Abstract:
The field of visual literacy has been active since its inception in 1969 by John Debes and members of various fields of study such as science, mathematics, psychology, education, and the arts forming the International Visual Literacy Association (IVLA). Recognizing that modern society is increasingly visual by nature, and with the advances in digital technologies, visual literacy is becoming an area of critical importance in education. Although much work has been done within the field to define it and to establish a firm theoretical base, the area of assessment has been somewhat limited until Avgerinou (2001) developed a means by which to categorize specific skill sets associated with three distinct areas of visual literacy (VL) ability: Visual Information, Intellectual Skill, and Cognitive Strategy. Avgerinou’s VL Index is the basis for a national study to measure the visual literacy ability of graduate level pre-service teachers. This descriptive study is preliminary study to investigate the measurement of VL ability across the United States in order to establish a baseline VL ability measure from which to make vital decisions in the purposeful training of visual literacy within teacher preparatory programs and professional development within school districts. This study describes the mean performance levels of 125 participants collected from a randomly stratified national population within five of the six regional accrediting agencies for public higher education. The measures of central tendency and variance for the individual skills within the Avgerinou (2001) VL Index indicate a need for growth, in particular, in the intellectual skills of concrete concepts, defined concepts, and higher order rules. The implications of these findings emphasize the need for more
development in critical engagement with visuals especially as it applies to Common Core State Standards assessments, consumer-driven marketing and power roles, and new modes of digital authorship in a media-saturated society.