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THE VISUAL ARTS CURRICULUM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

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The article presents the results of a study that investigates the perceptions of primary school teachers of Visual Arts Education curriculum. The research had the aim to analyze the perspectives of teachers regarding the curricular framework, educational objectives, structure of content, methodological guidelines, strategies of evaluation and the degree to which modern educational principles are reflected in the curriculum. The findings show a predominantly positive assessment of the current curriculum, that is considered clear, coherent, and aligned with contemporary educational requirements. Simultaneously, certain areas that require improvement are identified, including the limited quantity of instructional hours, insufficient teaching resources and challenges associated with the implementation of inclusive education practices. The study underscores the necessity of continuous curriculum development and the strengthening of methodological support provided to teachers.

Keywords: *primary education; national curriculum; Visual Arts Education; teachers' perceptions; curricular objectives; assessment strategies.*

CURRICULUMUL LA DISCIPLINA EDUCAȚIA PLASTICĂ ÎN VIZIUNEA CADRELOR DIDACTICE DIN ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTUL PRIMAR: DIMENSIUNI TEORETICE ȘI CONSTATĂRI APLICATIVE

Articolul valorifică rezultatele unei investigații privind percepțiile cadrelor didactice asupra curriculumului la disciplina Educația plastică în clasele primare. Studiul a vizat analiza opiniilor cadrelor didactice referitor la concepția curriculară, finalitățile educaționale, structura conținuturilor, sugestiile metodologice, strategiile de evaluare și aplicabilitatea principiilor educației moderne. Datele obținute relevă o apreciere general-pozitivă a curriculumului actual, acesta fiind considerat clar, coerent și adaptat cerințelor educaționale contemporane. Cadrele didactice recunosc valoarea metodelor interactive, a orientării pe competențe și a deschiderii spre interdisciplinaritate. Totodată, sunt semnalate vulnerabilități privind numărul insuficient de ore, resursele didactice limitate şi dificultăți în asigurarea incluziunii. În concluzie, cercetarea subliniază necesitatea dezvoltării continue a curriculumului şi consolidarea sprijinului metodologic oferit cadrelor didactice.

Cuvinte-cheie: *învățământul primar, curriculum național, Educație plastică, cadre didactice, finalități curriculare, evaluare.*

Introduction

The current curriculum (2018) represents the 4th generation of national curriculum documents and the 2nd explicitly grounded in a competence-based approach, reflecting a shift to outcome-oriented education focused on the development of key competences among learners. The subject "Visual Arts Education," integrated in the core curriculum of primary education, contributes considerably to the development of aesthetic, expressive, creative and intercultural competences of learners. However, the efficacy of teaching-learning process depends not only on the curricular content's quality, but also on its implementation, adaptation and alignment with the current needs of educational beneficiaries [1].

In this perspective, various educational actors play an important role in ensuring the efficient implementation and assessment of the curriculum. An educational actor (stakeholder) is defined as any individual, group, institution or organization that has a direct or indirect interest in the curriculum's quality and outcomes (e.g., learners, teachers, parents, school managers, higher education institutions, economic environment, etc.) and is involved in different ways in the processes of assessment and improvement of the curriculum [5].

In this context, this article examines the perceptions of teachers regarding the implementation of the “Visual Arts Education” curriculum in primary education, with special accent on its practical realization in classroom settings.

Theoretical Aspects of Curriculum Assessment

The assessment of the National Curriculum represents a systematic process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting data related to its relevance, coherence, efficacy, equity and implementation results with the purpose of ensuring the continuous improvement of educational quality. Assessment instruments comprise a set of methods and techniques used to collect data on the curriculum and its implementation (e.g., questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, classroom observations and statistical analyses), in order to get an objective picture of the educational process’ quality [5].

In the specialized literature of the Republic of Moldova, curriculum assessment is defined as an integral element of curriculum design and development, aimed at generating relevant information on its actual functioning and supporting decision-making processes for improving educational quality. A holistic approach to evaluation is recommended, encompassing the conceptual, structural, procedural and product dimensions of the curriculum, based on clearly defined methodological criteria [2].

Curriculum monitoring is a process through which the curriculum’s implementation is systematically observed and assessed with the aim of ensuring the achievement of learning objectives and the efficacy of teaching strategies [5].

From the perspective of assuring the educational quality, curriculum monitoring and assessment are essential for identifying strengths, challenges and areas requiring adjustment in response to evolving educational and societal contexts. Within this framework, teachers play a pivotal role as primary agents of curriculum implementation, being directly involved in observing learning results and providing evidence-based feedback for its improvement.

In this regard, professional experience of teachers, continuous interaction with students and adaptation to different classroom contexts provide valuable insights into the applicability of curriculum. Rather than acting solely as implementers, teachers function as evaluators, interpreters, and co-constructors of learning experiences, adjusting content, strategies and assessment practices in accordance with the needs of students and contextual realities.

Empirical Aspects of Curriculum Assessment

In this context, this research has the aim to investigate the opinions of teachers concerning the structure, relevance, applicability and efficacy of the curriculum for the Visual Arts Education subject. The study identifies perceptions of teachers regarding the clarity of curricular formulations, the alignment of competences with the age levels of students, the relevance and accessibility of content, opportunities for interdisciplinary integration, diversity of evaluation methods and the support provided by the curriculum for transversal competences’ development. To conduct this empirical investigation, the research instrument Curriculum Evaluation by Subject (Part 5) was administered to teachers who teach Visual Arts Education in primary school classes [2, pp. 59-64]. The questionnaire consisted of 24 items, organized into several thematic sections that target the dimensions: curriculum conception (items 1–2); curricular outcomes (items 3–6); content units (items 7–10); methodological suggestions (items 11–12); evaluation recommendations (items 13–14); student-centered teaching approach (items 15–18); and vision and involvement of teachers in curriculum monitoring (items 19–24). A total of 20 teachers participated in the study.

The results of this research are correlated with data obtained within complementary research on the monitoring of implemented curriculum in the Visual Arts Education subject in primary education [4], conducted within the State Subprogram “Theory and Methodology of Continuous and Cyclical Monitoring and Development of the School Curriculum” (code 01.14.01). While the previous research focused on the analysis of curriculum taught and the educational process from methodological and experiential perspectives, this article complements this approach through investigating teachers’ perceptions of the same curriculum.

This methodological continuity ensures a comprehensive perspective on the assessment of curriculum,

allowing for the triangulation of findings related to curriculum design, implementation, and perceived relevance in educational practice.

Analysis of Data on Teachers' Assessment and Monitoring of the Curriculum

This section analyzes the prospects of teachers on the process of curriculum monitoring and assessment in the Visual Arts Education subject. The questionnaire items were formulated in both closed (with predetermined response options) and open formats, allowing teachers to provide suggestions, proposals and additional explanations. The responses of teachers' regarding the dimension "Curriculum Conception" highlight the perceptions of coherence and values promoted by the curriculum document.

Item 1: Does the curriculum of subject you teach have a clear conception and reflect the principles of modern education: student-centered learning, competency-based approach, active learning, interdisciplinarity, and values?

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates the results: 70% of respondents believe that the principles of modern education are reflected to a sufficient degree, 25% consider them largely present and 5% assess that they are present to a small degree. These outcomes reveal a generally positive perception among teachers regarding the current curricular conception. The curriculum accentuates the development of subject-specific competences in artistic expression, focusing on practical activities and the cultivation of visual thinking. For example, it states that "activities will stimulate imagination, expressivity and autonomy of students." In some sections, nevertheless, the formulations are general and do not sufficiently clarify the connections between competences, values and learning activities, that may hinder coherent application in practice. The 2018 curriculum promotes a student-centered vision and the development of aesthetic-creative competences. Activity examples such as *"Draw my family"* and *"Primary and secondary color game"* support active learning, experimentation and interdisciplinarity with the domains *"Man and Society"* and *"Language and Communication"*. The accent on values - beauty, cooperation, respect - is evident across all units.

Item 2: Is the curriculum of the subject you teach aligned with other school curricula at the level of a grade cycle or a school year (inter- and transdisciplinary approach)?

The distribution of teachers' responses gives the following results: 60% of respondents consider the curriculum sufficiently aligned, 30% believe it is largely aligned, and 10% assess it as minimally aligned. These results suggest the existence of a framework for curricular coordination. The curriculum proposes common themes, such as *"Landscape in Nature"* and *"Winter Holidays"*, that can be associated with the Romanian Language (descriptive texts), Natural Sciences (environmental observation) and Music Education. Though, these connections are not systematically indicated; interdisciplinary links are not always clearly highlighted. Teachers must often establish these connections individually, particularly between Visual Arts Education, Music Education and the Romanian Language and Literature. Thematic units such as *"Nature"*, *"Family"*, and *"Childhood Holidays"* align with content in the Romanian Language Communication, Moral-Spiritual Education and Personal Development. For example, the theme *"Autumn"* allows the integrated activities, including oral descriptions, artistic collages and poetry.

These results are consistent with the findings of the curriculum implementation monitoring study [4], which highlighted that interdisciplinarity is present rather implicitly, being largely dependent on the initiative of teacher.

Item 3: Do the subject-specific competences in the curriculum adequately reflect the discipline's domain of knowledge and are they formulated in terms of learning outcomes?

The subject-specific competences reflect the domain of knowledge of Visual Arts Education and are formulated in terms of educational results aimed at developing aesthetic sensitivity and artistic expression skills. The outcomes of the investigation indicate a predominantly positive perception concerning the alignment of competences with the discipline's scientific specificity. Specifically, 75% of respondents consider this alignment largely adequate, 20% view it as sufficiently adequate and 5% assess it as minimally adequate. The distribution of responses confirms a high level of professional acceptance of the competency framework proposed by the 2018 curriculum, suggesting its coherence with the discipline's epistemologi-

cal requirements. Analysis of the open-ended responses and competency formulations highlights the presence of clear and relevant learning results, such as “Expressing impressions through drawing, painting and modeling” and “Demonstrating aesthetic taste in personal creations.” These outcomes indicate a focus on developing expressive capacities and aesthetic sensitivity. Though, some formulations remain highly general (e.g., “demonstrating interest in beauty”), that may create difficulties in operationalizing and assessing them. Concurrently, competences such as “exploring elements of visual language” and “expressing emotions through visual means” are formulated clearly, operationally and appropriately for the age level of students, facilitating their translation into concrete and measurable activities. These competences reflect the art education’s central objective: the development of expressivity and aesthetic sensitivity. In addition, the findings indicate the need for further methodological clarifications for more general competences to ensure coherence between formulations, content and learning activities.

To highlight the vertical coherence of the curriculum, synthetic observations concerning the relationship between subject-specific competences (a), content (b) and learning activities (c) are presented:

Grade I. Emphasis is placed on the development of fine motor skills and visual sensitivity through predominantly playful and individual activities: **a)** Exploring elements of the visual language (line, dot, color, shape); expressing emotions through drawing and color; following work rules. **b)** Line, dot, shape, primary and secondary colors; techniques – drawing, painting, collage. **c)** *“First Day of School”* (free drawing); *“My Favorite Colors”* (painting); colored paper collage.

Grade II. Technical skills and the capacity for visual organization are consolidated: **a)** Conscious use of visual elements; organizing compositional space; expressing ideas through various techniques. **b)** Color, shape, space, texture; collage, tempera, modeling. **c)** *“Autumn in Warm Colors”*; *“Seasonal Fruits”* (combined painting techniques).

Grade III. Autonomy and collaborative dimensions are amplified through interdisciplinary integrated activities: **a)** Expressing artistic intention; using contrast and harmony; creating collective works. **b)** Contrast, harmony, visual rhythm; group compositions, thematic posters. **c)** Poster *“Protect Nature!”*; *“Favorite Landscape”* (mixed media techniques).

Grade IV. Transition towards mature artistic expression and self-assessment through portfolios: **a)** Creative use of visual language; appreciation of artistic values; demonstration of artistic autonomy. **b)** Complex compositional elements; study of form, light, shadow; combined techniques. **c)** Project *“The Young Artist”* (personal exhibition); reinterpretation of an artwork. The 2018 curriculum ensures a logical and balanced progression across grade levels, highlighting a development from sensory exploration (Grade I) to artistic autonomy and reflection (Grade IV). The formative and integrative character of Visual Arts Education is evident, contributing to the development of key competences, particularly aesthetic, communicative and social skills. Though, to further strengthen internal coherence, the following recommendations are suggested: increase the operationalization of broadly formulated competences, explicitly correlate them with observable and assessable performance indicators and clarify the evaluative dimension in relation to progression levels of students.

Item 4: Are the subject-specific competences in the curriculum aligned with the key (transversal) competences?

The distribution of teachers’ responses indicates the following: 65% consider the alignment between subject-specific and transversal competences largely adequate, 25% perceive it as sufficiently adequate and 10% assess it as minimally adequate. These results suggest a predominantly positive perception of curricular coherence, but also reveal a need for optimization concerning the explicit articulation of transdisciplinary connections. From the perspective of curriculum content, subject-specific competences are implicitly associated with transversal competences such as communication skills, critical thinking, cooperation and collaboration, and cultural sensitivity. Although, this alignment is primarily implicit and insufficiently formalized in the analyzed curriculum documents. Explicit examples of integrated tasks or interdisciplinary projects that demonstrate the transfer of competences across subjects (e.g., joint projects with the Romanian Language and Literature, History or Civic Education) are not provided. The transversal dimension is, thus, more suggested by the nature of activities than explicitly structured at the level of

competency formulations. Group activities, presentation and argumentation of one's own work and peer evaluation contribute to the development of cooperation, communication and autonomous learning skills. For example, the project "The Young Painter" (personal exhibition with self-assessment and peer feedback) integrates elements of critical reflection, self-regulation and reciprocal evaluation, fostering the development of social and metacognitive competences. It can be concluded that there is a functional alignment between subject-specific and transversal competences, but this alignment is more implicit than explicitly formulated. To strengthen curricular coherence, it is recommended to: explicitly clarify the links between subject-specific and transversal competences within the curriculum structure; include examples of integrated tasks and interdisciplinary projects; and formulate performance indicators that reflect the transversal dimension of learning.

Item 5: Relevance of the Level and Complexity of Subject-Specific Competences in Relation to Students' Age and Potential

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates a predominantly positive assessment of the alignment between the complexity of competences and developmental level of students: 80% consider this alignment largely adequate, 15% view it as sufficiently adequate and 5% assess it as minimally adequate. These results suggest a high degree of curricular appropriateness in terms of competency design. From a conceptual and psycho-pedagogical perspective, the subject-specific competences reflect the progressive acquisition of skills appropriate for early school age. For example, the competency "using artistic materials according to the intended purpose" is appropriate for the psychomotor development of children aged 6–10 years, requiring hand-eye coordination, fine motor control and the ability to select suitable tools for the task. Activities such as free drawing, collage and modeling align with the stage of concrete thinking, promoting learning through direct manipulation and sensory experience. In lower grades, competences focus on fundamental acquisitions, including the development of fine motor skills, recognition and use of colors, spatial orientation and the expression of emotions through visual means. Overall, the level of complexity is generally appropriate, following a gradual progression from sensory exploration to conscious and creative use of visual language. Though, some teachers note that certain artistic tasks may temporarily exceed the motor abilities of younger students if differentiated methodological adaptation is not applied. Overall, the subject-specific competences are adequately aligned with the age and potential of students in primary education, reflecting the principles of progression and instructional accessibility. It is recommended, however, to introduce flexibility in the implementation of learning tasks through methodological differentiation to prevent motor or cognitive overload in younger students.

Item 6: Are competence units, as intermediate learning outcomes, formulated taxonomically in relation to content units and do they ensure the formation/development of subject-specific competences?

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates the following assessment: 60% consider that sub-competences are formulated taxonomically to a sufficient extent, 30% evaluate this formulation as largely adequate and 10% perceive it as minimally adequate. These data suggest the presence of a partially coherent structure, that requires optimization concerning the explicit articulation of progression and targeted cognitive levels. Examination of the curriculum content reveals that some sub-competences (e.g., "describe elements of the visual language") are not sufficiently differentiated according to age level and cognitive complexity. The absence of explicit progressive descriptors between Grades I and IV means that the development of skills is not always clearly delineated. Consequently, the responsibility for operationalizing competences and grading task difficulty largely falls on the teacher, who must develop individualized progression grids and evaluation criteria adapted to the grade level. It is observed that the taxonomic structure is not always explicitly formalized, and vertical progression across grade levels is not systematically highlighted. Although, certain learning units (e.g., "Point and Line") present an appropriate gradation of content and activities, suggesting a development from recognition and identification to conscious use and creative application. The formulation of sub-competences could be improved by specifying the targeted cognitive level (e.g., identification, description, application, analysis, creation), including observable performance indicators and clarifying progression between cycles and grade levels. Sub-competences generally contribute to the development of subject-specific competences, yet their taxonomic formulation is not always explicit

or progressively structured. To strengthen curricular coherence, it is recommended to clarify cognitive levels and vertical progression, thereby facilitating both formative and summative assessment of the learning outcomes of students.

Item 7: Structuring Content into Relevant Learning Units and Ensuring the Progressive Development of Concepts

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates a predominantly positive assessment of the curriculum structure: 70% consider the learning units largely relevant and well-structured, 25% evaluate this structuring as sufficiently adequate and 5% perceive it as minimally adequate. These data suggest a high level of professional validation of content organization. Examination of the curriculum documents reveals coherent thematic units, such as "Form and Color in Nature", "Decorative Composition" and "Visual Representation of Space". These units reflect a logical structuring of content and ensure a gradual transition from fundamental notions to more complex compositional structures. The principle of progression is evident through the gradual introduction of visual concepts (point, line, shape, color), followed by their integration into thematic and expressive compositions. Units such as "Me and My Family" or "Nature as a Source of Inspiration" demonstrate thematic coherence and relevance to the experiential world of students, facilitating connections between artistic content and the everyday reality of children. Generally, the curriculum structure supports a progression from simple to complex, from sensory exploration to conscious organization of visual language. However, some opinions highlight the need for thematic updates, including contemporary dimensions such as visual design, digital media or the valorization of local cultural heritage, to enhance the social and cultural relevance of subject. In general, the curriculum content is coherently structured into learning units relevant to the essence of Visual Arts Education and ensures the progressive development of fundamental concepts. It is recommended, nevertheless, to periodically update the thematic content to align with the dynamics of contemporary visual culture and the current sociocultural context.

Item 8: Are the contents of the taught curriculum accessible and up-to-date for students?

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates a predominantly positive assessment: 75% consider the contents largely accessible and current, 20% evaluate this characteristic as sufficiently adequate and 5% perceive it as minimally adequate. These data suggest a high degree of content appropriateness in relation to the age characteristics of primary school students. Analysis of the curriculum themes shows that most content is closely connected to the child's experiential world and facilitates affective and creative engagement. Relevant examples include representing favorite toys, painting the surrounding environment or creating collages inspired by stories. These themes support the cognitive and emotional accessibility of learning. Although, feedback of teachers highlights a limitation regarding the curriculum's cultural currency. The digital component is not explicitly included (e.g., digital drawing, use of graphic tablets, introduction to digital art), even though contemporary students show a strong interest in digital visual culture. Some traditional content, while valuable from a formative perspective, may not sufficiently stimulate the interest of today's students without methodological adaptation or contemporary contextualization. Therefore, the inclusion of topics such as digital arts, modern illustration or contemporary forms of visual expression is recommended to strengthen the subject's socio-cultural relevance. Overall, the curriculum content is accessible and appropriate to the developmental level of students, reflecting the everyday experiences of a child. However, to meet the demands of contemporary education, it is recommended to explicitly integrate digital components and elements of contemporary visual culture to strengthen the discipline's attractiveness and formative relevance.

Item 9: Are the content units in the taught curriculum correlated with the content units of other subjects within the same curricular area?

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates the following: 60% consider this correlation sufficiently realized, 30% evaluate it as largely adequate, and 10% perceive it as minimally adequate. These data suggest a moderately positive, though not fully consolidated, perception of the level of curricular integration within the "Arts" domain. Analysis of content and teaching practices shows multiple opportunities for connecting Visual Arts Education with Music Education, particularly through shared themes such as rhythm, harmony and artistic expressivity. Potential links with Technology Education are also identifiable,

especially in activities involving the creation of decorative objects or practical projects. However, the curriculum document does not systematically provide explicit examples of interdisciplinary activities, making integration largely dependent on the teacher's initiative and competence. Practically, some themes naturally facilitate integration across subjects. For example, the theme "Spring" allows correlations with Natural Sciences (observation of natural phenomena) and Music and Movement (performance of thematic songs). Integrated activities such as "Singing and Painting the Rain" demonstrate the potential for a syncretic approach in which musical and visual expression complement each other. While the correlation of Visual Arts Education with other subjects in the "Arts" area is possible and functional at the practical level, it is not always explicitly formalized in curriculum documents. To enhance interdisciplinarity, it is recommended to include concrete examples of integrated activities and clarify inter-subject competency connections to ensure systemic curricular coherence.

Item 10: Do the content units in the curriculum support the development of subject-specific competences and allow for individualized and inclusive learning design?

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates the following assessment: 65% consider that individualized and inclusive learning is sufficiently ensured, 25% evaluate it as largely ensured, and 10% perceive it as minimally ensured. These data suggest a declarative openness toward individualization, while highlighting limitations regarding the explicit articulation of implementation mechanisms. Analysis of the curriculum document shows an axiological orientation favorable to diversity, with statements such as "each student freely expresses their own vision." This approach reflects the principle of valuing individual differences and expressive freedom, which is characteristic of arts education. Though, the curriculum does not systematically provide methodological guidance for adapting content and tasks for students with special educational needs (SEN). The absence of concrete examples of curricular adaptations, differentiation of complexity levels or adjustment of assessment criteria places the responsibility for operationalization largely on the teacher, who autonomously develops differentiated worksheets and personalized strategies. On the other hand, the structure of the proposed activities allows some flexibility and adaptation to individual learning pace of students. Tasks such as "Complete the drawing based on the model" or "Choose colors appropriate for your emotion" facilitate differentiated expression and enable adjustment of difficulty according to potential of students. In general, the curriculum conceptually supports individualized learning and allows task differentiation in practice, yet it does not provide sufficient explicit methodological guidance for the systematic implementation of inclusive education, particularly for SEN students. It is recommended to integrate clear guidelines for curricular adaptations, examples of good practices and differentiated assessment suggestions to strengthen the inclusive dimension of the subject.

Item 11: Does the curriculum of the taught subject support the implementation of active and interactive teaching strategies, facilitating both the development of subject-specific and transdisciplinary competences?

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates a predominantly positive assessment: 70% consider that the orientation toward active strategies is largely realized, 25% evaluate it as sufficiently ensured, and 5% perceive it as minimally ensured. These data suggest the presence of an adequate methodological foundation focused on active student engagement in the learning process. Analysis of the methodological recommendations highlights the use of interactive methods such as guided observation, aesthetic conversation, role-playing and visual brainstorming. These approaches support the development of divergent thinking, expressive abilities and reflective capacity regarding the artistic product. Activities such as paired drawing or group collaboration projects (e.g., creating an *"Autumn Collage"*) promote cooperative learning and social skills development, while also strengthening the interdisciplinary dimension of educational process. Methodological suggestions encourage artistic experimentation and discovery-based learning through activities such as *"Sponge Painting"* or *"Sand Drawing"*, that leverage material exploration and direct sensory experience. These practices reflect an orientation toward experiential learning and creative play, appropriate to the developmental characteristics of primary school students. Although, the analysis indicates the need to further diversify and explicitly present practical examples, particularly in relation to contemporary visual-plastic specificity and the integration of digital technologies. Generally, the curriculum is clearly oriented toward ac-

tive teaching strategies and supports the direct engagement of students in artistic creation. The interdisciplinary dimension is possible and functional but could be strengthened through diversification of methodological examples and the integration of innovative approaches aligned with contemporary visual culture.

Item 12: Do the methodological suggestions and learning activities provided in the curriculum offer opportunities for the expression of teaching creativity?

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates the following: 75% consider that the curriculum largely provides opportunities for the expression of teaching creativity, 20% evaluate this feature as sufficiently ensured, and 5% perceive it as minimally ensured. These data reflect a positive perception regarding the degree of flexibility and autonomy offered by the curriculum documents. Analysis of the content shows that the methodological suggestions and proposed activities stimulate freedom of pedagogical expression through activities such as free creative work, school exhibitions and the production of thematic projects using natural materials. Teachers utilize these opportunities by designing projects adapted to the local context and the experiences of students, such as *"My Book of Colors"* or the *"Class Exhibition."* This approach promotes professional autonomy and allows the adaptation of content according to available resources and the particular students' needs. The analysis also reveals that methodological suggestions are generally more indicative than prescriptive and may be insufficiently developed for novice teachers, who may require concrete examples and models for effective implementation of creative activities. In general, the curriculum supports the expression of teaching creativity and the use of curricular freedom, providing teachers with the possibility to adapt activities to the local context and the needs of students. For novice teachers, it would be beneficial to supplement the curriculum with explicit project examples and detailed methodological guidelines to facilitate the planning and implementation of creative activities.

Item 13: Do the assessment suggestions in the curriculum provide clear references (tools, indicators, test models, etc.) for evaluating student outcomes?

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates the following: 60% consider that the assessment references are sufficiently clearly defined, 30% evaluate their clarity as largely ensured, and 10% perceive them as minimally clear. These data suggest that, while there is a general recognition of assessment criteria, the level of detail and standardization is limited. The curriculum includes general assessment criteria, such as originality, adherence to the assigned theme, expressiveness and appropriate use of materials. These references allow teachers to evaluate student performance and monitor their progress. Although, the curriculum does not provide standardized assessment tools, such as evaluation sheets, rubrics with performance descriptors or concrete examples adapted to the first-grade level. The absence of these tools limits the possibility of implementing rigorous and objective formative evaluation. Strengthening evaluation would require explicit models of instruments that clarify the criteria and enable comparability of the performance of student. The existing evaluation references lack methodological details and standardized tools necessary for effective formative evaluation. For greater clarity and consistency in evaluating the outcomes of student, it is recommended to include evaluation sheets, rubrics with performance descriptors and concrete examples of application adapted to each age or grade level.

Item 14: Does the school curriculum provide opportunities for diversification and differentiation of student evaluation?

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates the following: 65% consider that the diversification of assessment is sufficiently ensured, 25% evaluate it as largely ensured, and 10% perceive it as minimally ensured. These data suggest a moderately positive perception of the flexibility of assessment, with potential for further development. The curriculum proposes the use of alternative assessment forms, such as: the student portfolio, that documents individual progress and creative outputs; systematic observation of performance in classroom activities; verbal and visual self-assessment, exemplified by expressing preferences and motivations ("I like what I made because…", "I like my work because…"); and narrative assessment, that provides descriptive and qualitative feedback on artistic products. Though, the curriculum does not provide methodological details or concrete models for implementing these assessment forms. The lack of explicit guidance may limit the effective use of portfolios, self-assessment and narrative evaluation, particularly for novice teachers. Assessment diversification could be strengthened through the following:

sample portfolio sheets, rubrics with performance descriptors and examples of visual and narrative self-assessment adapted to each grade level. The curriculum promotes the use of varied assessment forms but does not offer explicit methodological references for their implementation. To enhance the effectiveness of formative evaluation, it is recommended to develop concrete and detailed models that allow systematic and level-appropriate application of portfolios, self-assessment and narrative assessment.

The findings regarding difficulties in applying formative evaluation and differentiating tasks are consistent with the results of the curriculum implementation monitoring study, where the same challenges were identified, including adaptation to individual learning paces and the lack of standardized assessment tools [4].

Item 15: Does the curriculum in the subject promote a student-centered approach, encouraging an active role of the learner?

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates that 75% consider the curriculum promotes a student-centered approach to a large extent, 20% evaluate this orientation as sufficiently ensured, and 5% perceive it as minimally ensured. These data suggest that the student-centered teaching orientation is positively recognized, although the implementation of its principles may vary depending on specific teaching conditions and available resources. The curriculum includes activities that value the personal expression of students and stimulate initiative, such as creating original compositions inspired by the surrounding environment. In these activities, the student becomes an author of the learning process rather than merely following instructions. Activities like "Drawing a Story Together" promote assertive communication and cooperation, developing social and collaborative skills. Although, some activities described in the curriculum remain too directive, that may limit the degree of autonomous exploration and discovery. Generally, the curriculum supports student-centered learning and active involvement, fostering initiative and creative freedom. To increase effectiveness, it is recommended to emphasize exploratory and discovery-based activities, ensuring that the student assumes a clear role as the author in the learning process.

Item 16: Does the curriculum encourage students' critical thinking for problem identification and resolution in different contexts?

The distribution of teachers' responses shows that 60% consider the curriculum encourages critical thinking to a sufficient extent, 30% evaluate this orientation as largely ensured, and 10% perceive it as minimally ensured. These results suggest that the activities provided by the curriculum offer opportunities to stimulate critical thinking, but the actual implementation depends on the teacher's guidance and how tasks are structured. The curriculum includes tasks that require students to analyze and make decisions, such as "transform a geometric shape into a real object" or "compose a landscape from abstract forms." These activities allow students to explore multiple solutions and make autonomous decisions, implicitly stimulating critical thinking. However, critical thinking as a competency is not explicitly defined in the document, and the elements of critical analysis and self-evaluation are insufficiently developed for this age group. Consequently, fostering critical thinking largely relies on the teacher's intervention and the way learning tasks are structured. Overall, the curriculum provides contexts and activities that can stimulate critical thinking and problem-solving, but the systematic development of this competency requires clearer objectives and the inclusion of explicit tasks formulated in terms of critical analysis and visual-aesthetic problem-solving.

Item 17: Does the Biology curriculum guide the formation of a system of values and attitudes in students?

The distribution of teachers' responses indicates that 70% consider the curriculum largely supports the formation of values and attitudes, 25% evaluate this orientation as sufficiently ensured, and 5% perceive it as minimally ensured. These data reflect a positive perception of the curriculum's capacity to direct the educational process toward values and attitudes relevant to the students' personal and social development. The curriculum promotes respect for beauty, cultural heritage and nature through activities such as "Depicting traditional motifs in folk ornaments," fostering cultural identity, aesthetic sensitivity and respect for traditions. Themes like "Friendship" or "Nature - My Friend" support the development of empathy, mutual respect and cooperative spirit among students. Although, the value-oriented dimension could be further extended to contemporary aesthetic education, integrating modern perspectives of art and visual culture to form a more complex and contextually relevant value system. In general, the curriculum significantly

contributes to value formation and attitudes of students, promoting aesthetic sensitivity, respect for cultural heritage and social collaboration. For a more comprehensive approach, it is recommended to include elements of contemporary aesthetic education that enhance cultural diversity and current creative expression.

Item 18. To what extent does the curriculum provide guidance that is useful for fostering students' initiative and creativity?

Teachers' responses indicate that 80% consider the curriculum highly effective in fostering initiative and creativity, 15% rate it as moderately effective, and 5% as minimally effective. These findings highlight the curriculum's capacity to stimulate students' creativity through open-ended activities, such as collage, drawing, and modeling, that encourage individual expression and original approaches. By allowing students to propose their own themes, the curriculum enhances autonomy, responsibility and independent planning in artistic tasks. Providing further methodological examples could reinforce these results and support the continued development of initiative and creativity in practice.

Similarly, the curriculum implementation monitoring study highlighted an orientation toward creativity and active learning, as well as the need for a clearer operationalization of transversal competences [4].

Item 19. Do you consider the curriculum text to be formulated in a clear, concise and coherent manner?

The majority of teachers 70% consider the curriculum text largely clear and coherent, 25% moderately clear, and 5% minimally clear. The curriculum is logically structured—competences, content, methodological suggestions, evaluation-facilitating progressive understanding of learning objectives. Academic language and theoretical formulations may challenge novice teachers, and some methodological suggestions could be more explicit to support practical application. Generally, the curriculum provides clear and coherent pedagogical guidance, with additional concrete examples recommended to enhance accessibility for less experienced teachers.

Item 20. To what extent do you consider that the curriculum supports long-term instructional planning and adaptation to real learning contexts?

Most teachers (65%) consider the curriculum moderately supportive, 30% highly supportive, and 5% minimally supportive. While it provides general guidance on competences, content and learning activities, it does not detail units weekly or by semester. Teachers must, therefore, develop annual and thematic plans adapted to class level and available resources. Existing guidelines facilitate semester- and daily-level planning, and provided examples can be adapted to real teaching contexts, ensuring flexibility in curriculum implementation. Overall, the curriculum offers a general framework that requires further adaptation to effectively meet real classroom needs.

Item 21. What changes, adaptations, or extensions have you implemented in the curriculum during the teaching of the subject (multiple responses allowed)?

Teachers reported diversifying learning organization 80.3%, updating content 56.7%, clarifying interdisciplinary connections 58.3%, developing links between competences, content, and strategies 53%, and expanding competences or introducing new strategies 43.3%. Adaptations included clarifying subject-specific competences, introducing contemporary content (e.g., digital art, modern design, national symbols, emotional expression through color) and diversifying teaching strategies through workshops, thematic projects, outdoor painting, cooperative activities and peer assessment. Interdisciplinary links, particularly with natural sciences, were emphasized. Applied creative activities such as collage, visual storytelling, and ecological art fostered students' expressive skills, collaboration, and aesthetic reflection. In general, these adaptations enhanced student autonomy, initiative and active engagement, improving both the relevance and efficacy of learning.

Item 22. How do you personally relate to the curriculum? (multiple responses allowed)

Teachers report understanding and applying the principles of the competency-based curriculum 90%, actively implementing new methodological approaches 85%, achieving visible results in students' aesthetic-artistic competences 80%, and showing openness to updating content and integrating new artistic trends, such as digital art and contemporary design 88%. These findings indicate high teacher engagement and a positive perception of the curriculum. To maximize effectiveness, additional support and resources are recommended to address challenges and strengthen teaching competences, particularly for integrating contemporary trends into learning.

Item 23. Strengths of the current curriculum

Teachers identify several strengths of the current curriculum, emphasizing its relevance and efficacy. Key features include the development of functional competences applicable to real-life contexts, a modular and progressively complex structure and adaptability to individual student needs. Other strengths include conceptual clarity, alignment with modern educational principles, student-centeredness, emphasis on creativity and aesthetic values, promotion of national cultural heritage, support for early visual and cultural education, openness to active and experiential methods, natural interdisciplinary integration and incorporation of digital arts and contemporary approaches. Overall, the curriculum provides a flexible and formative framework that enhances aesthetic, cognitive, social, and creative competences of students, while offering teachers guidance for innovative and context-sensitive instructional practices.

Item 24. Vulnerabilities of the current curriculum

Teachers report several vulnerabilities in the curriculum that may affect instructional efficacy, including limited concrete examples for inclusive adaptation, insufficiently detailed interdisciplinary connections, occasionally abstract theoretical language, few practical assessment guidelines, a need for more applied methodological guidance and limited examples integrating contemporary digital art.

Conclusions

The findings of the present study provide a comprehensive overview of teachers' perceptions regarding the 2018 Visual Arts Education curriculum in primary education and allow for several theoretically and empirically grounded conclusions.

Firstly, the curriculum is generally perceived as a coherent, modern and pedagogically relevant document, aligned with the principles of competence-based education and outcome-oriented learning. Teachers confirm that the curriculum ensures a clear progression of subject-specific competences, supports the development of aesthetic, expressive, creative, and intercultural dimensions of learners' personality, and is largely appropriate to the cognitive and psychomotor development of primary school students. The modular structure and thematic organization are considered functional and conducive to systematic instructional planning.

Secondly, the study highlights a predominantly positive evaluation of curriculum implementation in practice, particularly in relation to student-centered learning, active and interactive methodologies and the promotion of creativity and initiative. Teachers acknowledge that the curriculum provides sufficient methodological openness, allowing for adaptation to classroom contexts and encouraging professional autonomy. Simultaneously, this flexibility generates a high degree of dependence on the individual competence of teachers, particularly in designing interdisciplinary connections, adapting content, and operationalizing competences into measurable learning outcomes.

Thirdly, several systemic challenges have been identified. These mainly concern the insufficient explicitness of interdisciplinary and transversal competency connections, the limited operationalization of competences into observable performance indicators and the lack of standardized evaluation instruments and detailed formative evaluation guidelines. Teachers also report the need for clearer methodological support for inclusive education, differentiation strategies and the integration of digital and contemporary visual culture into the curriculum content.

Fourthly, while the curriculum conceptually supports individualized learning and inclusivity, its practical implementation depends largely on initiative and professional experience of teachers. This indicates a gap between curricular intentions and methodological operationalization, particularly in relation to assessment practices, inclusion of students with diverse learning needs and systematic development of critical thinking competences.

Finally, the synthesis of findings demonstrates a strong convergence between perceptions of teachers and previous empirical research on curriculum implementation, confirming both the functional coherence of the curriculum and the persistence of several recurring vulnerabilities. These include the need for stronger methodological concretization, enhanced interdisciplinarity, improved assessment frameworks and greater alignment with contemporary educational and cultural contexts.

Overall, the 2018 Visual Arts Education curriculum is validated as a structurally coherent and pedagogically valuable framework; although, its optimization requires targeted revisions aimed at strengthening its methodological precision, expanding its digital and contemporary dimensions and reinforcing evidence-based assessment practices in order to ensure higher consistency between curricular design, classroom implementation and learning outcomes.

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