathered built upon recurring themes that were established from existing frameworks and reviewed literature. It was essential to organize the data in a manner that allowed for the formation of patterns, categories, and themes based on deductive reasoning

(Yin, 2017). Categorizing or coding data was also required to identify themes or patterns that recurred in the found information. Coding was necessary to understand why things happen. In this study, the intention was to develop an understanding of the perspectives held by critical stakeholders concerning their value of art education. To find and categorize themes that clarified the perspectives and experiences of the participants involved in the study. The coding process for the interviews was, therefore, very deliberate and informed by the research question. After all the interviews were transcribed into word data documents, they were then imported into the NVivo coding software program.

This program allowed the data documents to be highlighted and color-coded into categories of themes and sub-themes that best organized the found information. Each interview transcript was treated as an individual data document, and it was examined line by line to discern each given topic or code. The NVivo program allowed the primary topics and sub-topics of each transcript to be listed, color-coded, and numbered together. The principal themes and sub-themes were developed from concepts and ideas that have emerged from the study. Coding is the transitional process between data collection and detailed data analyses. Coding assisted in understanding situations or a sequence of events that concluded with specific decisions being made (Saldaña, 2016).

Coding in this manner highlighted the importance or frequency of themes that arose during the interview process. Coding essentially enabled themes to be found that provided insight and understanding of the research question. Having the research data organized in an accessible data set for others to be able to have access to and interpret from supports the goal of proving new information that may fill the gap that exists in the existing literature. The purpose of

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this study was not to generalize, but rather to provide a rich understanding of experiences from the perspective of critical stakeholders regarding the value of art education.

Tracy (2019) stated that there are three main types of coding, which include descriptive coding, topic coding, and analytic coding. General themes and categories were determined from the research data during the descriptive coding process (Elliott, 2018). In this study, descriptive codes were compiled from the data with individual code descriptions and definitions related to stakeholders' perspectives concerning the value of art education. Topic coding classifies data into coded segments to reduce the number of different pieces of data in the analysis (Abdalla, Oliveira, Azevedo, & Gonzalez, 2018). Topic coding was achieved by examining the text line by line and highlighting pertinent segments and listing the topic code in the margin.

In this research study, the coded segments from the collected data included repeated terms or phrases related to stakeholders' perspectives regarding the value of art education. Fifthly, analytic coding was the final stage and a higher-level of categorization and was used to identify significant elements in the content analysis of the study (Tracy, 2019). For example, analytic coding was used to uncover the reasoning behind the loss of public funding for art education. During the analysis of the collected data, theoretical ideas and connections were found and expanded. The entire coding framework was guided by the main research question of the study, which are the perspectives held by critical stakeholders concerning the value of art education.

**Assumptions**

Methodological assumptions consist of the assumptions made by the researcher regarding the methods used in qualitative research (Yin, 2017). The methods used during the research process involve assumptions made while collecting and analyzing data. For this study, the

researcher assumed that the participants offered uncoerced responses to the interview questions (Elliott, 2018). The researcher assumed that all participants were reliable and transparent in their responses. Lastly, the researcher assumed that the participants were experienced and qualified in the positions that each participant held. The researcher's responsibility was to analyze the data to develop in-depth knowledge and understating regarding the participant's perceptions of the value of art education while considering the assumptions.

**Limitations**

The limitations of a research study were outside influences that the researcher cannot control, where delimitations are specific choices made by the researcher for the study (Buffington, 2015). The main limitation of the study was obtaining access to all the participants. The participants of this study are critical stakeholders who include principals, assistant principals, art educators, and parents of two different schools. As the stakeholders are fulltime employees of each two schools and involved in various school committees and school councils, it was challenging to schedule time to interview each of them as the participants needed to have the time to contemplate and reflect on the questions as it contributes to the likelihood that participants were honest and comprehensive in their responses.

The researcher ensured that ample time is allowed for all the semi-structured interviews to be conducted at the convenience of each of the participants. Another limitation of the study was that the participant responses may have been the result of what is believed to be the socially acceptable responses when asked questions regarding art education. As the sample only included twelve participants, this may not have been representative of the population. Transferability may also be a limitation as the participants represent only two schools in the district. For this study, the findings were documented honestly with detailed descriptions of the interview process

including recording the interviews, noting general observations, highlighting quotes, and the personal experiences of each of the stakeholders, journaling, and bracketing. It was essential to describe the findings to allow the reader to have a new and more detailed account of events (Silverman, 2016). This qualitative research study offered an in-depth understanding of the fundamental issues regarding critical stakeholders' value of art education.

**Delimitations**

The first delimitation of the study was the selection of the participants. The study sample included critical stakeholders of the same school, which had significant potential for bias, as critical stakeholders are individuals that have a vested interest in the decision making of the elementary schools with which they are involved (McFarland, & Currie, 2017). The researcher attempted to reduce the consequence of the delimitation by reminding the participants that the interviews were confidential and requested that all the participants be as candid and non-biased in their responses. The second delimitation was the use of semi-structured interview questions. Using semi-structured interview questions had the intention of allowing participants to provide insightful answers that would contribute to research studies (Silverman, 2016).

Yet, interview questions that are specifically geared toward art education posed some difficulty for some participants. Questions of this nature caused the participants to provide responses that were not related to the study's topic or replies, making the data challenging to code, decipher, and analyze. However, it was the researcher's responsibility to provide a fateful and accurate account of each interview; to prevent the potential for posing personal bias in the conclusions. The third delimitation of this study was that the focus of the research involved two elementary schools close in population, and the same location in the southwest, limiting the

generalization of the study. The researcher did ensure that the similarities of the research locations were recorded in the study.

**Ethical Assurances**

**Conflict of interest assessment.** Written permission was obtained to conduct the study from the Northcentral University internal review board. Permission was then given by the southwestern city's internal review board, and the superintendent of schools. The researcher took all the necessary steps to uphold ethical standards and follow proper protocol. Before the interview process, participants were provided with written consent forms explaining the purpose of the study, participation in the study is voluntary, and that participants could withdraw from the study at any time. Participants also received a copy of their consent form. To ensure the confidentiality of participants, all identifying information was removed, and a combination of letters and numbers identified the participants. Recordings from the interviews were deleted after participants have member checked the transcripts.

**Researcher's position.** A researcher needed to assume a non-biased position when conducting interviews and reporting research findings (Tracy, 2019). As an art teacher and interior designer, the researcher knows art education. However, the researcher did not have a professional relationship with either of the schools involved in the study. Displaying bias in research is a process where the researcher has inappropriately influenced the results to represent a particular outcome (Tracy, 2019). Therefore, all necessary measures to avoid the possibility of bias were taken.

For example, the participants were carefully and indiscriminately selected, and the researcher fatefully recounted their thoughts and reflections. This study's participants were critical stakeholders from two schools in the same area of the southwest. The information

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gathered during the interview process was presented with an open mind and honestly represented all points of view. The intention was to gather relevant information that may fill the gap in existing research that does not present the perceptions held by all critical stakeholders concerning the value of art education.

**Reflexivity, bracketing, and journaling.** Reflexivity is the ability to evaluate oneself (Silverman, 2016). Reflexivity was essential for the researcher to reflect on biases and preconceptions; so that the researcher did not modify the research data presenting biased interpretations of the data (Silverman, 2016). The researcher needed not to let their views and biases unnaturally influence the research data. Reflexivity involved examining and acknowledging that a researcher must try to become an objective observer and not bring bias or preconceptions into any part of the research study. This includes the research methodology, the selection of participants, the collection of data, and the analysis and reporting of the outcome of the study.

Bracketing was the process of setting aside personal experiences, biases, and preconceived notions regarding the research topic (Stratford, & Bradshaw, 2016). Bracketing also sets aside a researcher's knowledge of previous research and findings and theories of the research topic. There are three methods of bracketing that include: dialog with other researchers, a bracketing journal, presenting all that was bracketed in the finial research study (Silverman, 2016). Participating in a dialog with other researchers; should include writing down discussions regarding the researcher's personal biases and personal experiences related to the research topic (Janesick, 2015).

This process allowed the researcher to then bracket the information. It was also crucial for a researcher to write down memos or have a bracketing journal for incidences where biases

arose in the mind of the researcher, and they could make a note of it. Making notes in this manner happened throughout the research process allowing the researcher to reflect on as the study continues (Janesick, 2015). The final stage in the bracketing process was presenting everything that was bracketed in the finial research study (Stratford, & Bradshaw, 2016). This allowed the reader to be aware of the researcher's biases and read the results and interpretations of the research data.

When a researcher prepares a qualitative research proposal, there must be evidence of rigor provided within the document (Silverman, 2016). Journaling was another method for a researcher to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. Research journals are reflective notes accumulated throughout a research study of ideas, experiences, and biases that the researcher has considered (Glesne, 2016). An analysis of the content of the journals provides a strong indication of how personal the research process can be for researchers, due to their background, and the previous knowledge they bring into the process (Janesick, 2015). A journal can also indicate the difficulties and challenges that a researcher confronts during the research process itself.

**Ethical issues in the research study.** The data collection in a research study should be conducted in a structured manner that follows a set of controls. Such regulation ensures the ethical nature and validity of the research. This study's main ethical issues included guaranteeing the credibility and dependability of the findings throughout this study (Iphofen, 2016). For this to be achieved, it was essential to employ many trusted research sources and methods to provide corroborating evidence, such as member checking. It is also vital that all found information was presented in a fair, non-bias manner and to understand rationality and consistency that were essential for presenting research (Iphofen, 2016). This was achieved by using four research strategies that prevented researcher bias, they included, giving questions that are not misleading

but somewhat open-ended, by using participants that are appropriate for the study i.e., critical stakeholders, having a focus group that ensures that all participants have an opportunity to voice their opinions and having a data analysis plan to ensure that the results are not misinterpreted.

**Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of the research methodology employed by this research study. This chapter began with an introduction that highlighted the value and importance of art education. The chapter proceeded to present the main research question for this study which was: What are the perspectives held by critical stakeholders regarding the value of art education? Subsequently, the purpose of this study was to gather insight into decisions made by critical stakeholders' regarding funding and accountability issues that have affected the position of art education in the general education curriculum. The methodology and design of this study were qualitative, as the main aim is to provide a complete description of the research topic being explored (Stratford, & Bradshaw, 2016).

Qualitative research involves observing participants in their natural setting; this study involved two elementary schools in a district in the southwestern US (Glesne, 2016). Purposive sampling was employed for this study. The sample included twelve participants comprised of two principals, two assistant principals, four parents, and four art educators. The participants participated in semi-structured interviews, and a focus group was designed to gather insight into the perspectives held for the value of art education by critical stakeholders of two schools. The purpose of the interview process and the focus group was to uncover the rich descriptive data on the personal experiences of critical stakeholders regarding art education.

From the recorded and transcribed semi-structured interviews, patterns were identified from the data, and relevant connections were made to find explanations to the research question

presented in the study. The chapter also explored the limitations, and delimitations of the study. For example, the participants of the study, as they include the critical stakeholders of the same school, had significant potential for bias. Another delimitation of the study involved the semi-structured interview questions, as questions only about art education caused some of the participants to provide responses that were not related to the topic of the study, or no responses at all, making the data challenging to code, decipher, and analyze.

This chapter also explored the ethical issues involved when communicating found information during the interview process, and the focus group. To provide credibility and dependability throughout a study, it will be essential to employ many trusted research sources and methods to corroborate evidence. For this study, the research methods include, applying reliable research resources such as, using verified semi-structured interview questions, and member checking by participants ensuring the trustworthiness of the research (Glesne, 2016). The findings of this research study intend to reveal perspectives held by critical stakeholders regarding the value of art education.

## Chapter 4: Findings

This multi-site case research study was designed to examine the perceptions of critical stakeholders regarding their perspectives of the value of art education. The researcher intended to understand the perceptions of two study sites' critical stakeholders to gain insight into how stakeholder perceptions influence decisions made regarding the position of art education within each school's curriculum. Both schools were intentionally chosen to give a broad perspective of the research question, as one of the schools received an A rating for academic achievement, and the other school received an F rating (Department of Education, 2019). The perspectives of principals, assistant principals, art educators, and parents were explored through semi-structured interviews and a focus group.

For this study, twelve stakeholders participated in semi-structured interviews and a focus group. Six of the stakeholders were from School #1, and six stakeholders were from School #2. The participants were chosen because they were critical stakeholders at each of the elementary schools involved. The process of analyzing data, the trustworthiness of the data, and the results of the research study are discussed in this chapter. The researcher created questions for semi-structured interviews and a focus group with study participants to address the research question, which was: What are the perceptions of critical stakeholders regarding the value of art education?

### Trustworthiness of Data

The trustworthiness of the data was established through numerous methods. Following IRB approval from Northcentral University, approval was then attained from the Research Review Committee, and the Superintendent of Schools of the school district involved in the study. Consent was achieved by completing an application that described the specific details

about the study site, participants, methodology, data collection process, and data analysis procedures. Before any research could be conducted or any interviews scheduled, a signed Site Permission Letter was obtained and presented to the principals of each of the schools involved in the study. This letter granted permission to conduct the study, described the research instruments to be used, and included the informed consent form for participants.

Each of the principals involved in the study was assured of the confidentiality of the research sites, and the collected data. The participants were protected using a coding system that included numbers and letters for the researcher's use only to track participants. The researcher recruited the study participants from two elementary schools in Southwestern U.S. The participants included critical stakeholders of both schools: principals, assistant principals, parents, and art educators. Each participant was provided with a consent form that explained the purpose of the study and the interview process. An interview protocol was used to plan the interviews with all participants (see Appendix A, & B). The interview questions were developed to inform the research question. Before the interviews, the participants could ask questions about the study and satisfy any concerns they had regarding confidentiality.

Reflective notes were journaled and bracketed during the interviews and focus group, to assist in fully comprehending the meaning and significance of the information shared by the participants. Records were made when participants seemed passionate about specific topics or mentioned art programs that were unfamiliar to the researcher. For example, one participant provided detailed descriptions of various art competitions and art leadership programs in which her students participated. This participant described why such partnerships are so crucial to the success of the school's art program. P6ES1 shared,

We have an award-winning art program… students from our school have won competitions all over the city such as the Zozobra Festival, where their designs were used for tee shirts, and posters and students from our school have been nominated for the Museum leadership programs. We are also affiliated with the Scholastic Art Award Program.

All the interviews were transcribed into Word documents and checked for accuracy and completeness. During the transcription process, there was sometimes a change in tone when the participants were describing the happiness felt by students participating in art education, or when describing the fulfilment felt by art educators themselves when teaching art education. All the information was then imported into a password protected NVivo software program, which allowed the transcribed interviews to be coded efficiently.

**Credibility.** Cypress (2017) affirmed that validity and trustworthiness demonstrate the rigor of research processes and the dependability of research findings. To provide credibility throughout this study, it was essential to employ many trusted research sources and methods to provide corroborating evidence. Credible resources such as academic books, journals, dissertations, and other scholarly sources were obtained through an academic library. Online educational resources, including Google Scholar, and Ref, and Seek search engines designed for students and researchers. Having reliable research resources were invaluable as utilizing questionable sources in a research study would make arguments less formidable (Janesick, 2015).

After each participant had been interviewed and satisfied with their responses, the information was then coded, deciphered, and analyzed by the researcher as part of this research study. The collection of data from the interviews added to the credibility of the study. Using

credible sources, such as critical stakeholders, for the semi-structured interviews and the focus group, ensuring that the information provided was reliable. The interviews revealed the thoughts and opinions of the stakeholders in their own words, which allowed for consistency, verification, and trustworthiness of the findings. It was as important to use credible sources in research to substantiate assertions with credible evidence (Glesne, 2016).

It was essential to employ many trusted research sources and methods to corroborate evidence which provided credibility throughout this study (Elliott, 2018). Credible resources such as academic books, journals, and other scholarly sources were obtained through an academic library. It was also essential to employ many trusted research methods, such as member checking, to ensure the credibility of the study. Member checking allows participants to review and confirm the findings the researcher has recorded (Tracey, 2019). After transcribing the interviews, the researcher shared the transcripts with the participants through secure e-mail. Participants were asked to review their transcripts. During this process, participants had the opportunity to check over their responses and make any necessary changes or clarifications they believed would enhance the comprehension of their perceptions.

For the interview transcripts, the member checking process involved verifying the narratives for accuracy and for the focus group, the member checking process involved interpretive validity (Stratford, & Bradshaw, 2016). All the participants confirmed their transcripts and did not request to make changes. After the primary interviews, the researcher arranged a focus group with the participants where they were able to provide additional information by answering follow up questions. Eight of the twelve participants attended the focus group and each of the participants was e-mailed a transcript of the focus group for review and approval. None of the participants requested to make any changes or adjustments.

Assuring the validity of the research study, triangulation was also employed. Triangulation involves using different types of samples and more than one method of data collection on the same topic (Stratford, & Bradshaw, 2016). The triangulation method facilitates validation of data through cross verification from more than one source (Silverman, 2016). In this research study, theory triangulation was established by using two different conceptual frameworks to evaluate the data. The interview and focus group process revealed the thoughts and philosophies of the critical stakeholders in their own words, which allowed for consistency, verification, and trustworthiness of the findings.

**Dependability.** Funder, et al (2015) affirmed that the dependability of research depends on modeling sound methodological methods of research and encouraging transparency of data reporting. As there are different researchers, there are various research methodologies that are suitable for studies. In the Baxter (2015) study, semi-structured interviews were conducted that successfully demonstrated that art educators' can positively influence curriculum design and pedagogy. This study employed verified and reliable semi-structured interview questions. The interview process for this study was conducted in each of the two schools that were being researched. Twelve critical stakeholders were interviewed altogether, six participants from each of the two schools in a city in the southwest.

After the interviews were transcribed, they were presented to each of the stakeholders to member check the documents before they were analyzed for the study. The fundamental role of a qualitative researcher is to guide readers in the learning process of obtaining new knowledge; they are also required to display exemplary ethical principles in all aspects of their position (Silverman, 2016). A researcher must evaluate the quality of the research methods, findings, and sources to ensure dependability (Cypress, 2017).

Dependability is important to the trustworthiness of the study because it determines the research study's findings as reliable and repeatable (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2020). The researcher's main aim is to verify that the findings are consistent with the data that was collected, and if another researcher conducted a similar study that the conclusions regarding the data would be remarkably similar (Silverman, 2016). The replication of a study is an attempt to evaluate whether the results reflect true findings as the integrity of findings and reproducibility of research are important, as they form the knowledge foundation on which future studies developed (Hennink et al., 2020).

Dependability also emphasizes the need for the researcher to account for any changes that occur during the study and how these changes affected the research study (Glesne, 2016). For example, the researcher intended for all twelve participants to contribute in the focus group; however, only eight participants took part. This study employed semi-structured interviews and a focus group. Both sets of questions were approved by an expert academic committee. The interview process for this study was conducted in each of the two schools that were being researched. Twelve critical stakeholders were interviewed, six participants from each of the two schools. After the interviews were transcribed, they were presented to each of the stakeholders to member check the documents before they were analyzed for the study. Employing a multi-site case study design provided detailed qualitative information from different perspectives, providing insight for future research (Tracy, 2019

**Transferability.** Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of a study can be transferred to other settings or groups, which highlights the importance of ensuring high quality results and reporting of the analysis process (Hadi, & Closs, 2016). It is valuable, therefore, to give clear descriptions of the culture, context, selection, and characteristics of

participants and their viewpoints (Daniel, 2019). Purposive sampling was used as it facilitates transferability by selecting sample participants with traits that align with the target population (Glesne, 2016).This qualitative study uses thick descriptions of the data to provide findings that can be applicable to other contexts, circumstances, and situations. Transferability is also increased if the results of a study are presented in a way that allows the reader to look for alternative interpretations (Iphofen, & Tolich, 2018).

This study is transferable to other institutions, as it represents common themes related to perceptions held by critical stakeholders for the value of art education (Gross, & Gross, 2016).. The findings can be deemed confirmable and not due to participants and researcher bias for many reasons. Neither the interview questions nor the focus group discussion led the participants towards responding in a specific manner. Instead, both the interview questions and the focus group questions were written in such a way as to be open-ended and allow participants to answer honestly. Also, no incentives were offered to the participants to persuade them to respond in a particular manner. Instead, the participants were asked to respond based on their personal experiences.

**Confirmability.** In qualitative research, each researcher brings a unique perspective to the study. Therefore, it is essential to confirm that others can corroborate the results of the study (Glesne, 2016). It is especially important that research can be replicated, as it indicates that the study is a product of unbiased independent research (Johnson, & Christensen, 2019). Many strategies were used for improving confirmability, among them were journaling and bracketing, which are methods used in qualitative research to mitigate the potential effects of preconceptions that may taint the research process (Silverman, 2016). Bracketing is a method used in qualitative research to lessen the potential of having any preconceptions that may taint the research process.

Maintaining a journal throughout the data collection process was also beneficial as it was a place to write down any reflections and help prioritize any foreseen problems, fears, and concerns related to the research study.

The confirmability of qualitative data was assured by the researcher as the data was checked and rechecked throughout the study with the use of journaling and bracketing. Transparency is also the benchmark for writing up, presenting, and the disseminating of research findings. The researcher needs to be explicit, and open about the methods and procedures used throughout the research study (Beugelsdijk, van Witteloostuijn, & Meyer, 2020). The researcher recorded incidences where the found data was contrary to prior interview responses. For example, a participant involved in the study may have had large budget allowance for art education supplies, while another participant did not. This research study also had a clear coding system that identified the codes and patterns identified in analyses. Finally, the researcher carefully examined the data collection and analysis procedures, ensuring that were no possibility for potential bias or misrepresentation.

**Results**

**Interview Process**. Twelve participants from two elementary schools contributed to the interviews and eight participants contributed to the focus group process. The participants agreed for the interviews to be recorded by signing the informed consent form before the interviews began. Two elementary schools were specifically chosen for the research study, as one of the elementary schools received an A rating, and the other elementary school received an F rating for academic achievement (Farrie, Kim, and Sciarra, 2019). The interviews were conducted over three weeks in conference rooms of the two schools. The recorded interviews lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes. Each of the participants were asked 15 questions, one set of

questions were for the employees of the schools, and the other set was for the parents of students attending the school (see Appendix A, & B). During the interviews, each participant was asked questions designed to gain insight into the perspectives held by critical stakeholders regarding the value of art education at their specific schools.

**Focus Group Process.** The focus group was intended to run between 30 and 60 minutes. The key attributes of each participant were that each of the participants would have previously participated in a semi-structured interview. The protocol for the focus group, including a suggested attendance time, and the location were communicated to the participants via e-mail. It was decided that it would be more convenient for some of the participants involved to conduct the focus group virtually via Web-Ex. Eight of the participants attended the focus group and offered additional information regarding their perceptions of the value of art education. The collected data from the focus group was transcribed and sent via e-mail to all participants for member checking. The proposed focus group questions and were presented to the academic committee for review, and they were approved. The committee suggested that the focus group's location should be at one of the schools involved in the study, and the option for participating online should also be offered to the participants.

**Participants.** Each participant in the study was informed of the nature of the study, the background of the researcher, and why their participation was valuable to the research study. All the participants were from two different elementary schools in the same school district, which included six critical stakeholders from each school, twelve participants in total. The participants were asked to participate in both an interview and a focus group. The participants' involvement in the study varied, for example, during the interview process some of the participants gave short concise answers for a 15-minute interview, whereas other participants gave very detailed

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responses to the interview questions that lasted up to 35 minutes. Eight of the twelve participants contributed in the focus group. To avoid bias, the researcher purposefully selected interviewees unknown to the researcher, and the participant selection was based on the stakeholder's experience and number of years working at each elementary school.

Purposive sampling was used for this study, in which the researcher relied on their own judgment when choosing participates for the study. The participants from School #1 included four females and two males, and the participants from School #2 include three females and three males. All the participants ranged in age from 35 to 60 years old and the work experience of the participants employed at each of the schools, ranged from six years to 20 years. During the interview process, participants offered detailed explanations regarding their thoughts and experiences regarding art education. Involvement in a research study was not merely an altruistic contribution from a participant point of view; it also provided positive benefits to the participant. The benefits included a sense of empowerment by taking an active role in discussions involving the school curriculum, and a feeling of satisfaction based upon their experience.

The goal of this research was to identify perceptions held by critical stakeholders regarding the value of art education. Analysis of the collected data focused on the critical stakeholders of two elementary schools. The participants included principals, assistant principals, art educators, and parents. All the participants who contributed to the interview process were assigned a cypher using both a number and letter to protect their confidentiality and the confidentiality of each school, for example P1ES1. Table 4.1 indicates the sample research demographic from the two schools involved in the study including: the participants' ethnicity, gender, age range, amount of teaching experience, and the cypher used to conceal their identity in the study.

Table 4.1

*Sample Demographics*

| School | Participants | Ethnicity | Gender | Age Range | Teaching Experience | Number | Cypher |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| School #1 | Principal | Caucasian | Female | 50-55 | 15 Years | 1 | P1ES1 |
| | Assistant Principal | Hispanic | Female | 55-60 | 20 Years | 1 | P2ES1 |
| | Parent | Hispanic | Female | 35-40 | | 1 | P3ES1 |
| | Parent | Caucasian | Male | 40-45 | | 1 | P4ES1 |
| | Art Educator | Hispanic | Female | 35-40 | 12 Years | 1 | P5ES1 |
| | Art Educator | Caucasian | Male | 40-45 | 12 Years | 1 | P6ES1 |
| | | | | | | | |
| School #2 | Principal | Hispanic | Female | 40-45 | 9 Years | 1 | P1ES2 |
| | Assistant Principal | Hispanic | Male | 40-45 | 6 Years | 1 | P2ES2 |
| | Parent | Hispanic | Male | 30-35 | | 1 | P3ES2 |
| | Parent | Caucasian | Female | 35-40 | | 1 | P4ES2 |
| | Art Educator | Hispanic | Female | 30-35 | 11 Years | 1 | P5ES2 |
| | Art Educator | Caucasian | Male | 30-35 | 10 Years | 1 | P6ES2 |
| Total Participants | | | | | | 12 | |

**Step 1: Open coding.** Stratford and Bradshaw (2016) stated that there are three main types of coding: descriptive coding, topic coding and analytic coding. Descriptive coding is where general themes or categories emerge within each data set (Hennink et al., 2020). In this study, descriptive codes were compiled from the data with individual code descriptions and definitions related to the perspectives held by stakeholders concerning the value of art education. After all the interviews and focus group data were transcribed, all the transcripts were read carefully, and notes were made regarding first impressions of the interview process (Silverman, 2016). Descriptive codes were derived from the data collected during the interviews and the focus group. While conducting the semi-structured interviews and the focus group, the participants' initial responses were reviewed to construct a coding scheme based on common words that emerged (Glesne, 2016).

The interview and focus group questions were effective in addressing different aspects of art education. For example, some of the questions addressed art education and its place in a school's curriculum, while other questions addressed budgetary issues related to art education. During the organization process, approximately 25 to 30 codes were discovered through reading all the transcriptions carefully line by line (see Table 4.2). As the categorization process continued, new codes were added, and others were removed because of similarity. Categories were then developed from the codes that reflected the complete structure of the data. At the end of the categorization process, it was decided that 22 codes accurately depicted the personal thoughts and experiences of the participants. Coding was an effective method to organize the data into the different topics of conversation that arose from the data collection process (Travers, 2019).

Codes can be words, phrases, or paragraphs; for this categorization process, individual words were chosen for data consistency. For example, in a quote from participant, P3ES2 said, "For everyone nowadays a well-rounded education is having a strong math and science program, but the kids also need creativity which means having a good art program." The codes that were obtained from the sentence that related to art education include: well-rounded, creativity, and art program. Codes are particularly important in qualitative research because they are an effective means to sort and categorize the data which contributed to the study's trustworthiness (Glesne, 2016).  In research, there are two comprehensive methods of reasoning which include deductive and inductive reasoning (Stratford, & Bradshaw, 2016). Deductive reasoning functions by working with more general information, in this situation, that includes all of the interview and focus group data, to more specific information, which includes the results of the data analysis (Tracy, 2019).

Deductive research was used for this study from the conceptual frameworks and frames, as the knowledge of the frames was known independently of any experience shared by the participants (Sim et al., 2018). For example, the term artist was applied to the data from the frames. The term artist in this situation refers to the student who is receiving the instruction in art education, and the term teacher applying the instruction. Therefore, two of the codes that were applied to the data include: student and teacher. Additionally, inductive research was also applied based on experiences shared by the participants during the interviews and focus group process (Sim et al, 2018), which developed additional codes, such as, budget and curriculum.

Table 4.2 reveals the codes, a definition of the codes, and example quotes where the codes were found in the data. Parts of the example quote have been bolded for emphasis.

Table 4.2

*Code Examples, Definition, and Example Quotes.*

| Codes | Definition | Example quotes |
|---|---|---|
| Standards and Benchmarks | Educational benchmarks and standards are the learning goals for what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. | P1ES1 stated, "The teachers must follow the standards. The art teachers have an art curriculum director for the district, and they assist the teachers to meet the content **standards and benchmarks**." |
| Play | Engage in activity for enjoyment and recreation. | P4ES1 said, "My little one just loves to have a chance to play with paint and clay. They **need a break away from their other studies,** but still be productive." |
| Classroom Skills | A skill set that is learned inside the classroom. | P6ES2 said "Students learn **collaboration skills, and learn to complete tasks** and assignments in a team effort." |

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Table 4.2 (continued)

*Code Examples, Definition, and Example Quotes.*

| Code | Definition | Example Quote |
|------|-----------|---------------|
| Balance | An even distribution of something enabling someone or something to remain stable. | P6ES1 said, "There is a large conversation about how students learn differently, and I have heard both sides of the argument, and I believe that **students need both.** They need to have the core subjects and access to technology, but they also need a creative outlet to express themselves." |
| Art Integration | Arts integration is the use of the arts in core curriculum classrooms. | P5ES2 said, "I think now schools are moving more in the direction of **integrating art** into other subject areas." And P2 ES1 stated, "Besides having an art course, classroom teachers incorporate art into many subjects throughout the day." |
| Community Support | The support that may be organized through parents, teachers, community programs, cultural and ethnic organizations, or other school groups. | P2ES2 said "Yes, art education is **supported in the community** and it is reflected in their art, and other subject areas. Kids need a break from reading, writing and math. The whole community can see the difference in their kids and that is why they support art." |
| Creativity | The use of the imagination or original ideas, especially in the production of an artistic work. | P4ES2, shared, "Art provides the kids an opportunity to have the **freedom to create** and investigate the world around them without as many restrictions as other subjects." |

Table 4.2 (continued)

*Code Examples, Definition, and Example Quotes.*

| Codes | Definition | Example Quotes |
|---|---|---|
| Students | Referring to the students that attend the schools that were involved in the study. | P1ES1 shared, "I think the mission of art education is exposing **students** to what there is out there in the world that students can learn from, become excited about, and engage with." |
| Teachers | This includes the teachers that were involved in the study. | P5ES1 stated, "**Teachers** had been working very hard to get the Fine Art Act passed for years, and finally it happened in this state." |
| Parents | This includes the parents that have children attending the schools that were involved in the study. | P3ES2, a **parent** that was interviewed, added, "Of course art education helps my child…most children are visual learners and can learn so much from art. They can write a story from a picture it is all relevant." |
| Well-Rounded Education . | An education that includes many subject areas, for example music, the art, and social and physical skills. | P3ES1 declared, "My definition of a **well-rounded education** is one that gains knowledge in a combination and balance of math, science, reading, art, music, history, technology and physical education." |
| Value | The importance, worth, or usefulness of something. | P5ES1 said, "In the past we would have had to cancel all of the art classes for test taking, but now the school appreciates the **value** of art and they work around the art class schedule." |

Table 4.2 (continued)

*Code Examples, Definition, and Example Quotes.*

| Codes | Definition | Example quotes |
|---|---|---|
| Exposure to History and Culture | Having the opportunity to explore and learn about different cultures and eras of historical significance. | P5ES1 "art education lessons involve aspects **of history, literacy, and various cultures.** The goal is to keep student engagement high while keeping projects relevant and interesting." |
| Exposure to Art from Around the World | Students being exposed to art and artist from around the world | P6ES1 said, "A philosophy that I have recently put together has to do with equality and fairness for all the kids…exposing them to a wide variety of **art projects from artists from all over the world** while cherishing them as individuals." |
| Exposure to New Concepts and Ideas | For students or a society to reach its potential, it must continuously grow and develop | P1ES2 said, "I think art education is vital in a student's educational development. Not just participating in the process of art making but also having the ability to **explore different cultures, different world views and beliefs."** |
| Privilege | A special right, advantage available only to a person or group. | P6ES2 continued with, "We are very **privileged** to have the FAEA (Fine Art Education Act) pay for certified art teachers and music teachers in every school in the city." |
| Art Education | An art education program is one that includes one or more of the arts. | P1ES2 stated, "There is not really one definition of **art education,** it means different things to different people because it effects them in different ways." |

Table 4.2 (continued)

*Codes, Definition, and Example Quotes.*

| Code | Definition | Example Quotes |
|------|-----------|----------------|
| Enhancement | An increase or improvement in quality or value. | P1ES1 Stated, "Art education **enhances lessons plans,** it elaborates on them and extends them so much. When the art teacher works with the classroom teacher they know more of what is going in the curriculum of the students." |
| Budget | An estimate of income and expenditure for a set period. | P6ES1 said, "Yes, in this district from my experience the **budgets** are sufficient enough to be relative successful with the kids. It depends on the school district, on the administrator, and it depends on the school." |
| Materials and Methods | The materials used in the creation of a work of art, as well as the techniques used. | P6ES2 shared, "For my **mixed media** classes I want students to be exposed to a wide variety of materials, such as, paint, oil pastels, papier Mache, colored pencils etc." |
| Self-Expression | The expression of one's feelings, thoughts, or ideas, especially in writing, art, music, or dance. | P3ES1 said, "I believe art education is a form of **self-expression** and in certain ways a meditation which ultimately allow for better focus." |
| Visiting Artists | Professional artist that would visit the schools involved in the study. | P4ES1 declared, "We have a program called Artworks that allows classroom teachers to have **visiting artists**." |

**Step 2: Categorizing**. Topic coding classifies data into coded segments to reduce the number of different pieces of data in the analysis (Abdalla, Oliveira, Azevedo, & Gonzalez, 2018). Topic coding was achieved by examining the text line by line and highlighting pertinent segments and listing the topic code in the margin. All relevant words, phrases, and sections were labeled. Labels were related to themes, concepts, and differences in opinion. When deciding on the relevance of code, specific questions were asked, including: Has it been mentioned in several places? Was it a surprise to the researcher? Did the interviewee say that it was necessary? Was it something that was mentioned in previous studies? Did it remind the researcher of a theory or concept?

In this research study, the coded sections from the collected data included repeated terms or phrases related to stakeholders' perspectives regarding the value of art education or regarding the subject of art education in general terms. The interviews were transcribed, analyzed, and grouped according to the art education curriculum's conceptual framework frames (Board of Studies, 2013) and categorized. Topic coding examples include world, audience, artist, and art education. Each theme was discussed, along with the participant's responses related to the research question. Figure 4.1 indicates the categories that were discovered during the process of topic coding. For example, the frame of art education, relates to the coded topics of value, budget, privilege, and enhancement. The frame of artists relates to the coded topics of visiting artists, teachers, students, creativity, outlet for expression, and art integration.

Two conceptual frameworks were used to illustrate what to expect to find through research, including how the conceptual frameworks might relate to each other (Kelley, & Knowles, 2016). The frameworks of social constructivism and the art education curriculum's conceptual framework frames were chosen as effective frameworks to obtain and organize the

research findings (Board of Studies, 2013). Social constructivists identify qualitative research as discovering meaning and understanding through the researcher's active involvement in constructing meaning (Gross, & Gross, 2016). The framework of social constructivism was used to derive meaning from the found data, and the framework of the art education curriculum's conceptual framework frames were used to organize the found data in a meaningful and compelling manner (Board of Studies, 2013).
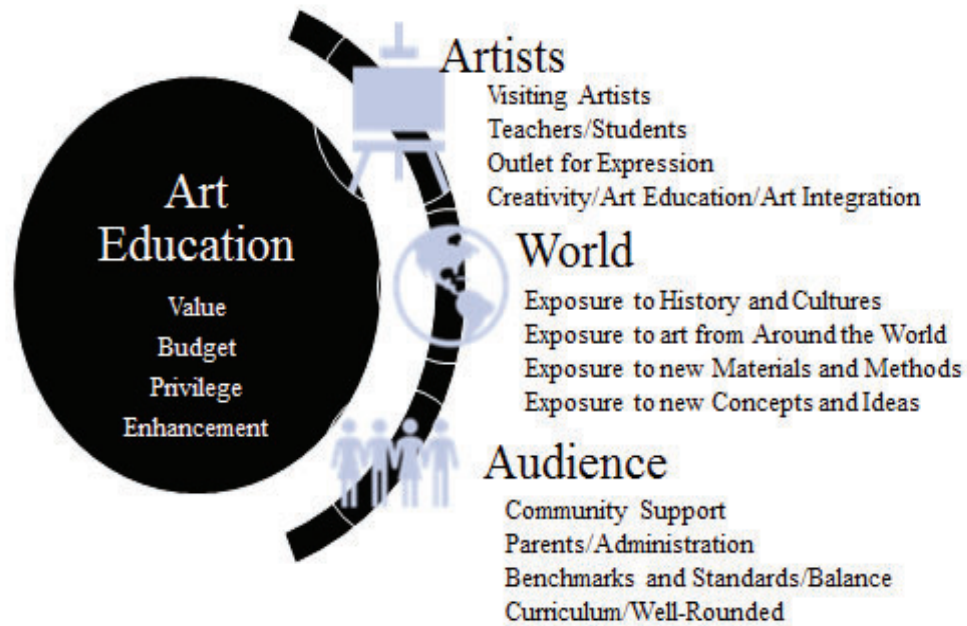


*Figure 4.1.* Topic coding

**Step 3: Identification of themes**. Analytic coding was the final stage and a higher-level of categorization and was used to identify significant elements in the content analysis of the study (Stratford, & Bradshaw, 2016). During the analysis of the collected data, theoretical ideas and connections were found and expanded. The entire coding framework was guided by the main research question of the study: What are the perspectives held by critical stakeholders concerning

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the value of art education? The participants' responses regarding art education provided rich data that can be further categorized by utilizing the NSW conceptual framework and frames. Here the subjective, cultural, structural, and post-modern frames represent different conceptual frames to observe the relationship between art education, artwork, the artist, and the world. Table 4.3 indicates the art education curriculum's conceptual framework and the frames (Board of Studies NSW, 2013).

Table 4.3

*Art Education Curriculum's Conceptual Framework and the Frames (Board of Studies NSW, 2013).*

| Frames | Art Education | Artwork | World | Artist |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Subjective Frame (Personal Psychological Experience) | Exposure to new methods and materials. | Artwork is an outlet for Expression and Creativity. | Exposure to new concepts and ideas. | Practicing Art Educators/Artists sharing their personal experiences. |
| Cultural Frame (Cultural and Social Meanings) | Enhancement of the student experience. | Exposure to new concepts and ideas | Exposure to art from around the world | Visiting Artists expressing their cultural and social experiences. |
| Structural Frame (Communication, System of Signs) | System of Standards/Testing for art education. | Systems of Budget/Curriculum determine the place of art education. | Communicating that having art education is a Privilege. | Local Communities show signs of their appreciation of art education. |
| Post Modern Frame (Ideas that Challenge the Mainstream) | Admiration and Value for art education. | Support for art education from Parents and Students. | Exposure to history and culture through art education. | Art Educators and Core Subject Teachers. |

The conceptual framework and frames is a system used to highlight and explain all the information and ideas that consist within and about the found data relating to the participants

perspective regarding the value of art education (Board of Studies NSW, 2013). The framework consists of four agencies: artist, artwork, world, and audience. The frames refer to the four lenses used to examine at the research data, to find meaning in data. These are the subjective, structural, cultural, and postmodern frames (Board of Studies NSW, 2013).

Themes are characteristics of the participants' accounts that describe perceptions and experiences that were relevant to the research question (Abdalla et al., 2018). With this technique, key words were identified from the coding and categorizing process of the data, and then systematically further categorized into themes (Travers, 2019). In turn, those codes were further sorted into categories that include art education, artist, audience, and world. Finally, those categories were further arranged into themes. Eight themes are discussed in this chapter, which include the rationale behind choosing the themes, and example quotes from the participants related to the themes.

The example quotes that have been listed are from both the interview process and the focus group. Some of the themes that were formulated based on the collected data include participants believed that art education was a vital aspect of a well-rounded education, participants expressed that art education was an essential part of the school curriculum, and many of the participants stated the view that art education assisted in a student's learning and understanding. Theme identification is one of the most fundamental tasks in qualitative research, as the themes are derived from the direct responses from participants to open-ended questions which provided rich descriptive narratives addressing the research question (Yin, 2017). It is important to note that all the themes were developed during the data analysis process, and not before as to not bias the results of the study (Hennink et al., 2020).

Table 4.4 indicates the themes, categories, and codes that were determined during the data analysis process. There are eight themes that have been developed from the data collected from the participants during the interviews and the focus group. The themes include: (a) well-rounded, (b) curriculum, (c) Fine Arts Education Act (FAEA), (d) art integration, (e) learning and understanding, (f) creativity and self-expression, (g) budget and, (h) play. The categories include: (a) art education, (b) artists, (c) audience, and (d) world, based on the agencies of the NSW (2013) frames and framework.

Table 4.4

*Themes, Categories, and Codes*

| Theme | Category | Code |
|---|---|---|
| Theme 1: Well-Rounded | Art Education | Well-Rounded |
| | | Balance |
| | | Enhancement |
| Theme 2: Curriculum | Artists | Students |
| | | Teachers |
| | | Visiting Artists |
| Theme 3: FAEA | Audience | Parents |
| | | Community Support |
| | | Administration |
| Theme 4: Art Integration | World | Art Integration |
| | | Exposure to History and Culture |
| | | Exposure to New Concepts and Ideas |
| Theme 5: Learning and Understanding | World | Exposure to new Materials and Methods |
| | | Exposure to Art from Around the World |
| Theme 6: Creativity and Self-Expression | Artists | Enhancement |
| | | Creativity |
| | | Self-Expression |
| Theme 7: Budget | Audience | Value |
| | | Budget |
| | | Administration |
| Theme 8: Play | Art Education | Privilege |
| | | Creativity |
| | | Self-Expression |

**Theme 1: Well-rounded**. The rationale for developing this theme was evident from the participants' responses to the research question regarding their definition of a well-rounded education. Each participant believed that art education was a vital aspect of a well-rounded education. Successful schools do not excel simply because they focus exclusively on core academic subjects; they also allow students to have a well-rounded education that exposes students to other subject areas such as, art, and physical education (Roth, 2017). For example, P3ES1 proposed, "Having art education as a part of my son's curriculum I believe ultimately makes for a well-rounded individual." P4ES1 shared, "I think the definition of a well-rounded education is one where my kids get to have exposure to well, obviously reading, writing, and math, but also where they can be creative and have fun."

The participants gave the impression from their responses, that improving the quality of education in elementary schools was not simply about meeting the core requirements; it also involved supporting all the needs of the students in terms of providing them an outlet for creativity and imagination. P5ES1 declared, "Students that have had art education classes seem to be much more well-rounded than other students that did not have a creative outlet." P2ES2 shared, "I think lessons will have to change for students of today. Not necessarily have shorter classes but have classes where the students can participate in their own learning and be more creative." P3ES2 said, "For everyone nowadays a well-rounded education is having a strong math and science program, but the kids also need creativity which means having a good art program." Marshall (2016) believed that preparing students with a wider range of knowledge and skills attained from a well-rounded education is even more important than students' improving their testing abilities.

P4ES2 also shared this belief when he described his definition of a well-rounded education. P4ES2 said,

> While the core subjects like English and math are obviously important, the kids need more than just the basics to succeed. To give them a chance for success, you need to make sure they learn subjects like art and science as well from an early age.

In addition to developing academic skills, the participants of the study believed that a well-rounded education; is one that encourages critical thinking, problem solving, and cooperation skills which are attributes commonly utilized in art education.

P5ES2 affirmed,

> A well-rounded education is one that provides students an opportunity to explore and understand what they would like to pursue in the future. That involves exposing them to many subject areas, such as, math, science, and art. It is important for students to know a little bit about everything so they are knowledgeable and articulate to express what they would like to pursue in the future. Art education is a large part of that because no matter what they decide to do they will need to be creative.

The theme of having a well-rounded educational curriculum has been the dominant theme in education for much of the twentieth century, and art education is a significant part of that discussion (Matthews, 2018).

**Theme 2: Curriculum.** Each participant expressed that art education is an essential part of the school curriculum. The rationale for developing this theme was evident in that data yet unexpected, as all the critical stakeholders involved in the study believed that art education was a necessary and vital part of the school curriculum. Ploof, and Hochtritt (2018) suggested that despite the inherent differences in classrooms, teachers can work together to cultivate and foster

art education. The participants shared experiences where extraordinarily successful collaborations involving many teachers from different educational backgrounds had worked successfully together learning and sharing ideas. When the principal of School #1 was asked if art education played a role in the school curriculum, P1ES1 responded:

The part that I see the art curriculum plays…and I am deeply passionate about this…we in the educational field; are always looking at data. What does the data show? What does the data show? If you look at it, what the data shows; is that we need to make sure that we have students exposed to a myriad of experiences. When you are looking at a hardcore curriculum all the time…the art curriculum provides an avenue where the kids can be more creative, express themselves and need that outlet in addition to always worrying about being so adamant about the reading and the writing. There is science now to show that art, music, and physical education are needed as part of their curriculum. So that they are not always working left brain, right brain they have a real integration of the two.

P6ES2 proposed, "Yes, I believe that art education gives students the opportunity to work on their problem-solving skills, and students learn that dedication and hard work are necessary to achieve goals." P6ES1 said, "I think that art education certainly does play a very big role in this school's curriculum, because art education is highly valued in the school community." P5ES2 said, "Art education allows students to hone analytical skills that I feel can only be practiced with art." The theme of curriculum emphasizes the many benefits of having a strong art education program (Workman, & Vaughan, 2017).

**Theme 3: FAEA.** Access to art education was only granted in this district after the Fine Arts Education Act (FAEA) was passed. The rationale for developing this theme derived from

the fact that the local community of the school district that was involved in this study worked tirelessly to have the FAEA passed which changed the way in which art education was valued in the local schools. The process of a bill becoming a law is a long and arduous process. A bill is first a proposed legislation under consideration by a legislature (Chemerinsky, 2019). A bill does not become law until it is passed by the legislature and, in most cases, approved by the executive. Once a bill has been enacted into law, it is called an act of the legislature, or a statute (Chemerinsky, 2019). For the school district involved in the study, this process took over three years. P5ES1 stated, "Teachers had been working very hard to get the act passed for years, and finally it happened in this state."

The purpose of the FAEA is to encourage school districts to offer opportunities for elementary school students to participate in fine arts activities, including visual arts, music, theater, and dance (Arts Education Partnership, 1995). It is important to note that the FAEA was established for a single school district in the southwestern state involved in the study, and it only pertains to elementary schools not middle or high schools of the same district. P6ES2 continued with, "We are very fortunate to have the FAEA pay for certified art teachers in every school in the city." However, Participant P6ES1 made a point of saying, "Now, I have to mention that this is not the case all over the state…there are still rural areas of the state that do not receive art at all." P4ES2 discussed,

> We would not have the art education, music, and P.E. classes that we have for this school
> if it were not for the tireless work of the teachers, the parents, and the local community.
> Period. They really pushed hard for two years for their local legislators to pass the FAEA.
> Thank changed everything in our schools. Now it is a law to have these classes for the
> students.

P4ES2 stated, "Well yes, of course we would do all we could to keep art in our schools. I am sure you have heard of the FAEA and the long process it took to pass, but now it is here to stay."

P1ES2 stated,

> All schools in this district must now provide art, music, and physical education to all elementary students. It is not the same however for middle school and high school students. They require additional funding and outside donations if they would like to have those classes in their schools.

The theme of FAEA accentuates the influence that strong community support has on the curriculum development and improvement (Herrera, 2019).

**Theme 4: Art integration.** Art education was being taught as both a standalone subject and integrated into core subject areas such as math and English in both schools involved in the study. The rationale for developing this theme resulted from all the participants of the study expressing the sentiment that art education should be retained in schools as a standalone subject where possible depending on funding or integrated into core subject areas. Art integration is an approach to education in which art concepts are used in core classes (Marshall, 2016). Students are given the opportunity to construct and establish understanding through a variety art media. The integration of art does not replace valuable core classes, but rather it offers an alternate perspective for students to observe and comprehend key concepts (Marshall, 2016). P3ES2 made a point of recognizing that the school curriculum requires a variety of learning experiences and art education is an important part of that equation.

When asked if art integration was applied into daily lesson plans, he replied, "We do a lot with cross curriculum stuff and from my experience, from what I have seen it is really

successful." P3ES2 stated, "Of course art education helps my child…most children are visual learners and can learn so much from art. They can write a story from a picture…it is all relevant." P4ES1 responded,

> Well, if the kids must write something on history or if they must write a story of their own they have to include a picture with that. In one lesson, their class teacher did a unit on the national forests and the kids were allowed to make a model of a park. They had a lot of fun with that and they learned a lot too.

P4ES2 said,

> Yes, the class teachers are more aware of the importance of having both written language and visual language in the lessons. I think it is even being recognized in colleges now. Many colleges require students to fulfill at least one or two years of an art program before they can apply.

P5ES1replied,

> Yes, I have my own art class and I do a lot of art integration with the class teachers. For example, one of the classrooms was working on a unit on Native American art and culture and we worked on the Hohokam and the Mogollon black on white pottery designs. It was amazing; in fact, the students entered their designs into an art pottery competition, where 12 of the students in the school had their designs chosen.

The theme of art integration highlights the development of higher-order thinking skills creativity, and problem-solving abilities across many subject areas (Marshall, 2016).

**Theme 5: Learning and understanding.** Many of the participants expressed the view that art education assisted in a student's learning and understanding. The rationale for developing this theme resulted from thoughts and feelings expressed by participants and the experiences that

had with their students, and children when participating in art education. Swapp (2016) believed that for students to grow and progress; there needs to be a balance between intrinsic motivation, and extrinsic motivation. In the early stages of learning art, young students are engaged with art because it is enjoyable, which is intrinsic motivation. However, over time as students become older and begin to advance, intrinsic motivation alone is not enough for student learning to fully develop. Extrinsic motivation in the form of tests or assessments, allow students to progress further.

Swapp (2016) also suggests that students should have a combination of both types of motivation to be productive and motivated. P4ES1 affirmed, "Art projects can take a while to complete and this helps students with their patience and understanding of taking the time with something to fully understand it."

P5ES1 affirmed, "The art that is provided is feeding into other subject areas, and it is helping their understanding." P5ES1 continued with, "Because we are such visual learners, I think it is really helpful to show students how to do something, if they can see it, it helps their understanding." P6ES1 stated, "We are really building skills and making them understand that they are the artist, they are the decision makers, the problem solvers." P1ES2 stated,

> I think the arts is involved in so many areas of learning for example, when the students put on a play they must take responsibility of the accurate writing of the dialog which is involves the language arts, they are responsible for the background scenery and props which involves a lot of creativity and imagination, they are responsible for the performance which helps them with public speaking and expressing themselves. Ultimately, it is their responsibility to do everything and have it completed on time which

helps them understand the value of cooperation, time management and working together, highlighting each other's strengths.

P4ES2 said, "Yes, I feel that art provides students with the creative tools and skills they need to learn, in art, and other subjects and apply those skills to demonstrate their understanding." The theme of learning and understanding is significant as art education can improve the comprehension of essential instruction as well as multicultural understanding (Watts, 2018).

**Theme 6: Creativity and self-expression.** All the participants communicated that art education is an excellent outlet for creativity and self-expression. Students learn an array of communication skills through art education. Through the very process of creating art, students communicate creatively, verbally, and emotionally (Leysath, & Bronowski, 2016). The participants in the study articulated that art education was an invaluable means of expressing creativity through self-expression. The rationale for this theme was derived from the responses to the question, do you feel that it is important to have art education at this school. P5ES1 suggested, "I feel as though art has provided them a great outlet for creativity." P4ES1 stated, "There are so many fields that they can go into that are very much involved in art and creativity." P6ES1 shared, "…they do need the latest technology, but they also need a creative outlet to express themselves."

P3ES2 declared, "With and job my son gets after he leaves school; he will need to be creative. Anyone would have a better understanding of creativity if they had experience in art class." P6ES2 stated, "I also feel that creativity is something that can grow, and con be improved upon with constant exposure and participation." P3ES1 said, "Art teaches shoe students how to be creative. It allows them to create something new, something tangible and exciting." P3ES1

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shared, "We cannot have art and design without creativity, and art inspires that." P4ES2 determined,

> I think along the way students are sometimes taught to be uncreative. They are taught that this is how something is done that these are your only possibilities. Art education can help re-open some of that suppressed creativity and pose new questions. To tell the world that there are other solutions other ways of looking at something is possible and that can be done through art.

Self-expression allows students to distinguish themselves from other students, to reflect their own beliefs, preferences, and individuality (Kraehe, 2018). P5ES2 said, "I love to help students find their creativity and express themselves. To be there when something clicks, when an idea they had works out, it is amazing!" P3ES2 said, "They can relax and be creative in art class, it is a way for them to be able to make something and appreciate the process that is involved in that." The theme of creativity and self-expression is incredibly significant for developing students, as it can intensify a student's motivation to learn and grow (Kraehe, 2018).

**Theme 7: Budget.** All the participants agreed that art education has been subject to budgetary issues and that will never change. The budget for art education has been a contentious issue since 2002, at that time, more than 80% of schools nationwide experienced cuts to their school budgets (Garcia, Jones, & Isaacson, 2015). When the No Child Left Behind Act (2002-2015) was passed, it put more focus on core subjects such as, math and reading and held schools accountable for student achievement. The budget cuts compelled schools to choose between non-tested subjects such as art education, and core subjects (Garcia, Jones, & Isaacson, 2015). Because of the focus on core subjects, schools were redirecting the school budget to the subject areas that required standardized testing in order to keep the school assessment scores high; which

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led to an enormous drop in art education opportunities in schools all over the country and this trend continues in many parts of the country today (Knight, 2017).

The rationale for the theme stemmed from the responses given by the participants to the question, is art education affected by budgetary issues. P1ES1 defended, "Always, the district has to provide an art, music and P.E. teacher for two semesters of the year, and the rest of the years is provided by outside funding." P2ES1 stated, "Yes, all teachers are. Classroom size, mandatory planning time, etc. are always considered when budgeting for teachers. This community funds many art initiatives." P4ES1 admitted, "It is much better now, because they have a bigger budget than before. There was a chance a few years ago that we were going to lose the art program altogether." P6ES1 shared, "In the past I was only given a $500 dollar budget for 400 students, it is just not enough. Here, I have a sufficient budget here in this district, but there are still rural areas of the state that do not receive art at all."

P1ES2 said, "Even though we have a pretty good budget, the art teachers are still very much involved in fund raising. Art is very expensive, needed, but very expensive." P2ES2 shared, "Everything is affected by the budget, and we try very hard to keep funding even across the board." P3ES2 added,

> Art is affected by budgetary issues because it is always the first thing that always gets cut when there is a shortage of funds. If art or art education was taken away, then people would have to step up and donate some money to the school and maybe help out with school supplies.

P5ES2 said, "Budget is not an issue at my current school, but in my previous schools' budget was a huge issue and made a big difference in the curriculum. Art supplies, as you know, are crazy expensive." P6ES2 shared, "Yes, budget is an issue and I must plan ahead for purchasing

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necessary materials in order to be prepared for the future." The theme of budget will always be an issue for subjects such as art education, as they are not tested subjects (Elliott, & Clancy, 2017).

**Theme 8: Play.** The participants also shared the value that playing, and having fun has in an elementary student's academic curriculum. The participants believed that creativity, innovation, and imagination in the form of play should be an essential aspect of any classroom especially at the elementary school level. Koch, and Thompson (2017) stated that nurturing play should begin in elementary school with the development of inspiring programs that encourage imagination. Such programs should continue in middle and high school where educators encourage critical thinking, and inquiry where creativity and innovation is fostered and valued (Koch, and Thompson, 2017). The rationale for this theme resulted from the responses given by the participants when discussing the factors involved in retaining a student's attention and interest.

P4ES1 shared, "My little ones just love to have a chance to play with paint and clay. Yeah, they need that brake from their other studies but still be productive." P6ES1 shared, "For classroom teachers, they see that kids get a lot of enjoyment in the arts. They can see that they need that, they are hungry for it and they are really motivated by it."

P5ES2 stated,

Art education provides an opportunity to explore and understand what you would like to pursue in the future. Understanding what makes a student happy to lead them into what they would like to do for the rest of their lives. Too often students are forced to take classes that are considered requirements but have zero clue what they like to take.

Some participants saw that art education was a welcome diversion for students that needed an opportunity to get away from other more concentrated study. P2ES2 said, "I am a strong advocate for the arts because kids need a break from math, reading and writing...the whole community can see the difference in their kids and that is why they support the arts." P1ES1 said, "The students and their families love to participate in the school's passport program that is affiliated with the art education program, which provides free admissions to museums, concerts, and movies during the summer and winter school holidays." P1ES2 confirmed, "Art education provides students with that element of play, and communication in another form of expression and receptive language. P6ES2 said, "It is important, no, invaluable that all of the students are included. As many of them do not feel comfortable speaking out loud, or English is a second language; but they can have fun, and communicate through art." The theme of play is very import for students of all ages, as it is necessary for students to have a diversion from intense study (Overby, & Jones, 2015).

**Evaluation of Findings**

The purpose of this qualitative multi case study was to discover the perceptions held by critical stakeholders regarding art education. Throughout the study, eight themes emerged from the data related to the research question and were guided by both the conceptual framework of social constructivism, and the Board of Studies NSW (2013) conceptual framework and frames. The Board of Studies NSW (2013) conceptual framework and frames was used as the lens to view the research problem, and social constructivism was used as the paradigmatic perspective to evaluate the findings. A social constructivist framework facilitated the interpretation of findings from the research data based on the participants' experiences (Sandu, & Unguru, 2017). Additionally, the NSW (2013) conceptual framework and frames provided a precise

organizational structure with which to organize the research data. The framework consists of four agencies: artist, artwork, world, and audience, and four frames that refer to four lenses with which to examine the research data including: subjective, structural, cultural, and postmodern frames (Board of Studies NSW, 2013).

The themes of play, creativity, and self-expression were developed from the subjective frame. The subjective frame is associated with personal and psychological experiences (Board of Studies NSW, 2013). Through this frame, the found data represents experiences, imagination, and creative expression. Kraehe (2018) stressed that creative potential exists everywhere in every context, and it is vitally important that students have an opportunity to explore this potential. Higdon (2019), in turn, focused on the essential benefits of play, which allows students to gain developmental and social skills. Play allows children to use their creativity while improving their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength (Rymanowicz, 2015).

The themes of curriculum, and budget were established from the structural frame. The structural frame refers to applied techniques and principles, which in this circumstance, was the procedures that have been put in place concerning art education (Board of Studies NSW, 2013). Examining the data through this frame, systems of the school curriculum and budget are in place to provide a balanced educational program while identifying areas that can be improved through a more efficient allocation of resources (Perille, 2016). Marshall (2016) declared that art education could act as an instrument to join the many components of the educational system together. May and Brenner (2016) affirmed that individual states and local school districts have had to adjust the school curriculum and limit art education, to maintain federal funding.

The themes of art education integration and learning and understanding were created from the postmodern frame. The postmodern frame is linked to ideas or concepts that challenge

conventional thinking and teaching methods (Board of Studies NSW, 2013). Very often, integrating art education into the school curriculum can assist in deepening cultural and personal understanding. Ploof, and Hochtritt (2018) declared that incorporating art integration gives teachers an incredible opportunity to practice collaborative ideas for both curriculum and professional development. Teaching through art education integration can visually present difficult concepts, making them more straightforward, assisting in student learning and understanding (Schlemmer, Carpenter, & Hitchcock, 2017). Applying art education in the school curriculum demonstrates how art can act as a means for stimulating learning and looking at information differently (Marshall, 2016).

The themes of the FAEA (Fine Art Education Act), and well-rounded education were obtained from the cultural frame. The cultural frame is associated with cultural and social issues (Board of Studies NSW, 2013). Participants of the school district involved in the study were determined to collectively address an issue that affected a considerable number of individuals in their community. That issue included the lack of funding for art education, music, and physical education classes in their schools, and after many years of avocation, the FAEA was passed. It is essential to support art programs, as rural and the underprivileged urban areas suffer the most when art education programs are eliminated, as there is a scarcity of foundation and grant money in those areas (Knight, 2017). Culp (2015) suggested that a successful, well-rounded school curriculum does not focus exclusively on core academic subjects, such as reading and math, allowing students to have exposure to artistic endeavors.

The study results were consistent with existing research and theory found in chapter two of the literature review. Art education is appreciated by many students, educators, and parents and it has numerous advantages in terms of developing students' creativity, problem-solving, and

visual learning skills (Kulinski, 2018). However, the main disadvantages of retaining art education in a school curriculum, is the monetary cost, and the impression that because art education is not a tested subject, it can be seen as an inconsequential, or a non-essential subject (Mannathoko, 2016). Educational representatives increasingly rely on empirical evidence to guide and justify decisions that involve what determines a well-rounded or balanced elementary education curriculum (Hamlin, & Fusaro, 2018).

According to the views of the participants of the study, they overwhelmingly believe that art education was an essential part of a well-rounded educational curriculum, as a standalone subject, and when art education was integrated into other subject areas. Art education can facilitate students to become more well-rounded and capable individuals by teaching them the procedures, and practices that they will benefit from in the future (Perille, 2016). A (2019) survey from the National Association of Colleges and Employers disclosed that employers are interested in hiring individuals with skills that can be supported through involvement in art education, such as communication, problem-solving skills, teamwork, and resourcefulness.

**Summary**

This qualitative multi-site case study design was used to explore the perceptions held by critical stakeholders regarding the value of art education. Using this approach made it possible to examine the participants' views and experiences regarding art education. The researcher collected data through semi-structured interviews, and a focus group discussion with the participants. A qualitative analysis method was selected for this study because it served to gather and interpret raw data (Johnson, & Christensen, 2019), which allowed the researcher to achieve a comprehensive examination of critical stakeholder perspectives and experiences. The analysis required the development of codes and categories from the data collected, allowing the

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researcher to obtain critical themes (Johnson, & Christensen, 2019). The themes found included, well-rounded, curriculum, the FAEA, art integration, learning and understanding, creativity and self-expression, budget, and lastly, the theme of play. The purpose of this chapter was to summarize and analyze the collected data, and to use the conceptual frameworks of social constructivism, and the NSW conceptual framework and frames to facilitate an increased understanding of the research data (Board of Studies NSW, 2013).

## Chapter 5: Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusions

The problem addressed in this study was that art education programs, and art education positions have been greatly reduced or eliminated all over the country. The purpose of this research study was to discover the perspectives held by critical stakeholders regarding their value of art education. A qualitative multi-site case study design was the most appropriate for this research project, as it was effectively used to gain a deeper understanding of fundamental perceptions of critical stakeholders concerning their value for art education. The qualitative research methods used for this research study included semi-structured interviews, and a focus group. The main limitation of the study was obtaining access to all the participants, as the participants were critical stakeholders who include principals, assistant principals, art educators, and parents of two different elementary schools in a school district in the southwestern U.S.

The study results revealed that for students in both elementary schools who were a part of the research study, art education was an integral part of the students' learning experience. Their reasoning for championing art education derives from the fact that each of the participants had experienced periods without art education as a component of the general curriculum. The participants expressed that a curriculum that did not include art education, was not an education model that they wanted to return to. This chapter includes a summary and discussion of the implications of the study, recommendations for practice, recommendations for future research, and an overview of the conclusions. The study's conclusions are related to the perceptions held by critical stake holders regarding their value for art education.

### Implications

One research question guided the study, which was: What are the perceptions of critical stakeholders regarding the value of art education? The question was created to address how

critical stakeholder perceptions impact the inclusion of art education in the general academic curriculum and perhaps shed light on the reasoning behind the loss of art education programs all over the country. Eight themes emerged from the data related to the research question and were guided by both the conceptual framework of social constructivism, and the Board of Studies NSW (2013) conceptual framework and frames. The themes include: (a) well-rounded, (b) curriculum, (c) FAEA (d) art integration, (e) learning and understanding, (f) creativity and self-expression, (g) budget and, (h) play.

The first conclusion that was drawn was that the critical stakeholders agreed that art education was an essential component of a well-rounded education. The results demonstrated that all participants of the study—including principals, assistant principals, parents, and art educators—believed that providing art education was fundamental to ensure that students were exposed to a myriad of experiences. The participants consistently described the importance of balance between academic studies, and expressed that creativity is the most crucial aspect in providing a well-rounded educational experience for students. The second conclusion that was drawn was that advocacy for art education is essential to maintain art education as a part of the general school curriculum. Through the course of their teaching, and parental experience, each participant had been in a situation where removing art education from the general curriculum in their schools was in question. The results showed that the participants from the two study locations regarded art education as an essential part of each school's general curriculums and was it necessary for the students' wellbeing.

The third conclusion that was drawn was that the participants from both schools had been involved in an improvement program provided by the Fine Arts Education Act (FAEA) that allowed funding for a certified art, music, and physical education teacher to be provided to every

school in the district. The funding from the FAEA was only eligible for elementary students within this school district. P1ES1 affirmed, "It was not always that way," and P5ES1 also noted that "I know that California and Colorado still rely completely on their donors and local business to support them." The term 'fortunate' was used often to describe the present situation of both elementary schools' art education departments, again about a previous period where art education was not a particular aspect of the school's curriculum. As P5ES1 said, "we are very fortunate to have the FAEA pay to have a certified art teacher in every school in the town." The next phase in the FAEA process is to attaining funding for middle and high school students.

The fourth conclusion that was drawn was that the participants also found that integrating art education in other subject areas further enhances the learning experience for students. When participants were asked if incorporating art education into other subject areas had helped or hindered classroom lesson plans, many of the participants expressed how art education enhanced or enriched the lessons for students. For the elementary schools involved in the study, art integration was an effective research-based teaching strategy, where students developed and displayed their understanding of subject matter by using art education techniques and principles (Leysath, & Bronowski, 2016). All the participants expressed that math and English core subjects were the prime focus of the curriculum; however, they also have a high regard for art education as a significant part of the schools' curriculum. For example, P6ES1 acknowledged, "I know the core curriculum is definitely the focus, but I do feel that art education is highly valued in that scenario." The participants agreed that art education was a significant aspect of their current school curriculum.

The fifth conclusion that was drawn showed that participation in art education was also beneficial for student learning and understanding. P5ES1 responded,

When students are involved in art education, they see that there is no one answer or one way of solving a problem; they can explore. From their experiences with art, they can explore and experiment with different mediums, and they apply this same thinking to other subject areas.

When the participants were asked if art education played a substantial role in the student's learning and understanding, the participants shared that art education allowed students to see different ways of problem-solving and that the students needed a creative outlet away from the more intensive study of core subjects. Results from the study also showed that not all art education programs are created equally or presented equally. Halsey-Dutton (2016) declared that it is essential that all art educators, like classroom teachers, be certified art educators, and follow the core educational standards, specifically the standards-based art curriculum. One of the school principals, P1ES1, affirmed that both classroom teachers and art educators follow common core standards.

Additionally, the participants of the study that were art educators described how they all use Plan Book to organize their lesson plans, which has comprehensive lists of all the standards and benchmarks that must be followed. The sixth conclusion that was drawn by the participants was that art education is essential for the promotion of creativity and self-expression. This study revealed that the participants from both elementary schools had experienced a period without art education as a significant part of their curriculum, and it had proved to be unsuccessful for the students. P1ES1 stressed, "I am a strong advocate for art simply because students need a break from reading, writing, and math. I have seen it, and I am paying attention to it." The need for art education became apparent to the participants from observing the students display mental fatigue, and continuously requesting an outlet for creativity and diversion.

The seventh conclusion drawn was that the participants noted budgetary issues were no longer an issue now in their school district. The word 'now' is significant, as receiving funding for art education was not always available to schools in this school district. The study participants expressed an understanding of the critical value that art education holds for students and the belief that they are in an extremely fortunate situation. Through collaboration, the participants were able to retain art education in their respective elementary schools; by having the local community become involved in insisting that their local legislators meet the needs of the students. The eighth conclusion drawn was that the participants expressed the need for the students to have an outlet for play. Through art education, students can practice critical thinking skills by making a mental plan or picture of what they intend to create and following through on their own proposal. In art education students can have the freedom to create and use their imaginations through experimentation and play.

Eight significant themes emerged from the data related to the research question. The themes from this multi-site case study provided insight into the perceptions held by critical stakeholders regarding the value of art education. Investigative studies of this nature are essential to communicate research findings related to the issues regarding art education to provide the highest quality of art education in all schools. The research data showed that students of all ages benefit from comprehensive, balanced, and sequential learning in art education directed by qualified teachers certified in art education (Marshall, 2016). The research methodology provided an opportunity for dialogue and assessment of the views held by the participants. During the study, participants welcomed the opportunity to discuss issues and concerns related to art education, such as the need to follow a standard based art curriculum.

Art educators must meet ethical and rigorous standards of excellence and practice in ongoing professional development, pedagogy, and inquiry in the field (Knight, 2017). The power of art education is to enrich the human experience, to recognize and celebrate art throughout the world (Baer, 2017). Art education also challenges students by being exposed to different points of view, compelling students to empathize with others, and allow them to reflect and consider (Rex, & Woywod, 2014). Participation in art education is related to behaviors that contribute to society's benefit, such as improved civic engagement and social tolerance (Marshall, 2016). Rymanowicz (2015) prepared a comprehensive list of the skills practiced when participating in art education activities, which include: fine motor skills such as grasping pencils, crayons, chalk, and paintbrushes to help students develop their fine motor muscles.

In terms of cognitive development, students can also practice critical thinking skills by learning to create and understand concepts like size, shape, making comparisons, counting, and spatial reasoning regarding math skills. Finally, concerning language skills, as students describe and share their artwork, as well as their process, they develop language skills (Rymanowicz, 2015). However, a critical challenge for art education is a lack of empirical evidence demonstrating its educational value (Halsey-Dutton, 2016). The findings of this study supported the framework of social constructivism, as the theory maintains that individuals construct knowledge and meaning through experiences and interaction (Vygotsky, 1962).

The findings supported the theory of social constructivism, as the participants' learning experiences have helped shape their perceptions and knowledge of the value of art education. As the data and results from this study suggest, the participants continually make meaning as they collaborate to design lesson plans and discuss teaching strategies to incorporate art education. Participants reflected on their ideas and experiences with art education, describing the

importance of retaining art education in all schools, also indicating that participants construct their perceptions of art education by the interaction and ideas, events, and activities in which they come in contact relating to art education. Contradictory to the framework of social constructivism is data that is real, or true no matter what the opinions or feelings of the participants regarding art education (Sandu, & Unguru, 2017).

This study revealed that the participants from both elementary schools had experienced a period without art education as a significant part of their curriculum, and it had proved to be unsuccessful for the students. The NSW (2013) conceptual framework and frames was comprised of four frames: subjective, cultural, structural, and postmodern which was the instrument used to understand the function and relationship between the agencies: artist, art education, world, and the audience in relation to the value of art education. During the collection and analysis of research data, the framework was used for the interpretation and understanding of the value of art education from the perspective of the participants.

Few individuals would deny the benefits that participating in art education has to offer. An overwhelming majority of the participants of this multi-site case study agreed that art education is a necessary part of a well-rounded education. However, only having an appreciation for art education alone is not sufficient for preserving the art education programs in schools across the country (Hamlin, & Fusaro, 2018). For art education to remain a vital part of the standard core curriculum in schools all over the country, it must be advocated for by local communities and more comprehensive research studies conducted to determine its value to students and society (Baxter, 2015).

**Recommendations for Practice**

Learning art education should prepare students for success in college and beyond. Art education not only involves teaching students the fundamentals of art theory and practice, but also teaching students about time management, project planning, verbal, and visual communication skills, and encouraging students to develop sound financial habits (Kay, & Wolf, 2017). The harsh reality is that not all artists will have the ability to support themselves with their creative abilities alone.

**Student achievement and success.** Art education graduates should have the ability to teach in their field of art, operate an art-related business, and develop an understanding of all aspects of their field (Hochtritt et al., 2015). As art educator P6ES2 declared, "I believe that a well-rounded education should prepare students for the future no matter the content area or discipline. I want to see a curriculum built on a foundation of vocational skills that prepare students for the workforce." If art education programs integrated professional practices into their curriculum, students would develop greater control over their future vocations.

Students would be better prepared to achieve fulfillment professionally and artistically and be in a better position to contribute to their communities. The participants of this study, based on their knowledge and classroom experiences, agreed that art education is necessary for the general academic curriculum. Many of the participants expressed concern over issues that prevented them from providing quality art education to students in the past, and they had no desire to return to that curriculum model. P4ES1affirmed, "A few years ago, the students did not have art at all, and the parents were asked to contribute. Thankfully, now it is different." The problems included but were not limited to lack of funding, support, and a lack of understanding

of the value art education for student development. The research participants observed that the absence of art education in the past led to a decrease in student achievement and morale.

**Transform the teaching and learning environment.** Art education improves the school environment and culture and allows schools to become more involved with their communities (Kim, & Jung, 2017). Art education should be included as a significant part of a comprehensive plan to prepare students for their future. Art education promotes valuable skills such as creativity, problem-solving skills, focus, collaboration, reasoning and understanding, and accountability, among many others (McCarthy et al., 2015). To maintain a high standard of quality art education in schools, there should also be statewide art-based assessment systems for all art education students. Professional development programs should also be in place to support art education educators as they evaluate and incorporate the most effective art integration methods in other subject areas. P5ES2 affirmed, "The classroom teachers are working with the art specialists, and they do a lot of cross-curriculum work, and from my experience, it has been enormously successful." When teachers collaborate, the individual strengths of each teacher can contribute to a lesson plan, and create a more involved, and enriching experience for the students (Kulinski, 2018).

Art integration programs should also be involved in school district accountability systems that indicate student progress and advancement (Halsey-Dutton, 2016). It was observed that it is essential to concentrate both on the academic and the creative aspects of student learning. Thus, there is a need to continually look for new knowledge and research strategies that promote a better understating of the value of art education to students' development and wellbeing (Gess, 2017). Regarding both elementary schools in the study, there was an enormous effort on the local communities to improve the funding and support for the art education programs at both

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elementary schools. In a case where the school budgets do not allow a full-time art teacher to be employed, participants suggested that classroom teachers engage in ongoing professional development that promotes art integration in their lesson plans (Halsey-Dutton, 2016). Additionally, it was recommended that teachers be provided the opportunity to observe art integration practices in classrooms in other schools, where there has been success in state assessments among students who have established art education programs.

**Support art educators and school leaders.** To maintain support for art education, it is necessary to connect and build relationships with critical stakeholders invested in the enhancement and improvement of the educational system (McFarland, & Currie, 2017). Identifying existing and developing new resources for art education is vital for it to remain a significant part of the educational system. School principals play a crucial role in ensuring that students receive a high-quality, art education programs as part of a well-rounded education. Principals committed to having a school curriculum that includes art education, have discovered the value and importance of investing time and resources in creating a dynamic and inclusive school curriculum (Marshall, 2016). A curriculum that encourages better collaboration among educators supports innovative teaching practices and inspires more parental involvement.

Classroom teachers should be encouraged to implement art integration practices with subjects such as science, English, history, and social studies (Nevanen, & Heikki, 2015). Classroom teachers who employ art integration into their lesson plans can create student-motivated, engaging lessons that can help reinforce student learning, comprehension, and achievement (Liao, 2016). School principals can facilitate this teaching model; by scheduling time for classroom teachers and art education teachers to collaborate and plan lessons. P1ES1 referred to this planning process as Professional Learning Communities. For example, the art

education practices of classroom evaluation and assessment could be incorporated into other subject areas. Developing partnerships outside of the school with local art organizations can also involve school with rich, comprehensive programs for the benefit of the students (Nevanen, & Heikki, 2015). Three of the participants had described a program entitled Artworks, where classroom teachers are trained on the ways in which art education can be integrated into their lesson plans. Remaining proactive in communicating the benefits of art education, school principals can become a significant influence in organizing support for the entire school community.

**Recommendation for Future Research**

Recommendations for future research studies include conducting a study from different school districts, as there may be significant differences in funding and support for art education from one district to another. This study was limited to only the perceptions and experiences of a sample of participants from two elementary schools. The sample did not represent all elementary school districts throughout the southwestern state involved in the study and, therefore, was constrained to only the data available to and experiences of the participants within the school district where the study took place. In this study, a significant theme discovered from the data collection was the theme, FAEA. The fine arts education act enabled all elementary schools in the school district involved in the study by law to have art, music, and a physical education teacher.

Having such opportunities may not have been the case in other school districts of the southwestern state involved in the study. Funding from the FAEA is only awarded to elementary schools in the district, not middle and high school students. It would also allow for future research studies to investigate if older students would benefit from art education as a part of their

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curriculum. Schlemmer, Carpenter, and Hitchcock (2017) revealed that schools with limited access to art education had the highest failure rates in middle and high school students. Conversely, the study also showed that schools with the highest graduation rates also had the most access to art education, and performance art programs (Schlemmer et al., 2017). Rolling (2016) found that many students who were at risk of falling out of school or leaving school altogether; credited their participation in art education or art-related activities as their central motivation to remain at their school.

Other areas for improvement for future researchers also include the use of research methodology that includes observations. Utilizing observations would allow the researcher to see firsthand how art education instruction influences the students. Studies conducted by Brown (2015) and Briggs (2016) employed the conceptual framework and frames teaching model and found the process beneficial to art students for applying, understanding, and critiquing artwork. The conceptual framework and frames can be employed as a means of educating students about the world they live in and the history of the past. Philosophical ideas explored during the process are just as crucial as artmaking activities (Brown, 2015). A further researcher could easily observe this teaching model.

An even wider variety of participants could be used in this multi-site study, which may lead to an even broader perspective of the research question. For example, expanding the study to include students would enable the inclusion of the research method of observations, allowing the researcher to observe students participating in art projects that emphasize both the benefits and difficulties of schools with an established art education program. By including the students' perceptions, the results could provide significant implications regarding the current opinions of art education from the student's perspective. Future research is also needed to explore

professional development types that may be offered to classroom teachers in terms of art integration. Professional development programs can focus on areas of instruction that would allow classroom teachers to include art education techniques in a manner that enhances the learning experience of the students. The professional development opportunities could also introduce classroom teachers to the extraordinary art resources in their area, such as museums and performing arts organizations.

## Conclusions

This study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the perspectives held by critical stakeholders regarding the value of art education. This chapter discussed the results of the multi-site qualitative case study in detail and the central research question's context. After analyzing data from the semi-structured interviews and a focus group, the results indicated that several factors supported art education as an imperative aspect of student learning and development. For example, art education contributed to a well-rounded education, has proved to be a vital part of the school curriculum of the schools involved in the study, allowed for better learning and understanding among students, and facilitated students' creativity and self-expression.

While the study also suggested that other factors still exist that prevent art education from being an essential part of the general education curriculum in other areas. These factors included a lack of funding, and a lack of support in more rural areas where the local communities do not have the resources to advocate for art education. This research study presented the perspectives held by critical stakeholders regarding the value of art education. Employing the research methodology of a qualitative multi-site case study was designed to acquire a deeper understating of the reasoning behind the reduction and elimination of art education programs all over the country and provide the perspectives of each stakeholder's knowledge experiences in rich detail.

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**Appendix A**

*Interview Questions for Principals, Assistant Principals, and Art Educators*:

Describe your ethnicity/race.

What is your gender?

What is your occupation at the school?

How many years have you worked at the school?

Who is primarily responsible for the school's curriculum?

Do you feel that the present curriculum provides the criteria needed for a well-rounded

education? Why?

What is your definition of a well-rounded education? Why?

Does art education play a role in the school's curriculum? Why?

Do you feel that the students receive an adequate amount of art education at the school? Why?

Are educators encouraged at the school to apply art integration into their daily/weekly lesson

plans? Why?

How does incorporating art education help or hinder lesson plans? Why?

Who makes decisions regarding art education at this school? Why?

What are the main influences effecting those decisions?

Is art education affected by budgetary issues? Why?

## Appendix B

*Interview Questions for Parents:*

Describe your ethnicity/race.

What is your gender?

How many years have you had a child/student at the school?

Do you feel as a parent, that you have any influence on the school's curriculum? Why?

Do you feel that the present curriculum provides the criterial needed for a well-rounded

education for your child/student? Why?

What is your definition of a well-rounded education?

Do you feel that art education plays a role at the school? Why?

Do you find that educators at the school apply art integration into their daily/weekly lesson plans

for your child/student? Why?

How does incorporating art education help or hinder your child's/ student's learning?

Do you feel that it is important to have art education at this school? Why?

Do you and your child/student participate in artistic activities outside of school? Why?

Would you encourage art education to be a part of your child's/ students' future curriculum at

school beyond elementary level? Why?

If art education was affected by budgetary issues at the school would this concern you? Why?

## Appendix C

*Letter of permission granted from The New South Wales Education Standards Authority:*

Dear Nicole,

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Good luck and all the best!

Kind Regards

**Mila Buraga**
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