

## Mnenja učiteljev razrednega pouka o pomenu in uporabi učnih metod pri pouku likovne umetnosti

ZLATA TOMLJENOVIC

**Povzetek** Kakovost pedagoškega procesa pri pouku likovne umetnosti je v veliki meri odvisna od kreativne in učinkovite kombinacije splošnih in predmetnospecifičnih učnih metod. Cilj raziskave je preveriti mnenja učiteljev o funkciji, posebnostih, pomenu in cilju uporabe posameznih učnih metod pri pouku likovne umetnosti ter tudi o pomenu pouka likovne umetnosti kot šolskega predmeta. V empirično raziskavo je bilo vključenih 373 učiteljev razrednega pouka na Hrvaškem. Za preverjanje korelacijske povezave med spremenljivkami delovna doba, percepcija pomena pouka likovne umetnosti kot šolskega predmeta in percepcija lastne avtonomije ter spremenljivkami uporaba učnih metod pri pouku likovne umetnosti je bil uporabljen Spearmanov test korelacije. Ugotovili smo, da so značilnosti, prednosti ter cilji splošnih in specifičnih metod dela pri pouku likovne umetnosti še vedno nezadostno obdelani in ostajajo neraziskani tako v strokovni literaturi kot v šolski praksi. Ugotovitve bodo v pomoč pri modernizaciji in izboljšanju šolske prakse, lahko pa tudi spodbudijo nadaljnje raziskave na tem področju.

**Ključne besede:** • interaktivni pristop učenja in poučevanja • splošne in predmetnospecifične učne metode • učitelji razrednega pouka • učne strategije • pouk likovne umetnosti •

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## Elementary School Teachers' Attitudes towards the Importance and use of Teaching Methods in Visual Arts Education

ZLATA TOMLJENOVIC

**Abstract** The quality of the teaching process in visual arts largely depends on a creative and effective combination of both general and subject-specific (visual arts) teaching methods. The aim of this study was to determine in-service teachers' perceptions of the features, specifics, importance and objectives of teaching methods in visual arts education, as well as their perception of the importance of visual arts as a school subject. The research was conducted on a sample of 373 Croatian elementary school teachers. A correlation was determined between the following variables: "teachers' work experience", "teachers' perception of the importance of visual arts education" and the variable: "use of teaching methods in visual arts classes". Findings have implications for modernizing and improving school practice; they also suggest further research in this area.

**Keywords:** • interactive approach to learning and teaching • generic and subject-specific teaching methods • elementary school teachers • teaching strategies • visual arts •

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## Introduction

Nowadays, life is marked by the global presence of visual communications; visual information has become part of everyday life in all its variety. This fact points to the need for changing the old paradigms of visual arts education. Teaching visual arts should promote the application of diverse, contemporary pedagogical approaches, adaptation to new content and to an altered educational context. Qualitative changes in the conceptualization of visual arts education are directed, on the one hand, towards the subjects of the educational process, and on the other, towards the development of new and more efficient ways of realizing the teaching process. Visual arts education should be in line with the contemporary demands of students, their needs and interests. A significant number of respectable authors in the field of pedagogy, psychology and art (Arnheim, 1974; Efland, 2002; Eisner, 2002) point to the importance of art in personal development and highlight the unavoidable needs of today's society, such as visual literacy and creative expression.

In the implementation of the educational process, considerable importance is given to the quality development of interaction-communication activities between teachers and students (Tomljenović, 2015). Moreover, research points to the teacher as the most important factor affecting student learning as well as to major differences in performance among teachers (Marzano, Pickering, Pollock, 2006). Contemporary visual arts education requires creative teachers who can keep abreast of new trends in education and who, in addition to general pedagogical-psychological, didactic and personal competences, possess subject-specific competences (Zupančič, Velikonja, 2017). The subject-specific competences in visual arts education are related to knowledge of the purpose, tasks, aims and role of the visual arts as a subject in the educational system, as well as to mastery of methodological procedures that respect the specifics of visual arts learning and teaching. The teaching methods and procedures are designed by the teachers. The criteria for selecting methods include the students' age and developmental level, student motivation, knowledge and abilities, cognitive styles, art types, spatial and material conditions, as well as didactic-related tasks and objectives.

## Use of teaching methods in the context of contemporary visual arts education

In visual arts education, teaching methods can be classified into two categories: general teaching methods, applicable in the activities of all teaching subjects, and subject-specific teaching methods. Subject-specific (visual arts) methods arise from the particulars of the visual arts area, its features and problems. Therefore, the use of these methods is very important, since this is the only way to make the most of this subject's methodological potential. By applying subject-specific methods in visual arts education, the students develop their ability to perceive and think about visual phenomena, their imagination, the ability to solve visual problems, their divergent and critical thinking, creative expression, creative and independent use of art materials and techniques and the ability to create useful knowledge (Berce Golob, 1993; Karlavaris, 1991). The first seriously attempted classification of general and subject-specific teaching methods in the area of visual arts education in Croatia (as well as in the former Yugoslavia) appeared in the work of

Karlavaris (1987). He generated the subject-specific teaching methods from the specific nature of the art-pedagogical process itself (specifics of aesthetic communication, specifics of creative processes, complexity of visual appearance and function, and the individual, subjective features of visual phenomena). There are four subject-specific methods, and two different methods that can be differentiated from each. These are as follows: the method of visual and aesthetic communication (including the method of aesthetic cultivation and the method of multiplication and elaboration of artistic sensibility); the research method (including the transposition method and the method of indirect stimuli); the complexity method (including the method of overlapping and the method of alternating influences); and the method of autonomous procedures (including the method of alternatives and variants and the method of awareness of artistic sensibility) (Karlavaris, 1991). Karlavaris's research and the classification of visual arts teaching methods have been continued and partly modified by the Slovenian authors Berce Golob (1993) and Tacol (2003). This issue in the context of modern visual art curricula also constitutes a research topic of the Slovenian authors Duh and Zupančič (Duh, 2004, Duh, Zupančič, 2013). Croatian professional literature does not offer a more detailed analysis of visual arts teaching methods, so we used the above mentioned literature for the purposes of this study.

### **Research problem, aims and hypotheses**

Despite the modernization of visual arts education theory, outdated approaches to learning and teaching visual arts are still prevalent in Croatian schools. The problem arises in the context of teachers' interpretation of theoretical concepts and content from the Elementary School Curriculum, as well as their implementation in practical teaching activities. Elementary school teaching is often characterized by some teachers' passivity and uncritical use of established teaching styles and methods, along with a lack of methodological pluralism, freedom, and openness to using more effective ways of learning and teaching (Tacol, Tomšič-Čerkez, 2004; Tomljenović, 2015). Most elementary school teachers still work in the transmission role of knowledge mediators, and mostly use established general teaching methods: the method of oral presentation, demonstration and conversation. In this way, student artistic activity is directed only towards the realization of the visual motif and the use of art techniques. Thus, other aims of visual arts education cannot be realized, despite the guidelines for modern concepts in the visual arts curriculum as prescribed by the Croatian National Education Standard (hereinafter: HNOS). HNOS sets out specific guidelines that promote the realization of a high-level of student activity, as well as the use of contemporary teaching methods that stimulate students' activity and artistic development as part of overall personal development (Vodič kroz HNOS, 2005). These concepts also imply a shift to the transformational model of learning and teaching, in which the teacher encourages students' active participation by fostering interactive conversation, discussion, questions, and researching and solving problem-shaped visual tasks.

The aim of this study was to examine the reasons for and frequency of elementary school teachers' use of certain teaching methods in visual arts education and to determine their perception of the features, importance, purpose and objectives of visual arts teaching.

Teachers' attitudes and opinions greatly affect the planning, structure and achievement of the goals of visual arts teaching. Another aim of the study was to establish the correlation between the variables "teachers' work experience", "perception of the importance of visual arts education", "perception of the importance of teacher autonomy" and the variable "use of teaching methods in visual arts classes".

Considering the aims of the research, the following hypotheses were derived:

H1: The choice of teaching methods and teaching styles in visual art classes differs with regard to the teacher's work experience.

H2: The selection of teaching methods and teaching styles in visual art classes differs with regard to the teacher's perception of the importance of art as a school subject.

H3: The choice of teaching methods and teaching styles in visual art classes differs with regard to the teacher's attitudes about their own autonomy.

## **Methods**

### *Sample*

The study included 373 randomly selected elementary school teachers (hereinafter: teachers) from the regions of Primorsko-goranska, Istarska and Lika-Senj. The schools where the participants work are located in urban, suburban and rural areas. The participants' age ranges from 25 to 65 years. The highest percentage (50%) of participants is between 36 and 50 years of age (with an average of 44). Work experience refers to time spent at the teachers' workplace. Values range between 1 and 45 years, while the average length of work experience is 20 years.

### **Data collection procedures and analysis**

The empirical research was based on a quantitative research paradigm. For the purpose of this study, an apparatus was created that included a survey for teachers. This study is part of a larger research project. The teachers' attitudes were examined regarding the importance of visual arts education and their opinions about the frequency, and purpose of and reasons for the use of certain methods in visual arts education. Objectivity, reliability and validity of the questionnaire were calculated. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used. In order to verify the correlation between the variables, the nonparametric Spearman correlation test was used. It measures the interconnection between two ordinal variables, since the data distribution significantly deviates from the normal distribution. The criteria for confirming the hypothesis were determined as follows: if there was a statistically significant correlation between more than half the variables, the hypothesis would be confirmed. If there was a statistically significant correlation between less than half the variables, the hypothesis would not be confirmed.

## **Results and discussion**

### *Teachers' attitudes towards the importance of visual arts education*

This section presents teachers' perception of the importance, purpose and goals of visual arts education.

**Table 1:** Teachers' perception of the importance of visual arts as a school subject

	f	f.%
no importance	1	.3
small importance	13	3.5
average importance	44	11.8
great importance	214	57.4
very great importance	101	27.1

Responses indicate that the teachers' perception of the importance of visual arts as a school subject is mostly positive, since the vast majority rate it of great (57.4%) or very great (27%) importance. However, 11.8% of teachers consider this subject to be of only average importance, while a small number of teachers attribute small importance (3.5%) or no importance (0.3%) to the subject. In all, 253 (67.8%) teachers answered descriptively to the same question. Their opinions can be classified into several categories. The largest number of teachers (116) believes that the subject is important for the development of creativity, creative thinking and imagination. The development of motor skills was highlighted by 68 teachers, the development of visual and aesthetic sensitivity by 48, and the learning of visual arts and visual observation by 23 of them. Forty-three teachers mentioned the advantage of relaxation and freedom of self-expression, while 32 teachers noted the tendency for students to express themselves through art media i.e. the student's preference for the subject. As important reasons, the teachers also highlighted the development of various emotional skills (36), social skills (18) and work habits (patience, persistence, orderliness and concentration - 12). The possibility of correlation is also highlighted as an important component of this subject (21). Nineteen teachers see visual arts education as an important part of the students' global personality development. The importance of visual culture was recognized by a few teachers because of the development of an independent, active and exploratory approach to the environment (10). The remaining seven responses are classified under "Other". Answers that point to the lesser importance of the subject are largely related to the disadvantageous position and the weak valorization of this subject by the existing education policy. Fourteen teachers think that this subject is of little importance because of the extremely small number of lessons in relation to the benefits that the subject offers. Seven teachers believe that parents assign less importance to the visual arts in relation to other school subjects. Three participants believe that the lesser importance of the subject arises from poor material and technical conditions for work. Only 2 responses expressed a negative attitude to visual arts, considering it less important than other subjects.

**Table 2:** Perception of the importance of purpose and goals in visual arts education

	f:%
development of creativity and creative thinking	92.7
learning a visual language	67.0
relaxation of students through practical expression	54.7
development of aesthetic sensitivity	54.1
development of motor skills	44.7
development of an active and exploratory approach to the environment	36.2
development of social skills	18.5

The next question focused on teachers' opinions about the importance of purpose and goals in visual arts education. In this area, teachers could select more than one answer. Based on the answers provided, the vast majority of teachers (93%) believe that the main goal of visual arts education is the development of creative expression and imagination. This answer can be easily argued with the concept of visual arts as a subject that is, above all, practical in nature, without the strict structuring of teaching content. On the other hand, there is an increased awareness of the need to develop the cognitive abilities of students, since 67% of teachers mentioned the learning of visual language and the development of visual thinking as important goals. The practical and emotional dimension of teaching visual arts was emphasized by about half the participants. Only slightly more than one-third of teachers (36%) mentioned the development of an active and exploratory approach to the environment as one of the goals of teaching visual arts, which indicates inadequate awareness or lack of knowledge about how to apply modern teaching methods within this subject. A small number of participants (19%) mentioned the development of social skills as one of the goals, which can also be interpreted as indicating a lack of knowledge about the contemporary, interactive approaches to teaching and learning, which place emphasis on social relations among all participants in the teaching process. This could also indicate insufficient awareness of the importance of group work, which promotes collaborative learning.

**Table 3:** Perception of the importance of acquiring certain knowledge, abilities and skills in teaching visual arts

	Mean	SD
creative thinking and expression	3.60	.580
motor skills	3.31	.658
emotional skills	3.31	.713
Capacity for independent exploration	3.30	.696
ability to solve problems	3.23	.708
social skills	3.14	.711
knowledge of visual language	3.09	.735
verbal skills	2.44	.812

The analysis of participants' responses shown in Table 3 gives a picture that is slightly different from the results in the previous table. The greatest number of teachers, as in the previous question, considers that the major emphasis in visual arts education should be on the development of creative thinking and expression, and on the development of motor and emotional abilities. Other abilities whose development within the curriculum of art

education is considered important include the capacity for independent exploration, ability to solve problems and social skills. In last place among the desirable knowledge and skills is the development of knowledge of visual language (although in the previous question this category took a high second place) and the development of verbal skills. Regardless of the fact that these types of knowledge and skill are among the important goals within the subject of visual arts, teachers do not consider them important in the context of the general education that students acquire. This confirms teachers' perception of visual arts mostly as a practical, or non-cognitive subject. This fact also neglects the need for development of visual perception and visual thinking, which has become a valuable form of communication in a modern way of life dominated by visual media and visual communication.

### *Teacher's opinions about the use of teaching methods in visual arts*

The next set of questions relates to teachers' opinions about the importance of using certain teaching methods, as well as the frequency of application of particular methods in visual arts classes. The questions refer to general and subject-specific teaching methods. In order to make their features more comprehensible to the teachers, method names were somewhat modified with regard to the terms used in the previously cited professional literature. This is because the terminology and classification of subject-specific teaching methods is almost completely unknown in Croatian school practice. Their application by the teacher is not planned (as a result of understanding the attributes, purpose and goals of subject-specific teaching methods). Teachers' methods for and results of work depend mostly on the personal enthusiasm of individuals and the frequency of applying contemporary approaches to teaching visual arts. Consequently, it is more likely that some of activities specific to the use of subject-specific teaching methods will be also realized by applying that kind of work. The question includes 14 general and subject-specific teaching methods.

**Table 4:** *Frequency of the use of general and subject-specific methods in visual art classes*

	Mean	SD
conversation method	3.07	.718
method of correlating visual arts content with a context	3.05	.677
demonstration method	2.92	.770
oral presentation method	2.78	.777
method of expanding and elaborating on visual sensibility	2.76	.787
method of transposition and alternatives	2.65	.729
problem-solving method	2.53	.780
method of using varied media and multimedia	2.52	.745
method of autonomous visual processes	2.50	.788
aesthetic communication method	2.47	.920
complexity method	2.10	.811
method of experiential learning	2.09	.775
method of independent comprehension and mastery of art techniques	1.85	.936
text-based method	1.52	.893



The analysis of responses regarding the frequency of the use of certain methods in visual arts classes (0 = never, 1 = rarely, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often, 4 = always) indicates that teachers mostly use the conversation method, the method of correlating visual arts content with a context and the demonstration method. It is interesting to see a high ranking for the method correlating visual arts content with a context, which tells us about the teacher's awareness of the interdisciplinary nature of visual arts. Teachers also often use the conversation method, the demonstration method and the oral presentation method, which are the usual and most commonly used methods in school practice in general (Terhart, 2001). The use of the oral presentation method points to the still strong rootedness of the frontal (transmissional) way of teaching visual arts. In the upper half of the scale, we also find the method of expanding and elaborating on visual sensibility, which can be interpreted by the majority of teachers as an awareness of the need for developing specific arts abilities. The question, however, is how well this method is used in an appropriate, expert manner, with the understanding of all its features. In the group of methods used occasionally or less frequently, there are mostly subject-specific methods, and contemporary general methods, such as the problem-solving method and the method of experiential learning. This fact once again suggests that teachers are still minimally familiar with the features of contemporary teaching strategies and contemporary concepts of visual arts teaching, or, possibly, they do not know effective ways in which these could be implemented in practice. The text-based method falls at the very bottom in the frequency of application. The most likely reason for this is the abolition of the obligation to use textbooks for teaching visual arts in 2010 by the Ministry of Health, Education and Sports - a move that indirectly imposes a conclusion about the inconsistency of textbooks as teaching material for visual arts, regardless that some research (Bračun, Koščec, Loher, 2010) points to the opposite effect. Another reason may lie in the specific nature of visual arts education, which is based on the students' practical work, especially in classroom teaching. Financial reasons may also play a role in the infrequent use of textbooks, and another reason may be a lack of time (in Croatia, only one hour per week is provided for visual arts classes), i.e. the teachers' effort to allow students more time for artistic expression.

**Table 5:** Perception of the efficacy of certain teaching methods in realizing the aims of teaching visual art

	f:%
demonstration method	62.82
problem-solving method	54.72
aesthetic communication method	44.86
conversation method	43.13
method of correlating visual arts content with a context	42.32
method of using varied media and multimedia	40.97
method of expanding and elaborating on visual sensibility	36.39
method of experiential learning	36.39
method of transposition and alternatives	32.08
method of autonomous visual processes	17.79
oral presentation method	10.51
complexity method	09.43

Teachers' opinions differ to a certain extent from the answers given in the previous question in their responses to the question of which teaching methods best encourage student activity and motivation for work, or contribute most to the achievement of the goals of teaching visual arts. Teachers could opt for several answers. The largest number of teachers (62.8%) thinks of the demonstration method as the most successful method. This is followed by the problem solving method (54.7%), which suggests that teachers are aware of the need to apply contemporary teaching methods. Consequently, the reasons for inadequate implementation of this method can be sought not only in teachers, but also in external circumstances, such as insufficiently equipped classrooms and obsolete working conditions. As expected, subject-specific methods and contemporary general methods follow at a slightly lower percentage: the method of expanding and elaborating on visual sensibility (36%), the method of experiential learning (36%) and the method of transposition and alternatives (32%). The low percentage of responses related to specific teaching methods – the method of autonomous visual processes and the complexity method--can be explained by the teachers' ignorance of their features, although the names might suggest what kind of activity they relate to.

**Table 6:** *Perception of the effectiveness of certain activities in visual arts classes*

	Mean	SD
practical work (artistic expression)	3.62	.626
demonstration method	3.27	.757
students' independent exploration	3.27	.734
conversation method	3.12	.749
oral presentation method	3.11	.785
use of textbooks	1.80	1.032

When it comes to activities that should provide the students with an understanding and adoption of visual arts content (0 = at lowest, 4 = highest), teachers have the following opinion about their effectiveness: practical work (artistic expression) is considered the most effective activity, which once again confirms the pervasive perception of visual arts as a primarily practical activity. This is followed by the demonstration method, which along with the oral presentation method and the conversation method, still mostly dominate practice, as well as students' independent exploration, which shows that teachers are aware of the need for and effectiveness of the active and independent participation of students in the teaching process. Nevertheless, these modern methods are still inadequately used. Čudina-Obradović and Brajković (2009) cite Kohl's (1970) statement on teachers' potential resistance to the use of teaching methods that require greater student activity. The reasons for this are the fear of losing control during the teaching process, fear/sense of unwillingness to quit using traditional frameworks, fear of losing the sense of their own competence, fear of creativity and the need for constant self-evaluation and self-education. Therefore, particular attention should be devoted to the organization of quality teacher training in order to reduce these unwanted attitudes and replace them with the sense of security, competence, and a positive relation to visual arts and teaching in general. The conversation method and the oral presentation method are considered of average effectiveness. The weaker positioning of the conversation method is probably due to the experience of those teachers who do not use this method

appropriately – by talking to students about visual arts with the aim of encouraging visual perception and thinking; asking open-ended questions that encourage students to participate in the conversation, to present their own thoughts and ideas, and to reach independent conclusions. In the opinion of teachers, the least effective method is the use of textbooks. Besides the above-mentioned reason for abolishing the obligation to use textbooks in visual arts teaching, we can find several other possible reasons for the weak ranking of the last category: lack of time, lack of interest in this type of work in visual arts classes, inappropriate textbook concepts, financial reasons, etc.

*Table 7: Frequency of using different work forms in visual arts classes*

	Mean	SD
individual work	3.04	.908
frontal work	2.87	1.012
group work	2.26	.709
teamwork	2.05	.744

The use of work forms also points to the way that teachers adapt to the specifics of teaching visual arts. The answers shown in Table 7 (0 = never, 4 = always) give us the following results: the individual work form is the most commonly used, which is understandable and expected. Visual arts teaching necessarily involves this work form: each student individually handles the task through practical creative expression, and during that activity, the teacher should also have an individual approach to each student. The answer also shows teachers' awareness of the need for such an approach in teaching visual arts. Immediately afterwards, follows the frontal work form. Its frequent use points to the persistence of the traditionally conceived concept of teaching (in which learning is still taking place through the teacher presenting the teaching material while the students listen). On the other hand, this work form cannot and should not be avoided, since organization of and time constraints around teaching mandate its use. Group work is applied occasionally, while teamwork is the least commonly used work form. Visual arts education offers wide opportunities for group work and teamwork. Carpenter (2006) and Slavich and Zimbardo (2012) write about the positive effects of group work and teamwork, concluding that some cognitive higher-order activities such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation are most successful if they are implemented in team or group work mode.

*Correlation between the variables “teachers’ work experience,” “perception of the importance of teaching visual culture,” “teachers’ perception of the importance of their own autonomy” and the variable “use of teaching methods in visual arts classes”*

**Table 8:** *Correlation between the variables “teachers’ work experience,” “perception of the importance of teaching visual culture,” “teachers’ perception of the importance of their own autonomy” and the variable “use of teaching methods in visual arts classes”*

Spearman's rho	work experience	importance of visual arts	importance of autonomy
oral presentation method	-.001	-.023	-.048
conversation method	.992	.653	.353
method of using varied media and multimedia	-.106*	.180**	-.059
demonstration method	.040	.000	.255
method of transposition and alternatives	-.018	.158**	-.017
method of independent comprehension and mastery of art techniques	.726	.002	.739
aesthetic communication method	.111*	.163**	.017
problem-solving method	.033	.002	.740
method of expanding and elaborating on visual sensibility	.023	.214**	-.095
text-based method	.653	.000	.067
method of experiential learning	-.063	.036	-.042
complexity method	.228	.484	.420
method of autonomous visual processes	.045	.193**	-.029
method of correlating visual arts content with a context	.384	.000	.577
	.101	.219**	.114*
	.051	.000	.028
	.207**	.170**	-.015
	.000	.001	.771
	.080	.166**	.021
	.124	.001	.687
	-.012	.199**	.109*
	.823	.000	.035
	.007	.170**	.121*
	.887	.001	.019
	.019	.148*	.132*
	.709	.004	.011

Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)

\*  $p < 0,05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0,01$

*Correlation between the variable “teachers’ work experience” and the variable “use of teaching methods in teaching visual culture”*

The results (Table 8) show that the correlation between most variables is not statistically significant. There is a statistically significant correlation only between the variable “teacher’s work experience” and the other three variables. There is a negative correlation between “teachers’ work experience” and the method of using varied media and multimedia, while there is a positive correlation between “teachers’ work experience” and the method of transposition and alternatives, as well as the text-based method. This means that teachers with more work experience are more likely to use the method of

transposition and alternatives and the text-based method, while teachers with less work experience often employ varied media and multimedia. The largest statistically significant correlation exists between “teachers’ work experience” and the text-based method, while the correlation with the other two methods is weaker. The use of media and multimedia in teaching is expected among teachers with less work experience, as the use of multimedia (computer, TV and DVD) is a rather new phenomenon. It can also be assumed that younger teachers will be more willing and inclined to their use than older ones, since these modes also represent part of their everyday life outside school. There is an interesting correlation between the use of textbook tutorials and teachers with more work experience, although previous responses have shown that, in the opinion of teachers, the text-based method is the least effective way of teaching (Table 6): i.e. the text-based method in visual arts classes is the lowest ranking one based on frequency of use (Table 4). Given this fact, it can be concluded that a smaller proportion of teachers (those with more work experience) still prefer the use of textbooks as a teaching tool. Books for visual arts classes have been used in Croatian schools since 2000. It can be assumed that teachers with more work experience (i.e. older teachers) are more focused on the traditional concept of teaching (work with textbooks is usually based on the frontal way of teaching; textbooks also facilitate teaching by ensuring image examples and better structuring of classes). It can be assumed that teachers with more work experience are accustomed to working with textbooks in teaching other subjects. The positive correlation between using the method of transposition and alternatives and teachers with more work experience can be explained by their greater awareness of the need to encourage the students’ search for comparisons among and differences in the observation of art works and student work.

It can be concluded that the choice of teaching methods is less dependent on the teachers’ work experience, which means that most teaching methods are used by teachers with more and less work experience, with the exception of the method of using different media and multimedia, the method of transposition and alternatives, and the text-based method.

In other words, a correlation or statistically significant difference was not established between the variable “teachers’ work experience” and most of the aforementioned methods. The reasons for this may be found in the fact that the use of teaching methods is a highly dynamic and complex category, which depends on many factors in the educational process, especially teachers; however, not only are their professional competences important, but their personal competences as well. On the one hand, it is possible to assume that teachers with more work experience are less reluctant to adopt modern educational concepts, but may have more experience than younger teachers in assessing which teaching methods yield better results with students in practice. On the other hand, teachers with more work experience sometimes find that there is no need for additional professional training, as their experience is considered sufficient. However, work experience cannot replace the range of new knowledge that needs to be adopted by those with more work experience, i.e. those who consider their experiences to be “more valuable” (Cencič, 2004). Dimić (2005) writes about the trend towards a mild decline in creative and working ability with working age. This means that teachers with over 30 years of work experience increasingly fall into a routine. The results of the survey also indicate that teachers with 10 and 20 years of work experience are more creative than those with more than 20 and 30 years of work experience. Teachers with longer work

experience, however, have greater theoretical knowledge of modern pedagogical theories, but lack the ability to apply this in school practice. This fact is partly the consequence of a lack of practical activities during their studies (Tomljenović, Novaković, 2017; Županić Benić, 2017). The concept of study programs at faculties of teacher education is such that it does not allow students to acquire competences for quality teaching of visual culture (mostly because of an insufficient number of school hours for the course *Methodology of Visual Arts*). Some research (Javrh, Kalin, 2011) also confirms that teachers with less work experience (the first three years of teaching) cannot be expected to be sufficiently able to respect the diversity of their students or to handle the dynamics of classes. It can be concluded that teachers with time and gradual acquisition of professional experience become able to coordinate all elements of the teaching process and adapt to its unpredictable dynamics, while respecting individual characteristics of the students.

Based on the results above, it can be concluded that the H1 hypothesis has not been confirmed.

*The correlation between the variable "perception of the importance of visual arts classes" and the variable "use of teaching methods in visual arts classes"*

From Table 8 it is apparent that the correlation of most variables is statistically significant. Spearman's correlation coefficient shows that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between using varied media and multimedia, the demonstration method, the method of transposition and alternatives, the method of independent comprehension and mastery of art techniques, the problem-solving method, the method of expanding and elaborating on visual sensibility, the text-based method, the method of experiential learning, the complexity method, the method of autonomous visual processes, and the method of correlating visual arts content with a context and the variable "perception of the importance of visual arts classes." This means that the more teachers emphasize the importance of visual arts in the educational system, the more they use these teaching methods in their work. In other words, the frequency of using these teaching methods increases if teachers have a more positive perception of the importance of visual arts as a subject. The results also show that there is a statistically significant correlation between teachers who give greater importance to the subject of visual arts and the use of general contemporary teaching methods (the problem-solving method, the method of experiential learning), as well as to the use of subject-specific methods (the method of transposition and alternatives, the method of independent comprehension and mastery of art techniques, the method of expanding and elaborating on visual sensibility, the complexity method, the method of autonomous visual processes), with the exception of the aesthetic communication method. This information is interesting, as it shows that teachers' awareness of the importance of visual arts as a school subject is related to their better knowledge of the content, specifics and goals of visual arts teaching methods. The results can be also explained as meaning that better methodological and didactic teacher competence results in a better appreciation of some school subjects. No statistically significant correlation was found for only three methods out of a total of fourteen: the oral presentation method, the conversation method, and the aesthetic communication method. With the exception of the last method, this data was also expected, since the first

two methods are commonly used in teaching all other subjects. The greatest positive correlation exists between the variable “perception of the importance of visual arts classes” and the two variables “method of independent comprehension and mastery of art techniques” and “method of expanding and elaborating on visual sensibility.” The assumption is that teachers who attribute greater importance to visual arts as a subject use these methods because they see the most advantages and benefits of this subject in the students’ practical work. On the other hand, they are aware of the special features of visual arts that students need to learn, and so they consider that this can be accomplished most effectively by using the other method. The correlation with other methods is less pronounced. The weakest correlation exists with the oral presentation method, which was expected, since this method is used in all subjects and is not particularly related to the teaching of visual arts.

From these results, we can conclude that hypothesis H2 has been confirmed.

*Correlation between the variable “teachers’ perception of the importance of their own autonomy” and the variable “use of teaching methods in visual arts classes”*

The statistical analysis provided data on the correlation between the teachers’ perception of the importance of their own autonomy and the use of teaching methods in visual arts. The survey made by Slovenian authors (Marentič Požarnik, Kalin, Šteh, Valenčič Zuljan, 2005) shows that there are statistically significant differences in the Slovenian teachers’ perception of their own autonomy, and their perception depends on how teachers in Slovenia experience the current school reform. The greatest sense of autonomy is expressed by those teachers who see a broader purpose for the reform and see it as the development of metacognitive levels of knowledge and learning, the overall personal development of students and as the acquisition of quality knowledge. On the other hand, teachers who feel the least autonomous are those who see the purpose of the reform only in the changed content of the curriculum. According to these results, the third hypothesis of this study is that teachers who feel sufficiently autonomous in their work will also be reliant on the more frequent use of contemporary teaching methods and subject-specific methods, with the aim of ensuring a quality realization of visual arts classes.

From Table 8, it is apparent that the correlation between most variables is not statistically significant. Spearman’s correlation coefficient shows that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between “teachers’ perception of the importance of their own autonomy” and the following methods: the method of expanding and elaborating on visual sensibility, the complexity method, the method of correlating visual arts content with a context and the method of autonomous visual processes. There is also a statistically significant negative correlation between the teachers’ perception of the importance of their own autonomy and the use of the conversation method. This means that the method of expanding and elaborating on visual sensibility, the complexity method, the method of correlating visual arts content with a context, and the method of autonomous visual processes are more frequently used by teachers who find their own autonomy important, while the conversation method is more often used by those teachers who do not find their own autonomy important. The highest statistically significant correlation was established between “teachers’ perception of the importance of their own autonomy” and the method

of correlating visual arts content with a context, while the lowest correlation was established between the teachers' perception of the importance of their own autonomy and the text-based method and the method of transposition and alternatives.

The results point to a statistically significant positive correlation between the teachers' perception of the importance of their own autonomy and the use of four subject-specific methods (of the seven listed in Table 8). This fact can be interpreted to mean that teachers whose own autonomy is important also have a more positive attitude towards their own professional skills. In the context of visual arts, it means that they are also aware of the importance of the use of various teaching methods adapted to the specifics of visual arts classes. On the other hand, the statistically significant negative correlation between the teachers' perception of the importance of their own autonomy and the use of the conversation method suggests that teachers who do not view their own autonomy as relevant are less likely to find new, non-traditional ways of teaching and usually use the most common (general) teaching methods, such as the conversation method (this method is, in addition to the demonstration method and the oral presentation method, one of the most common and recommended methods in various visual arts textbooks that offer the ready-made teaching instruction solutions to which some teachers resort without either scrutiny or creative effort).

From the above results, it can be concluded that the H3 hypothesis has not been confirmed.

## Conclusion

Despite contemporary educational concepts, teaching methods are rarely the subject of professional training programs or the subject of analyses conducted during post-secondary studies, especially as part of the methodology of individual subjects. Research results show that their features, advantages and goals are still insufficiently elaborated and remain undetected. On the other hand, the frequency of using contemporary and specific teaching methods increases when teachers have a more positive view of the importance of visual arts as a subject. In teaching visual arts, teachers most often use general teaching methods. Contemporary general teaching methods (problem solving methods, experiential learning) are used less frequently, although most respondents are aware of their effectiveness in achieving the goals of visual arts classes. Specific (art) teaching methods are used to a lesser extent. Therefore, more attention needs to be paid to the initial education of future teachers. It is necessary to design more effective forms of school practice at faculties of teacher education, as well as practical workshops in the context of professional teacher training, where teachers can witness practical examples demonstrated in specific school situations.



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