

Competency Development in Visual Arts Education: A Systematic Review on Human Capital and Teaching Effectiveness

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Abstract

As education systems worldwide confront the demands of 21st-century learning, the role of teacher competency, particularly in creative disciplines like Visual Arts Education (VAE), has become increasingly central to human capital development. However, there is a lack of synthesized understanding of how VAE teacher competencies are cultivated and how they translate into teaching effectiveness. This systematic literature review investigates how competencies in VAE, comprising professional knowledge, pedagogical practices, and personal attributes, are defined, developed, and applied across diverse educational contexts. Grounded in the frameworks of human capital theory and competency-based education, this study systematically analyzed 10 peer-reviewed articles published between 2021 and 2024, retrieved from Scopus and Web of Science using PRISMA guidelines. This study uncovers how visual arts educators uniquely cultivate pedagogical competency through the integration of creative learning environments, value-driven reflection, and cross-disciplinary collaboration positioning the arts not only as a subject but as a transformative medium for fostering human capital and adaptive teaching in contemporary education. Key challenges included inadequate professional development, lack of alignment between curriculum and creative teaching goals, and limited support for teacher autonomy. The findings underscore the importance of building structured, context-sensitive teacher development models that not only enhance instructional quality but also contribute to long-term human capital growth in the creative economy. This study offers implications for teacher training programs, curriculum designers, and policymakers to bridge the gap between educational aspirations and practical classroom implementation. By placing creativity at the core of teacher competency development, this review highlights pathways to cultivate a more responsive, empowered, and future-ready teaching workforce in the field of visual arts.

Keywords: Teacher Competency, Competence, Creative Thinking, Visual Art

Introduction

Teacher competency development has increasingly shifted towards a humanity-based approach that emphasizes empathy, inclusivity, and global responsibility alongside professional knowledge and skills. Cwirynkalo et al. (2024) revealed that Polish teachers working with Ukrainian refugee students varied in their self-perceived competencies depending on school context, highlighting the need for culturally responsive and emotionally supportive teaching. Similarly, Kim & Kwon (2023) found that South Korean elementary teachers faced challenges in AI integration due to limited content and pedagogical knowledge, as well as anxiety demonstrating the importance of aligning technological skills with ethical and humanistic teaching values. (Wu & Li, 2023) further emphasized that global engagement in teacher education should encourage critical reflection on human capital discourses, promoting sustainable, moral, and globally competent teaching practices. Complementing this, (Herut, 2024) traced global trends in early childhood education and highlighted the growing emphasis on developing pedagogical competencies that support innovation, collaboration, and child-centered learning. Together, these studies underscore the importance of holistic, context-sensitive, and ethically grounded teacher competencies in shaping inclusive and effective education systems.

Competency development in visual arts education increasingly emphasizes the integration of human capital and teaching effectiveness. Studies show that professional capital comprising human, social, and decisional elements positively influences innovation when supported by constructivist beliefs (Liu & Zhang, 2024). However, practical application remains limited due to systemic constraints, as many teachers struggle to implement competency-based approaches effectively (Deng et al., 2024). The need for adaptable, context-sensitive frameworks is further reinforced by findings in AI-driven HRM, where structured competencies support technological adoption (Deepa et al., 2024). These insights highlight a gap in visual arts education, where creative, affective, and pedagogical competencies require clearer definition and implementation.

Although teacher education has increasingly emphasized the importance of sustainability, self-regulated learning, and innovative pedagogical models, existing research reveals significant gaps in how these concepts are internalized and operationalized among preservice teachers. For instance, teacher education shows gaps in integrating sustainability, digital learning support, evolving beliefs about intelligence, and emerging technologies. Studies reveal fragmented understanding, inconsistent practices, and underexplored AI-based creative thinking models, underscoring the need for cohesive, differentiated, and future-oriented training approaches to enhance pedagogical effectiveness and adaptability. (Grushka et al., 2022; Liu & Zhang, 2024; Gao Yan, 2016). Collectively, these studies reveal that while individual elements such as environmental awareness, self-regulated learning, and creative thinking are being studied in isolation, there is a pressing need for holistic, cross-domain teacher education models that systematically embed these competencies into teacher training frameworks.

Recent research emphasizes a shift in teacher competency development toward a holistic, humanity-based approach that integrates empathy, inclusivity, and global responsibility with professional and technological skills. For instance, Cwirynkalo et al. (2024) found that Polish teachers working with Ukrainian refugees demonstrated varying competencies based on

school context, stressing the need for culturally and emotionally responsive teaching. Similarly, Kim and Kwon (2023) highlighted South Korean teachers' struggles with AI integration due to limited pedagogical knowledge and anxiety, underscoring the importance of aligning tech skills with ethical values. Wu and Li (2023) advocated for global teacher education that fosters critical reflection on human capital discourses, promoting sustainable and morally grounded practices. Herut (2024) echoed this by tracing global trends in early childhood education that prioritize innovation, collaboration, and child-centered pedagogy. In visual arts education, Liu and Zhang (2024) showed that human, social, and decisional capital positively influence innovation when linked with constructivist beliefs, though Deng et al. (2024) noted systemic barriers to implementing competency-based teaching. Deepa et al. (2024) further reinforced the need for adaptable frameworks by demonstrating how structured competencies aid AI adoption in HRM. Collectively, these studies underscore the demand for ethically rooted, context-sensitive, and clearly defined competencies across educational contexts

Research Question

Formulating research questions (RQs) is a vital step in the planning stage of a systematic literature review (SLR), as it directs the overall methodology (Kitchenham, 2007). This SLR aims to explore and consolidate current knowledge on the topic. To guide the development of the RQs, the study uses the PICo framework, a tool commonly applied in qualitative research (Lockwood et al., 2015). PICo consists of three elements: Population (P), the group or individuals being studied; Interest (I), the main issue or phenomenon; and Context (Co), the relevant setting or environment. This framework ensures that research questions are structured clearly, enabling a focused and systematic review process. The specific research questions were as follows:

1. How do visual arts educators develop pedagogical expertise that enhances teaching effectiveness in the context of human capital development?
2. In what ways do visual arts teachers implement innovative and flexible instructional strategies to improve student engagement and creative learning outcomes?
3. How does the cultivation of a reflective mindset and professional identity contribute to the competency growth of visual arts educators in achieving effective teaching?

Materials and Methods

The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) method is a standardized approach that enhances the transparency, consistency, and rigor of systematic reviews. It involves four key stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and data abstraction. This structured process ensures the inclusion of high-quality studies by systematically locating, filtering, and analyzing relevant literature. Emphasizing randomized trials to minimize bias, PRISMA supports reliable conclusions. For this study, Web of Science and Scopus were used due to their comprehensive coverage and reliability, reinforcing the robustness of the review process.

Identification

A systematic search was conducted to locate relevant literature using two major databases: Scopus and Web of Science. Specific search strings were developed for each platform. In Scopus, the string used was: creativity AND "Visual Art" IN "teaching", while in Web of

Science, the terms Competence AND “Visual Art Students”, “Visual Arts” OR “Visual Arts Education”, and “Creative thinking” were applied. Both searches were carried out on 31 July 2025. Boolean operators AND and OR were used to refine and combine the keywords. Additionally, the reference lists of all selected studies were manually reviewed to uncover any further relevant sources. The search was restricted to journal articles published between 2021 and 2025, and written in English

Table 1

Search strings used for each of the databases

Database	Search	Date
Scopus	creativity AND "Visual Art" IN "teaching"	31/7/2025
Wos	Competence AND and "Visual Art Students" "Visual Arts" OR "Visual Arts Education" "Creative thinking"	31/7/2025

Screening

The screening process followed specific inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the relevance and quality of selected literature. Only English-language publications from 2021 to 2025 were included, while older and non-English sources were excluded. Eligible literature types were journal articles, case studies, and review articles, excluding research articles without peer review, conference papers, books, and non-peer-reviewed reviews. The subject focus was limited to Social Science, Arts and Humanities, and Educational Research, ensuring the literature aligned with the research scope.

Table 2

The Selection Criterion is searching

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English	Non-English
Timeline	2021-2025	<2021
Literature Type	Article, Case Study, Review Article	Reaserach Article, Conference, Book, Review
Subject	Social Science, Art and Humanities, Educational Research, Social Science	

Eligibility

Description and mapping involved gathering relevant information from the full-text articles. The first author conducted data extraction under the guidance of the second author. Initially, each article was assessed for its relevance to the research questions. Key details such as the authors' names, publication year, study location, methodology, study population, and main findings were recorded. The research findings were synthesized using thematic and content analysis. Each article was thoroughly reviewed, and the main findings were summarized to identify recurring themes and codes. Content analysis was used to interpret both quantitative and qualitative text, enabling a comprehensive understanding of complex issues and longitudinal trends (Khirfan et al., 2020).

Data Abstraction and Analysis

This study used integrative analysis to examine and synthesize various quantitative research designs, aiming to identify key topics and subtopics. The initial step involved gathering data, as shown in Table 3 , where 10 articles were reviewed for content relevant to the study's

themes. Key studies on instructional approaches in visual arts education for creative artwork structuring were evaluated, focusing on methodologies and findings. The authors collaborated to develop themes based on the evidence, maintaining a log of observations and reflections. Any inconsistencies in theme development were resolved through discussions with the co-author to ensure clarity and consistency in interpretation.

Table 3

Characteristic and main findings from the studies included in systematic review

Reference s	Sample and Respondents	Instrument	Research Objectives	Main Findings	Domain
(Swanzy- Impraim et al., 2023)	16 secondary visual arts teachers (Sekondi- Takoradi, Ghana)	Interviews and classroom observation s (qualitative case study)	To explore how innovative learning environmen t s support creativity in visual arts classroom	Identified two creativity- enhancing environment : Innovative spaces and Innovative practices	Skill : Creative pedagogical practice Knowledge : understand of creative facilitation
(Oeschger et al., 2022)	108 primary school teachers (Switzerland)102 female, 6 male	Mixed- methods: • Qualitative content analysis (curriculum) • Quantitative questionnai re (value perceptions)	To examine how values are embedded in the Swiss curriculum and perceived in the school environmen t	Curriculum promotes values linked to creativity (Openness to Change, Stimulation). Teachers perceive alignment with such values, though actual classroom application may vary.	Knowledge: awareness of value- oriented curriculum Personality: empathy, openness to change (creativity- related traits)
(Chappell et al., 2025)	24 educators joined a 20 hour online training. 20 educators were interviewed in pairs.	1. Online training activities (artwork study, reading, discussions, and lesson plan changes). 2. Dyadic interviews.	1. To help teachers use art to support students' cultural identity and creative thinking. 2. To promote arts teaching that values	– Teachers better understood culture and creativity. – They changed their teaching to support student expression and avoid	– Knowledge: Cultural teaching, using online art. – Skills: Creative planning, reflection. – Personality: Open- minded,

			different cultures.	cultural misuse. – Art was used to support social justice and creative learning.	respectful, thoughtful.
(Sanz & Rodriguez-Labajos, 2021)	32 interviewees: activists, artists, and legal experts; supported by observations and secondary data.	Semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, secondary data, and network analysis of artistic activism.	Examine the role of art in environmental justice activism; link art to socio-spatial transformation and movement strategies.	Art fosters engagement, inclusion, awareness, and socio-spatial impact; creative practices act as catalysts for participation	Teacher skill (primary), teacher knowledge (secondary), with personality traits like empathy and openness to creative pedagogy.
(Campbell & Cunningham, 2025)	5 children aged 3–5 years from a university-affiliated preschool.	Analysis of 23–73 samples per child (drawings and early writing). Measures: human figure drawings, name writing, oral descriptions, content themes.	To explore how children’s drawings develop into early writing. To prepare for a larger future study.	Children showed individual but steady growth. Drawing supported creativity, language, and early literacy. Teachers play a key role in giving space for expression and creativity.	Knowledge: Child development and early literacy. Skills: Observing and supporting creative expression. Personality: Patience, sensitivity, encouragement.
(Costes-Onishi & Kwek, 2023)	67 Primary 5 students (11 years old) and 71 Secondary 1 students (13 years old) in Singapore.	Classroom observations using comprehensive observational indicators.	To analyze how aesthetic inquiry, as a form of Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL), is implemented in visual art lessons, and to	Teachers tended to implement aesthetic inquiry through formal analysis and skills mastery, rather than fostering meaning	Knowledge and Skills – specifically in facilitating inquiry-based and meaning-making approaches in art education.

			identify challenges teachers face in delivering an inquiry-based curriculum.	making in art. This limits students' opportunities for deeper creative engagement. The study suggests that teachers need to reflect on their competencies to better support critical and conceptual artistic inquiry in classrooms.	
(Dechaume et al., 2024)	854 children, including 238 with high IQ (IQ > 130).	Intelligence: Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC). – Creativity: Evaluation of Potential for Creativity (EPoC). – Analysis: Segmented Regression Analysis (SRA) and Necessary Condition Analysis (NCA).	– To examine how intelligence (IQ) relates to creativity. – To identify cognitive factors (e.g., processing speed, verbal skills) that support creative thinking.	– Creativity has links to specific cognitive abilities like verbal comprehension and processing speed. – Divergent thinking needs good processing speed. – Convergent thinking needs a minimum level of IQ or reasoning ability. – Teachers can use this knowledge to better support and	– Knowledge: Understanding cognitive traits that support creativity. – Skills: Interpreting assessment data to adapt teaching. – Personality: Sensitivity to students' individual learning needs and cognitive profiles.

				assess students' creative potential.	
(Fahy, 2023)	50 primary school teachers from 8 Irish schools involved in the Creative Schools Initiative.	Online survey (mixed-method: quantitative and qualitative data collection).	To explore how the Creative Schools Initiative influenced teachers' confidence and effectiveness in teaching arts education.	-Teachers had positive experiences with the program. – However, it only slightly improved their confidence in teaching the arts. – Teachers emphasized the need for ongoing professional development to support creative teaching more effectively.	– Knowledge: Arts teaching approaches and integration. – Skills: Creative lesson delivery, use of external partnerships. – Personality: Willingness to learn, openness to collaboration, reflective practice.
(Escala et al., 2024)	• 2 supranational/governmental entities • 12 socio-cultural institutions • 6 primary schools (teachers and staff)	Qualitative ethnographic approach Documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews	– To explore how arts integration in schools affects student engagement – To understand teachers' perspectives on collaboration and ICT use in arts education	– Teachers value arts integration for student engagement – Collaboration with arts specialists helps but is not always sustained – Limitations include weak leadership support, lack of interdisciplinary planning, and inconsistent partnerships	– Knowledge: Interdisciplinary teaching, arts and ICT integration – Skills: Collaboration, creative lesson planning, flexible teaching approaches – Personality: Openness, adaptability, teamwork, initiative

				– ICT can enhance creative learning if properly supported	
(Oliver-Barcelo et al., 2024)	25 experts from 10 Ibero-American countries	Qualitative interviews	– To identify strengths and weaknesses in early childhood teacher training related to arts education. – To suggest improvements for more effective integration of the arts in pre-service teacher education.	– Current training is seen as unsatisfactory. – Five key improvements needed: 1. Stronger connection with the cultural sector 2. Clearer artistic focus 3. Inclusion of more artistic disciplines 4. Emphasis on cross-disciplinarity 5. Re-definition of the arts' role in education – These changes can help future teachers better foster creativity in young learners.	– Knowledge: Value and integration of arts in early education. – Skills: Cross-disciplinary teaching, cultural engagement. – Personality: Appreciation for the arts, openness to new methods.

Quality Appraisal

In line with Kitchenham and Charters' (2007) guidelines, we assessed the quality of primary studies original research articles selected for detailed analysis using a framework (Anas Abouzahra et al., 2020) consisting of six quality criteria (QA1–QA6). Q1, Are the research aims clearly stated? Q2, Is the context of the study adequately described? Q3, Is the research method clearly described and appropriate? Q4, Are the results clearly reported? Q5, Is there a clear statement of the findings? Q6, Are threats to validity explicitly discussed? Each criterion received one of three scores: "Yes" (1) if fully met, "Partly" (0.5) if somewhat met, or "No" (0) if not met at all. The criteria focused on evaluating key aspects: whether the

study's purpose was clearly stated (QA1); if its relevance and usefulness were evident (QA2); the clarity of its methodology (QA3); the definition of core concepts (QA4); any comparisons with similar research (QA5); and acknowledgment of limitations (QA6). This structured scoring system enabled a systematic and consistent evaluation of each study, allowing for thorough quantitative and qualitative comparisons and enhancing the overall reliability and rigor of the review's findings. Table 4 presents the quality assessment of ten primary studies (AR1–AR10) across six criteria, scored from 0 to 1. Most studies showed high methodological rigor, with AR5 and AR7 scoring highest (91.67%) and several others scoring 83.33%. AR9 showed moderate quality (75%), while AR3, AR4, and AR10 had the lowest scores (66.67%), indicating areas for improvement. Overall, the studies generally met strong quality standards.

Table 4

Quality Assessment Table For Selected Paper

Data	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Total Marks	Percent
AR 1	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	5	83.33
AR 2	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	5	83.33
AR 3	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	0	4	66.67
AR 4	1	1	0.5	0.5	0	1	4	66.67
AR 5	1	1	1	1	0.5	1	5.5	91.67
AR 6	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	5	83.33
AR 7	1	1	1	1	0.5	1	5.5	91.67
AR 8	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	5	83.33
AR 9	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	0.5	4.5	75.00
AR 10	1	1	0.5	0.5	0	1	4	66.67

The initial themes were refined for consistency and validated by two experts in visual arts and curriculum design. Each subtheme was reviewed for clarity, relevance, and domain suitability. Any discrepancies were addressed collaboratively by the authors, with final adjustments made based on expert feedback and author consensus.

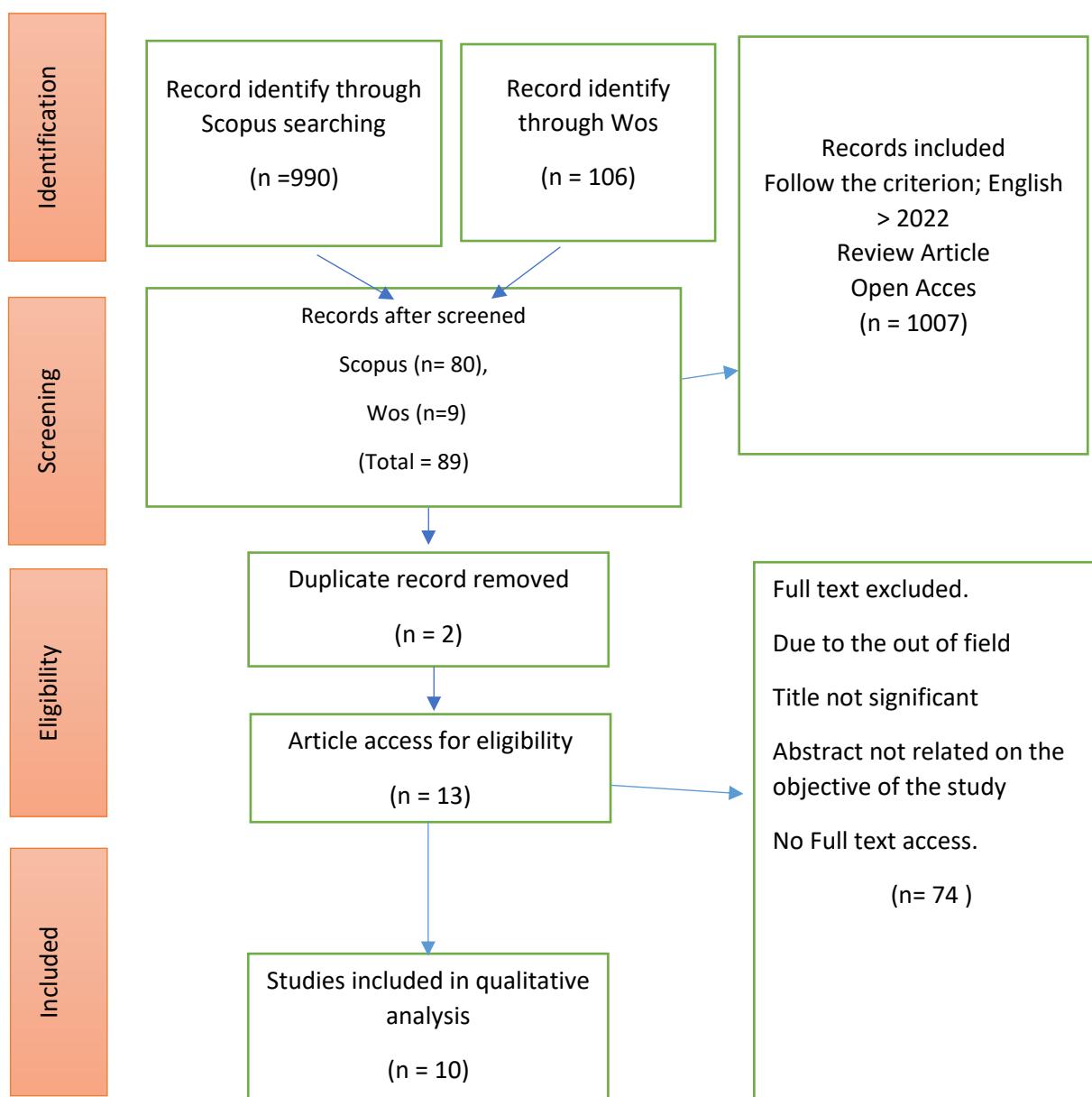


Figure 1: Flow Diagram of the Proposed Searching Study

Results and Finding

How do visual arts educators develop pedagogical expertise that enhances teaching effectiveness in the context of human capital development?

The development of pedagogical expertise in visual arts education is shaped by learning environments, reflective practice, and teacher preparation, all of which contribute to teaching effectiveness and human capital growth. Swanzy-Impraim et al. (2023) highlighted the role of innovative learning spaces and teaching practices in fostering creativity, while Chappell et al. (2025) emphasized interdisciplinary approaches such as collaboration and real-world engagement in STEAM education. Costes-Onishi and Kwek (2023) found that teachers often focus more on technical skills than meaning-making in aesthetic inquiry, revealing a gap in pedagogical depth. Oeschger et al. (2022) showed that values embedded in curricula influence teaching behavior, supporting the need for value-conscious instruction. Fahy (2023) and Sanz and Rodriguez-Labajos (2021) demonstrated how arts-based initiatives and activism

enhance teacher self-awareness and student engagement. Meanwhile, Oliver-Barcelo et al. (2024) and Escala et al. (2024) called for stronger cultural integration and interdisciplinary collaboration in teacher training. Campbell and Cunningham (2025) further suggested that understanding children's artistic progression supports informed teaching. Together, these studies affirm that pedagogical expertise in visual arts must integrate creativity, cultural literacy, and reflective practice to support effective teaching and sustainable human capital development.

In what ways do visual arts teachers implement innovative and flexible instructional strategies to improve student engagement and creative learning outcomes?

Visual arts teachers implement innovative and flexible instructional strategies by adapting pedagogical approaches, integrating interdisciplinary methods, and engaging with broader cultural and technological contexts. Swanzy-Impraim et al. (2023) emphasized the need for creative learning spaces and collaborative practices to enhance student engagement, while Chappell et al. (2025) highlighted "thinking-making-doing" and real-world connections as central to effective STEAM education. Costes-Onishi and Kwek (2023) found that aesthetic inquiry remains underutilized, often reduced to formal analysis rather than deeper meaning-making. Escala et al. (2024) showed that ICT integration and collaboration with cultural institutions can enrich learning, although sustained support remains a challenge. Fahy (2023) reported that external arts programs increased teacher participation but had limited impact on teaching confidence. Sanz and Rodriguez-Labajos (2021) demonstrated how arts-based activism enhances inclusivity and critical awareness in learning. Furthermore, Oliver-Barcelo et al. (2024) and Campbell and Cunningham (2025) underlined the importance of teacher preparation in promoting flexible strategies, especially when grounded in artistic integration and child-centered observation. Oeschger et al. (2022) confirmed that value-oriented curricula influence adaptive teaching behaviors. Collectively, these findings show that flexible strategies in visual arts require structural support, reflective practice, and interdisciplinary engagement to foster creativity and learning effectiveness.

How does the cultivation of a reflective mindset and professional identity contribute to the competency growth of visual arts educators in achieving effective teaching?

The development of a reflective mindset and professional identity is essential to enhancing the competency of visual arts educators in delivering effective teaching. Oeschger et al. (2022) showed that teachers' perceptions of curriculum values, especially Openness to Change and Self-Transcendence, shape reflective practices that align instruction with educational ideals. Similarly, Fahy (2023) noted that while initiatives like the Creative Schools Initiative promote teacher involvement in arts education, their long-term impact is limited without structured professional development to strengthen self-awareness. Costes-Onishi and Kwek (2023) found that the underuse of aesthetic inquiry for meaning-making suggests a lack of reflective depth in teaching practice, highlighting the need for critical self-assessment. Chappell et al. (2025) emphasized empowerment and personalization as core traits of effective educators within the STEAM framework, both of which reinforce reflective teaching identities. Escala et al. (2024) added that sustained collaboration and interdisciplinary engagement support teachers in developing adaptive, reflective instruction. Oliver-Barcelo et al. (2024) further underlined that early exposure to cultural and artistic experiences in training programs contributes to stronger reflective capacities and identity formation. These studies collectively

demonstrate that reflective thinking and professional identity are key drivers of competency growth in visual arts education.

Discussion and Conclusion

The competency models presented in Table 5 are among the key references in the field of human resource development. Each model introduces core concepts aimed at enhancing individual performance within organizations. McClelland's (1973) model emphasizes psychological traits, such as motives, values, and personality, as more reliable predictors of job performance than IQ. Boyatzis (1982) distinguishes between threshold competencies required for job entry and differentiating competencies like emotional intelligence that drive superior performance. Spencer and Spencer (1993) integrate both internal (motives, traits, self-concept) and external (knowledge, skills) aspects of performance. Meanwhile, the UNESCO ICT-CFT (2018) framework focuses on teachers' digital competencies, including pedagogy, ethics, and inclusive practices. Collectively, these models promote a more effective, skilled, and adaptable human workforce.

Table 5

Competency Model Analysis and Key Competency Concept

Competence Model	Focus	Used By	Key Competency Concept
McClelland (1973)	Job performance through psychological attributes	Industrial, organizational psychology	Motives, values and personality traits are considered more reliable predictors of job performance than intelligence quotient (IQ).
Boyatzis (1982)	Leadership and managerial effectiveness	Organization Academia	Threshold competencies are essential for job entry: differentiating competencies (e.g., emotional intelligence) distinguish superior performance
Spencer & Spencer (1993)	High performance in roles	Human resource, corporate, education	Including underlying (motives, traits, self-concept) and surface (knowledge, skills) competencies.
UNESCO ICT-CFT (2018)	Teacher digital competence	Ministries, Global education	Covers knowledge, pedagogy, ethics, ICT intergration, and inclusive practices

Findings from the reviewed studies align closely with earlier competency models, including Spencer and Spencer (1993), which emphasize both underlying traits (motives, self-concept) and surface competencies (knowledge, skills). While McClelland (1973) focused on psychological traits, recent studies highlight creative planning, cultural awareness, and reflective teaching. Boyatzis's (1982) differentiating competencies are seen in traits like empathy and openness. Compared to earlier models focused mainly on individual predictors, current competencies are more holistic integrating collaboration, technology, and inclusive pedagogy reflecting the evolving demands of 21st-century education that value both cognitive and emotional development in teaching.

The enhancement of teacher competency in visual arts education is shaped by pedagogical expertise, reflective practice, and humanistic values such as empathy and inclusivity. These

elements support adaptive, value-driven teaching aligned with competency models that emphasize the integration of knowledge, skills, and character. For future research, it is recommended to investigate how reflective practices influence competency growth across diverse educational contexts and stages of teaching careers. Studies on the role of digital tools and AI in fostering reflective pedagogy may also provide innovative insights for strengthening professional identity and improving instructional effectiveness in visual arts education.

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