
Promotion of Creative Development of Early Childhood Learners: ECE Teachers' Perspective on How in Atebubu Amantin Municipal

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ABSTRACT: *The aim of the study sought to examine the impact of teacher's creativity on the creative development of early childhood learners. In providing a clear justification to the purpose of the study, the qualitative research approach and the case study as the research design. The target population for the study was all the lower primary teachers in Early Childhood Development Model in Atebubu (ECD). The census was used as the sampling technique due to the relatively small number of the participants. Ideally, the semi-structured interview was used as the instrument for the study. The study found that Intellectual risk-taking, brainstorming, teachers' narrative and dramatization activities promote learners' creative abilities and development. The study concluded that teachers creating spaces for play, giving students access to time ask questions and providing learners active environment that are resource-rich, and supporting musical play in the classroom promote learners' creative abilities. The study recommended that providing teachers with opportunities to improve their creativity via continuing professional development is an important step in enhancing their understanding of the benefits of creativity in the classroom and assisting them in becoming more creative educators.*

KEYWORDS: early childhood, education, creative development

INTRODUCTION

Creativity is increasingly being recognised as a human trait that can and should be fostered via education. It is valued not only for personal growth and fulfilment, but also for its contribution to economic prosperity. The global emphasis on creativity has withstood the test of time. To emphasise, the National Advisory Committee for Creative and Cultural Education report (NACCCE, 1999) presented a number of comprehensive suggestions to encourage the recognition and advancement of creativity throughout the both formal and informal systems.

Because human abilities and people's capacities for creativity and imagination are key resources in a knowledge-driven economy, creativity is an essential element in a society dominated by technological advancements (Hayes, 2004). The ability to deal with complexity and live in the face of uncertainty is becoming more and more crucial as social systems change, and governments and

organisations throughout the world are more eager than ever to promote innovation. It aids in teaching young people the abilities they will require in a rapidly changing and uncertain environment and may increase their self-worth, drive, and success.

It is famously hard to define creativity, yet it is not limited to special people or to certain arts-based activities, nor is it unstructured play. It has been called "a state of mind" that involves "seeing, thinking, and innovating" and involves all of our intelligences functioning together (Craft, 2006). Additionally, it has been defined as "imaginative action fashioned to yield outputs that are both original and valuable" (NACCCE, 1999). Creativity is available whenever human intellect is actively used, and it is a crucial component of a successful education, which encompasses all topics on the curriculum and all students, teachers, and other primary school staff. In fact, everyone may show it in any part of life, at any time in their lives.

Although the debate over whether creativity can be improved has persisted for a while, there seems to be agreement in the field of education that creativity can be taught (Bahia, & Trindade, 2013; Beghetto, 2009; Craft, 2006; Draper, Hall, & Wilson, 2005; Puccio, & Gonzalez, 2004; Kaufman, 2016). When psychometric experts like Guilford and Torrance worked to expand and measure people's creativity in the middle of the 20th century, the quest to encourage creativity via training received greater attention (Parnes, 1963). Like other behaviours, creative activity presumably reflects a variety of taught abilities to some extent. These talents may have constraints imposed by inheritance, but I am sure that one may expand one's skill set despite these limitations by study (Sternberg, 2003).

In other words, the procedures and frameworks that educators and teachers use have the potential to significantly improve the performance of their pupils. Teachers are more likely to unlock their students' creative possibilities when they inspire them, provide them chances to think in a different way, and also offer them with a supportive atmosphere in which to engage in creative endeavours. In Ghana, the battle on the search for creativity among learners has also been on for some time. Most researchers have joined in the crew of stakeholders of education in fighting to bring creativity to the Ghanaian classroom, especially at the early childhood stage. Most of the studies done on creativity has added enough knowledge to literature with respect to the methods and techniques of stimulating creative thinking (Nyarko, Assumeng, & Atindanbilla, 2012 Silvia, 2008). However, the question that readily comes to mind is what at all would this creative characteristic that we seek to instill in our lower primary pupils' will do for them? In other words, what impact would creativity have on the lives of pupils in the early childhood stage?

Rationale of the study

The application of creativity will be essential to live in the conceptual era (Warner & Myers, 2009). Creativity is becoming an increasingly popular issue in educational settings (Clegg, 2008; Feldman, & Benjamin, 2006). Teachers are an essential resource at the forefront of maximising students' learning experiences and releasing students' potential in classrooms. Teachers, whether they like it or not, function as the metronome in the teaching process (Creme, 2003; Gibson, Luckman & Willoughby-Smith, 2010). The ultimate purpose of education is to help students

improve their talents and, as a result, maximise their potential for practical applications in everyday life. In Ghana, the notion of innovation is especially important because the country is now grappling with young unemployment (Silvia, 2008). As a result, the rising emphasis on creativity in studies is critical. However, it appears that most studies done in Ghana seems to focus more on teacher actions that bring about creativity in the Secondary schools and universities (Nyarko, Akenten, Abdul-Nasiru, 2013; Nyarko, 2010; Silvia, 2008). In other words, research on creativity in Ghana has taught us the impact of creativity in the classroom but has left untouched how teachers promote creative development of the child at the early childhood stage. Children's intellectual, spiritual, material, and emotional development is facilitated by the creative arts, which constitute a significant component of learning (Kindler, 2008). According to Bogen & Bogen (2003), students can be given a variety of creative projects to do that will challenge their way of thinking and help them come up with new creative ideas. Students may not become artists as a result of this method, but it may nevertheless assist to influence their creative growth as they build the problem-solving abilities they will need in the future. This study therefore sought to bridge the gap by finding out how teachers promote creative development of early childhood pupils in Atebubu Amantin Municipal.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Teresa Amabile developed the componential theory of creativity in 1983. This theory addresses the creative process and the different impacts on the process and its outputs. It is intended to be comprehensively beneficial for both psychological and organisational creativity research. The hypothesis is based on two key hypotheses. The highest degrees of creativity may be found in historically significant inventions, performances, scientific discoveries, and works of art. First, there is a continuum from low, ordinary levels of creativity found in everyday life to these heights. The second underlying premise is that there are different levels of originality in each individual's work, even within the same field. The degree of creativity that a person exhibits at any particular time depends on the elements of creativity that are active at that time both inside and outside of the individual.

The componential theory of creativity states that three factors—domain-relevant skills (expertise in a specific field or knowledge areas), creativity-relevant processes (cognitive and personality processes conducive to novel thinking), and task motivation—are influenced by within-individuals (specifically, the intrinsic drive to engage in an activity based on curiosity, enjoyment, or a sense of challenge). The external factor is the environment around the person, particularly the social environment.

According to the idea, creativity involves a combination of these factors; creativity should be at its maximum when an individual is working in an environment that is highly supportive of creativity and is intrinsically driven, has strong domain competence, and has high creative thinking skills (Amabile, 1983). According to the Componential Theory of Creativity, "all humans with normal capacities are capable of producing at least minimally creative work in some arena, some

of the time—and that the social environment (the education system) can impact both the level and the regularity of creative behaviour" (Amabile, 1997).

More significantly, Bronfenbrenner held that everything in a person's surroundings had an impact on their growth. The mesosystem, the macrosystem, exosystem, the chronosystem, and the microsystem are some of the five categories he used to categorise a person's surroundings. The system in which a person has direct touch and is closest to them is called a microsystem. Examples include the workplace, home, school, and childcare. Typically, a microsystem consists of family, peers, or caretakers. A microsystem has mutual relationship. In other words, how you respond to the individuals in your microsystem will influence how they respond to you. The ecological systems theory's level at which the largest impact is felt is this one. We will only discuss the microsystem level because it is pertinent to the present investigation (Bronfenbrenner, 1992).

In the framework of this study, the third component that affects creativity—the "social environment"—is given a lot of attention. Because this study is focused on the crucial role(s) that the teacher as a "relevant individual" plays (to advance the creative growth of the individual), the social situation (a child's connection with relevant individuals in the society) is extremely significant. The principle behind this is that the kid is seen of as having domain-relevant talents that are innate, and that his or her possibilities of evolving into a creative person depend on the setting in which they find themselves, which is the teacher component in the classroom.

The concept of creativity

According to Encarta (1993), "creativity" is the capacity to employ imagination to produce novel and unique ideas or objects, whereas "creative" is the act of creating something new. In other words, creativity is creating something new or enhancing something that already exists to give it a fresh appearance or new functionality. It also implies changing anything somewhat from how it was before or rearranging existing items in new ways. According to this interpretation, the study created exercises that would inspire young students to think creatively or independently and to be able to use new techniques while completing creative projects that might reveal their latent skills. A group of abilities known as creativity are required to generate ideas that are both unique and worthwhile (Sternberg, 2001). According to Moore (1993), creativity is that vivacious inner spark of life that people employ to express themselves to the outside world. In light of the aforementioned claim, it becomes clear that creativity is the capacity to communicate one's inner sentiments through one's actions. According to Ward, Finke, and Smith (1995), the best ways to characterise creativity are in terms of the things that are produced, the variations among individuals, the forces that inspire creativity, and the processes themselves. It follows that the goods produced must be brand-new and fresh. It follows that the goods produced must be brand-new and fresh. This enables us to say that some people are more creative than others; some people are motivated to produce, while others need encouragement and conversation to do so.

In other terms, creativity is the mental process of coming up with a fresh idea or thought (Hosseini, 2014). Researchers and educational planners are paying close attention to creativity and how it might be enhanced in order to assess it from an educational perspective. All educational systems

have a significant impact in either strengthening or decreasing an individual's creativity depending on their goals, aims, material, and training resources.

How teachers can promote Creativity among children

This section of the literature review discusses the role teachers may play in encouraging innovative teaching and fostering children's creativity. The majority of authors who have written about creativity appear to concur that young children's creative expression and growth can be encouraged or even hampered. Meador (2000) noted that children appear to be more creative before entering kindergarten, which raises the question of whether this is a natural result of development and socialisation or whether the kindergarten experience in any way contributed to the observed fall in creativity.

Meador, a perceptive creativity researcher, believes that children's creativity may be fostered in three ways in their educational environment. Mellou (2005) suggests these ways of nurturing young children's creativity:

1. The creative environment.
2. Creative programmes.
3. And creative teachers and ways of teaching.

Below is a quick summary of the recommendations in connection to these three issues. The stimulation of children's play is essential to the development of the creative environment. Young children's creativity is frequently discussed in terms of play, and older kids and adults are also taught to think in playful ways in order to stimulate their own creative thinking. The early childhood context would seem to be crucial in connection to creativity, with imaginative play (including role play) and free choice of activities (intended to stimulate choosing, intrinsic drive, and perseverance) (Prentice, 2000; Russ, 2003).

Additionally, along the same lines of reasoning, Winner and Hetland (2000) stated that a teacher's attention to the open-ended nature of activities like dramatic play, painting, or modelling provides a clear potential for creativity in a nursery school setting. Furthermore, according to Prentice (2000), "Learners must actively participate in the process of their own learning for creativity to thrive in an educational context" (p.12). As Runco (1990) notes, the stimulation provided by the child's physical surroundings is equally significant. The necessity to allow kids enough time to create creative endeavours over a continuous length of time is yet another concern raised in the literature (Edwards and Springate, 1995; Malaguzzi, 1993; NACCE Report, 1999).

It is possible to improve children's creative abilities, especially those related to the arts, by education through creative programmes (Scope, 1999). The benefit of arts programmes on children's creativity, however, has not yet been established, according to findings from two assessments of studies examining the transferrable effects of arts education (Winner and Heltand, 2000; Sharp et al., 1998). However, a limited number of recent intervention studies reported in this study assert that arts programmes have a favourable impact on young children's creativity (Anderson and Yates, 1999; Mendecka, 1996; Ulfarsdottir & Erwin, 1999). The most likely explanations of the seeming contradiction are a dearth of sufficient, high-quality research and the

possibility that engaging in the arts may not necessarily lead to enhanced creativity. It is essential to be clear about the objectives of the arts programme in relation to creativity and to consider the suitability of the metrics used to ascertain if the desired effects have taken place.

The term "creative pedagogy" is used to refer to educational practise that fosters the development of creativity via three interconnected components: teaching for creativity, teaching creatively, and engaging in creative learning. The three interrelated components complement and result in each other, making it a resonant process rather than a scenario where teaching and learning are two parallel processes that seldom come together (QCA, 2000). The interactive learning context for problem solving and valuing learners' creative contributions are fundamental aspects of teaching for creativity because they help establish a supportive environment for the development of creative talents and attributes (James, Lederman, & Vagt-Traore, 2004).

The pedagogical ideas that Cremin, Burnard, and Craft (2006) identified as supporting children's possibility thinking may be used to explain how instructors might prioritise children's autonomy while yet fostering a supportive atmosphere. By handing decision-making and the responsibility for learning back to the children, they contend that the three principles—standing back, identifying learner agency, and providing time and space—help to foster the kids' questioning and active involvement in learning.

A creative classroom atmosphere must first be established and maintained, according to the evaluation of how instructors might foster creativity in lower primary classes. Once more, it was clear that the instructor needed to include some art programmes, including dramatic play, painting, and modelling, to name a few. The evaluation also concluded that instructors should emphasise creativity, creative teaching, and sustained creative learning in their pedagogy.

RESEARCH METHODS

A case study methodology was employed for this investigation. According to Amedahe (2002), a case study is employed when a researcher wants to look at a particular group, institution, or other social unit. Additionally, Leedy and Ormrod (2019) argued that case studies are helpful when the researcher concentrates on a particular example since they may have special or exceptional traits that might advance understanding or guide practise for situations that are comparable. The discussion from the authorities cited in this text regarding case study design provides a hint that case study design would be most appropriate if the goal of the current study is to obtain in-depth knowledge on the impact of teachers' creativity on the creative development of students in the lower primary (a specific group of people).

The target population for the study was all lower primary teachers in the Early Childhood Development Model in Atebubu, taking into account everyone who was of interest to the researcher (ECD). There are six of them. Fink (2003) asserts that the traits of respondents who are qualified to take part in the case study serve as the basis for the criteria for a unit's inclusion in a survey. Therefore, choosing these preschool instructors for the study was the best choice both for ease and to enable a more thorough examination of the relevant factor.

The census method was utilised to include all preschool instructors in the study's sample because of their relatively modest number. Because all individuals of the population were found to share the same traits and had an equal and independent probability of being included in the research, using the entire population was significant. This makes taking into account every member of the population relatively fair (Sidhu, 2002). An interview schedule served as the primary tool for data collection. This tool was utilised because, given the nature of the study, a structured interview with the study participants was a must for the researcher to fully explore the issues surrounding teachers' creativity and its effects on children.

Prior to each interview segment, respondents received assurances regarding the confidentiality and anonymity of all data collected from them. Additionally, respondents' free agreement to take part in the study was obtained. Additionally, students were given the choice to stop participating in the study if they so desired. The researcher used a tape recorder to capture all of the information given by subjects with their consent. Following the data collection, the researcher accurately copied everything that was spoken on the tape recorder by the respondents. To guarantee that the researcher had not manipulated any responses from the respondents, the material that had been transcribed had also been reviewed. In the research report, replies were finally reported exactly as they were made, and additional discussions were conducted utilising the literature that was accessible for this study.

DISCUSSIONS

How teachers promote creativity in the lower primary level

The discussion in this section focuses on how educators encourage creativity in their pupils. Participants in the study identified a number of methods relevant and acceptable for fostering toddlers' creative abilities. For instance, it was discovered that instructors encourage creativity by creating spaces for play, giving students access to time and places that are resource-rich, and supporting musical play in the classroom. Consistently Pelfrey (2011), discovered that encouraging collaboration, student choice, imagination, a risk-free learning environment, and inquiry by instructors improved student creativity. It is obvious that youngsters require opportunities and the ideal environment to cultivate their capacity for creative thought, autonomous problem-solving, and taking intellectual risks.

The study's findings also showed that teachers can encourage students' creative abilities by involving them in active learning activities like providing them with plenty of opportunities for hands-on field work, fostering interactions that give students plenty of opportunities to solve problems, pretend role plays and occasionally hosting round-table discussions on engaging topics. The development of children's creativity is mostly a teacher's responsibility. According to Saracho (2002), instructors may assist young children to sustain their creativity by creating a learning environment that increases the likelihood that they will acquire associated abilities. According to Alsahou (2015), active learning can only be promoted when the learning environment is enjoyable for the students. Children who can maintain pretend play roles are more able to cooperate with

their classmates and resolve social issues, claim Bodrova, Germeroth, and Leong (2013). Wohlwend (2008) contends that play is the foundation of the new core curriculum that instructors employ to educate their pupils for the rapidly changing 21st century, not only an essential component of a developmentally appropriate curriculum (2008). Through play, kids may experiment with new technology, find fresh uses for the resources at hand, and dream of a future in which they can be anyone and whatever they want to be.

The study's outcomes also showed that brainstorming is an effective strategy for fostering learners' creativity. This study supports the findings of Ikwumelu and Oyibe (2014), who hypothesized that when students participate in brainstorming exercises, they are able to generate ideas for solving specific problems and, as a result, can generate queries about how the problem arises and the most effective way to approach it. According to Algorishi (2008), brainstorming is an educational strategy that helps pupils improve their capacity for thinking and retention, which in turn helps them do better academically. When utilized as an approach to educate creativity, brainstorming is both easy to use and very successful, especially when introducing a new subject. It works successfully because it engages the students' prior knowledge, attracts their interest, and introduces new concepts.

The study also showed that teachers encourage creativity in their students by implementing models and teaching techniques. Eddles-Hirsch et al. (2020) give illustrations of how creativity may be developed utilizing models and techniques that have been shown in the study to be successful. The Osborne-Parnes paradigm aids in directing creative thought. The six tactics of solution-finding, fact-finding, idea-finding, problem-finding, acceptance-finding, and mess-finding should be taught to pupils. Students are pushed to apply alternative thinking at every stage. These frameworks, which are founded on facts, encourage creativity in a diverse learning environment. The participants also suggested that teachers who take intellectual risks help toddlers' creative talents. This is expressed in a way that does not imply haphazard or dangerous teaching, but rather a readiness to experiment with novel concepts and methods in the classroom. They may develop innovative and engaging teaching strategies because they are willing to attempt things in new ways (Henrikson, 2014). A friendly, creative classroom atmosphere that encourages and rewards original thinking should exist. According to Sternberg (2006), even if a person possesses all the internal tools necessary to think creatively, that individual's creativity might not ever come to fruition in the absence of a setting that encourages and rewards taking risks. Beghetto (2017) highlights that we must lead by example if we want our kids to take calculated chances and come up with innovative solutions to every problem. Pllana (2019), who examined numerous facts concerning creativity in 21st-century educational reforms in discovered that creativity is important to every educational system despite the variations in how it is implemented.

The study also found that teachers who use divergent thinking strategies and questioning in the classroom encourage their students' creative talents. Our kids frequently respond to straightforward queries devoid of original thought by using convergent thinking. The precise opposite is called divergent thinking. Children must be imaginative in order to think in this way. Encourage pupils to think creatively and to consider other points of view, have them engage in extensive

brainstorming, and assist them in connecting their ideas. Try to incorporate both convergent and divergent thinking into your lesson plans. While asking questions all the time in class is inappropriate, giving students the chance to ask questions and teaching them the right questions to ask at the right time are crucial to the creative process. Children will have an understanding of the importance of applying knowledge rather than memorization owing to this skill. Children must learn to formulate questions and arguments to convince others of the importance of their ideas, proving why their ideas are significant, in order to foster both creative and critical thinking. Self-advocacy and the growth of the self-esteem and self-confidence necessary for creativity begin with internalising responsibility for one's ideas. Before kids can learn to advocate for themselves based on their own values, external reinforcement is crucial.

The study also showed that teachers' narrative and dramatisation activities encourage students' creative growth. Dramatic play fosters the development of creativity when the activity is child-initiated and teacher-directed, according to groundbreaking research by Gupta (2009). Dramatizing children's original stories enabled for social growth and improved the verbal, cognitive, socioemotional, and creative abilities of young people (Gupta, 2009). Wright et al. (2008) also noted that when uniqueness is maintained via the use of efficient prompts, child-centered storytelling and dramatisation may foster children's creativity in early childhood education.

CONCLUSION

youngsters require opportunities and the ideal environment to cultivate their capacity for creative thought, autonomous problem-solving, and taking intellectual risks. The study concludes that instructors encourage creativity by creating spaces for play, giving students access to time and places that are resource-rich, and supporting musical play in the classroom. Divergent thinking strategies and questioning in the classroom encourage their students' creative talents, teachers' narrative and dramatisation activities encourage students' creative growth. The conviction is that dramatic play fosters the development of creativity when the activity is child-initiated and teacher-directed.

Recommendations

The job of a teacher involves a continuous cycle of directing student learning and monitoring student development. Teachers need additional knowledge on most efficient ways to use different schedules and domains of interest, as well as a range of tactics to encourage student learning and advance students' creative abilities, comprehension, and knowledge. Last but not least, giving teachers the chance to develop their creativity via ongoing professional development is a crucial step in raising their awareness of the value of creativity in the classroom and in helping them become more creative educators. There should be ongoing professional development for teachers to inform them of the innovative and inventive approaches to teach creative thinking abilities to children since instructors play a crucial role in establishing or modifying the environment as the educational context. Moreover, Workshops should be planned for pre-nursery/nursery school

instructors to familiarise them with contemporary methods of leading students through a wide range of learning environment.

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