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## **Teaching of Creative Arts in Ghana**

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### **Abstract:**

*The study was on evaluation of the performance of teachers teaching creative arts in kindergarten schools in Cape Coast metropolis. It aimed at finding out how pupils gained new knowledge and skills through the teaching of creative arts. The research design adopted for the study was descriptive survey with questionnaire as the main instrument. The study revealed that K.G. teachers are able to equip their pupils with the necessary creative arts skills and new knowledge pupils need to acquire. Also, pupils in KG are helped to develop their potentials in the creative arts when the necessary activities and inputs are provided. It is therefore recommended that the government of Ghana supports Ghana Education Service to train all teachers who teach at the KG schools, specifically in creative arts, to enable them handle the subject effectively and ensure efficient transmission of knowledge in the Cape Coast Metropolis.*

**Keywords:** Creative arts, teaching, evaluation, kindergarten

### **1. Introduction**

Generally, education aims at developing the intellectual, moral, social and physical characteristics of individuals, so that they will be able to enjoy living as people, support themselves adequately as adults, and contribute sufficiently to nation-building. But Ghana has not realised this philosophy to the full since the type of education introduced and practiced in the nation did not possess the components to equip learners with the requisite knowledge and skills capable of functioning effectively as Ghanaians, and for that matter Africans. The educated people rather looked up to foreign cultures and white collar jobs which are not in existence, and some get confused because the curricula are Europeanized, having little to do with Ghanaian culture. In like manner, the westerners imposed their arts on Africans, and for that matter, Ghana, therefore what the learners acquired were not applicable to their local situation.

After series of considerations, the Pragmatist and Re-constructionist philosophies were adopted by Ghanaians through which came the need for the design of the new structure and content of education. For Pragmatists, teaching methods focus on hands-on problem solving, experimenting, and projects, often having students work in groups. Curriculum should bring the disciplines together to focus on solving problems in an interdisciplinary way. Rather than passing down organised bodies of knowledge to new learners, Pragmatists believe that learners should apply their knowledge to real situations through experimental inquiry (Cohen, 1999). This prepares students for citizenship, daily living, and future careers.

In the view of the re-constructionist, the type of learner is self-directed, creative, and innovative. The purpose in education is to become creative and innovative through analysis, conceptualizations, and synthesis of prior experience to create new knowledge. The learning goals are proficiency in higher-order cognitive functions: heuristic problem solving, creativity, and originality (Lombardi, 2011). Re-constructivism not only acknowledges the uniqueness and complexity of the learner, but actually encourages, utilizes, and rewards it as an integral part of the learning process.

These philosophies brought into existence the present 6-3-3-4 education system. That is six (6) year primary, three (3) years Junior High School, three (3) Senior High School and four (4) years for University education. This reform has the view of preparing pupils to be practical oriented and analytical enough to face their own problems and those of the nation squarely in this global world and technological era. The education system was structured to meet the needs of the individual, the society in which he lives and the nation as a whole. Hence the need to study the creative arts programme after running over 5 years

The subject, creative arts is one of the newly introduced subjects which is being studied at Kindergarten up to primary level. Therefore the teaching and learning of creative arts requires the teacher to equip the pupils with knowledge and skills to be able to create and make things on their own. The most significant element in children's learning at school is the teacher or

other skilled adult. Creative arts is essential to the development of emotional, material, spiritual and intellectual life, and the reason for studying it as a subject is to develop skills and aptitudes for learning new knowledge and prepare pupils for further education and training that embrace all domains of life, however there is no doubt then that, we need to go extra mile as a nation in helping our younger generation in developing their interest in creative arts because whoever is left out in the study of this creative subject might left out in the field of education.

Pre-school and kindergarten teachers play a vital role in the development of children. What children learn and experience during their early years can shape their views of themselves and the world and can affect their later success or failure in school, work, and their personal lives. Pre-school, kindergarten, and basic school teachers introduce children to mathematics, language, science, and social studies. They use games, music, artwork, films, books, computers, and other tools to teach basic skills.

Art is a subject which is closely connected with every subject that is taught in school (Stanfield, 1976). Creative art activity is one of the spontaneous acts by which the child is encouraged in childhood to take part in art activities leading to the development of personal activity, creativity, learning and enrichment of experiences. They learn to associate with themselves, with physical problems, to make calculations, judgments and choices. They in fact educate themselves spontaneously (Jameson, 1968). Art activities make the children want to take part in all that goes on around them. They create, learn new experiences, work with others and build up a healthy self-concept of themselves. Since there are judgement and choices of situations, calculations of distances, sizes and composition of various items into one whole, art makes use of the various subjects and thereby induces self-learning by the child. Art has the means to help self-education. For many years it has been the intention of all educationists to develop in the children creative and imaginative skills through the process of education. Art plays this role effectively. It motivates and stimulates the child into imaginative and creative actions. Creative activity begins as a stroke of imagination. It may be direct or induced learning. The child's contact with various objects and situations ignite their imaginations and fantasy state (Jameson, 1968)

Regarding the roles of art in general education, Art has a potential and vital role in the education of the children due to the process of any art activity which enables the child to give us more than a picture. For the child, art is a dynamic and unifying activity (Lowenfeld, 1970). Lay-Dopyera and Dopyera (1992, p.19) asserted that by understanding the artistic process, teachers will be better equipped to understand how young children feel as they explore the world of art. They went on to say that children show more constructive behaviours and relationships when their teacher is warm, friendly, actively and positively involved in their activities.

Mayesky (2002) outlined six things that can be done for children to help them express natural creative tendencies:

- Help children accept change. A child who become overly worried or upset in new situation is unlikely to express creative potential.
- Help children to learn to judge and accept their own feelings. Children should feel guilty for having feelings about things. Create an environment where judgment is deferred and all ideas are respected, where discussion and debates are means of trying out ideas in a nonthreatening atmosphere.
- Reward children for being creative. Let children know what their creative ideas are valued. The more creative idea or the product, the more greatly they should be rewarded. It is also useful to help children realize that good is sometimes its own reward.
- Help children feel joy in their creative production and in working through a problem, children should find that doing things and finding answers for themselves is fun. The adult should establish the conditions that allow this to take place.
- Help children appreciate themselves for being different. There is the tendency to reward children for conformity. This discourages creativity. Children should learn to like themselves because they are unique
- Help children realize that some problems have no easy answers. This may help prevent children from becoming anxious when they cannot find immediate answer to a question or problem.

According to Lowenfeld and Brittain (1970) the most important factor is the teacher himself. Pupils can read and get something from English, History and Arithmetic books but it is not so in the art classroom. A poor art teacher could cause real damage to the child's concept of art. The teacher has the most important task at providing an atmosphere conducive to innovations, explorations and production. In art then a poor teacher might be worse no teacher at all. Another important role that the teacher plays as suggested by Lowenfeld and Brittain (1970) is the end for identifying with the child because, art is important for the artist. The youngster must feel that he is doing an important activity relevant to his needs. The discrepancy between the teacher's own way of thinking and that of the child is the greatest problem. Gradually the teacher will learn to adjust his relationship with the child so as to meet the child's need every time.

Concerning the problems of art materials Stanfield (1976) suggested that, many kinds of materials can be used to draw upon. Young children need large surfaces with big tools to work with since until they have acquired control of their muscles they cannot do fine work i.e. small and carefully detailed work. Lowenfeld and Brittain (1970, p.52) stated that the proper materials and development of skills play an important part in the expression of art. It is only through the use of the art materials that any expression can evolve such as development of techniques and skills necessary to communicate. However, it is not the skills that the child expresses rather the feelings and emotions of the artist. Do not concentrate upon the materials and skills and ignore the fundamental issue of "individuality" in creative art; the expression self, the urge to put down

experiences that are meaningful to the child. Materials, techniques and skills in handling materials are important components of art activities. The absence of materials will turn art lessons into useless, meaningless theories of no value to the children. However the child must be helped to develop liking for the medium so that he can use it for his self-expression. The issues of skills, techniques are of no importance to the child and must be shelved until the child make demands for it.

The teacher should develop the technique of turning the child's question round and aiming it back at him and so evoking from the child responses which are answers to his original question. This is an effective technique by which the teacher can train the child to think deeply, observe carefully and listen attentively to the various situations. Since art activities are aimed at helping the child develop self-concept and imagination, the teacher should help the child discover answers and solutions to novelty situations. His giving ready and quick answers to the pupils' requests will make him develop passive attitudes and become dependent on the teacher. This is a situation which must be discouraged to occur.

Across the nation, educational authorities are working on many fronts to ensure that no child is left behind and that all children reach academic proficiency. However, many educators are discovering that reform efforts in KG education systems are sometimes too little and too late. By the time some children reach kindergarten, they are already far behind their peers in skills and measures of school readiness. These educational gaps tend to be much more difficult and costly to close as children advance through primary, junior high, and senior high school. This realization has led authorities to try to get it right from the start by expanding their financial investments in pre-kindergarten services, with a goal to better prepare young children for school success. With public schools facing heightened accountability requirements, KG has emerged as an important strategy to promote school readiness and close achievement gaps in elementary school and beyond.

Creative thinking and reasoning have been identified and highlighted as an essential twenty-first-century skill by many business, education, community and government leaders. As our children grow and develop, introducing them to the idea that the arts involve creative problem solving will teach them how to manage frustration, uncertainty and ambiguity with innovative ideas and solutions. Through the arts, young children can learn how to express their unique identities, while simultaneously developing habits of mind that will help them succeed anywhere, from the playground to the workplace (Robertson, 2003).

Ever since KG education became part of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) structure, no comprehensive evaluation has been implemented to ascertain the impact of its institution, especially in the field of creative arts which is the backbone of every developing nation. In view of this the main problem of this study is therefore to evaluate the performance of Teachers teaching creative art in kindergarten schools in Cape Coast metropolis. The main focus of this study is to evaluate performance of teachers teaching creative arts in KG schools. The study sought to: 1 find out how creative arts are taught in K.G. schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis; 2. expose the extent to which teaching learning materials and equipment are put in suitable conditions for general use to enhance teaching and learning; and 3. help develop proper means of effective teaching of creative arts practical lessons at K.G schools.

## 2. Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is the descriptive survey. Descriptive survey deals with what exist or prevailing conditions, practices and attitudes. It searches for accurate information about the characteristics of particular subjects, groups, institutions or situations (Gay, 1987). It was an attempt to investigate if qualified trained K.G. teachers have the requisite expertise to handle the creative arts aspect of their education.

The population for the research comprised all head teachers and KG teachers in the Cape Coast metropolis. Cape Coast was chosen because of the cluster of schools that are situated within the metropolis ranging from the kindergarten to basic level. In all, ten (10) schools with twenty-two (22) teachers and ten (10) head teachers were sampled for the study. These comprised of four (4) teachers in Pere Planque School, two each from OLA Presby School, Kakumdo M/A KG, St Monica KG, Kwegyir Aggrey KG School, Catholic Jubilee KG, St Mary KG School, A. M. E. Zion KG School, St Francis KG School, and Philip Quaicoo Girls KG School. The sampled size was equal to the population.

Questionnaire and observation were used in securing factual information about practices and conditions which the respondents are presumed to have knowledge and for enquiring into opinion and attitudes of the subjects (Babbie, 1996). The instruments were administered by the researchers. In situations where respondents were unable and/or unwilling to correlate, cooperate or offer information, observation was employed.

The Likert scale format was used for most of the questions. A few opened-ended items were also used for others. These questions were directly related to the object of the study. This was done to ensure content validity. The questions were scrutinised for relevance, clarity and simplicity. The questions were pooled to solicit information on how creative arts is taught with emphasis on practical work and if the teachers have helped them to understand creative arts better.

Prior to the administration of the questionnaire, the sampled schools were informed and made aware of the impending study. The respondents (KG teachers and the Head teachers) were assembled at one place and the purpose of the research explained to them. The two sets of questionnaire were then distributed and the meanings of all the terms clearly defined. Respondents were encouraged to be independent in answering the questions truthfully. Retrieval rate of 100% of the questionnaires was attained because the respondents were all ready for the exercise.

Teachers were informed in advance that their lessons would be observed so they should not panic alongside their pupils and the exercises went on smoothly. The researchers observed lessons of five selected teachers on different topics of

the creative arts subject from different schools. The schools were Kakumdo M/A KG, St Monica KG, Kwegyir Aggrey KG, Catholic Jubilee KG and OLA Presby KG.

### 3. Finding and Discussion

Descriptive statistics was used in presenting the results. Frequencies and percentages were employed. These were presented in tabular form. There is general discussion of the results at the end of each section aimed at answering the research questions.

#### 3.1. Research Question 1

##### 3.1.1. How Can Creative Arts Be Taught to Equip Pupils in K.G. With New Knowledge and Skills?

The first research question was meant to find out from the teachers how creative arts could be taught effectively in order to promote creativity and acquisition of new knowledge in pupils. The views of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

Equipping Pupils' with Creative Arts	Teachers			
	Yes		No	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Can creative arts be taught to equip pupils with new knowledge and skills?	17	77.3	5	22.7
Are your pupils motivated to develop their creative abilities?	18	81.8	4	18.2
Are your pupils confident of completing their assigned work?	15	68.2	7	31.8
Do you assign group work to your pupils?	20	90.9	2	9.1

Table 1: Teaching Creative Arts to Equip Pupils with New Knowledge and Skills

Table 1 shows that while 17 (77.3%) teachers held that creative arts can be taught to equip pupils with new knowledge, 5 (22.7%) said no. Majority (81.8%) of the respondents were also of the view that pupils are motivated to develop their own creative abilities. This was however contrary to the views of 18.2% of the respondents.

As indicated by Gaitskell et al (1982, p.28) that "art is personal and creative and for that matter people must control the activities that engaged them. It is expected that pupils be encouraged to be in control of their works". They pointed out that artist must have freedom to choose both their subject matter and their manner of expression. In the same way, a teacher should not correct a child's work when he thinks the child is wrong. The child has his/her ideas which is different from the teacher's, and they are sure to be unique. That in this case will help the children develop the new knowledge expected. Otherwise if teachers insist on pupils expressions on their works, it would stifle creativity. According to Jameson (1968) the teacher should not intrude when the child is working happily and spontaneously. In addition, the teacher should develop the technique of turning the child's question round and aiming it back at him and so evoking from the child's responses which are answers to his original question.

The study also revealed that while 15 (68.2%) of the teachers shared the view that pupils are always confident of completing their assigned work, 7 (31.8%) disagreed. Finally, Table 1 reveals that teachers assign group work to their pupils. This shows a majority of 90.9 per cent who were in support as against 9.1% who held contrary views. However, the researchers perceived that the role of the teacher is paramount in motivating learners to do group work. This implies that one way that creative art can be taught to equip pupils in K.G. is group work, what matters most is how the teacher does it as prescribed by Jameson (1968).

The teachers were also asked to indicate the kind of creative skills they would want their pupils to develop. The outcome of their views is shown in Table 2.

Creative Skills	Teachers	
	Freq.	%
Creativity	8	36.4
Critical thinking and problem solving	5	22.7
Integration of knowledge	9	40.9
Total	22	100

Table 2: The Kind of Creative Skills Pupils Develop

The results from table 2 shows that while 8 (36.4%) teachers indicated that their pupils acquire skills in creativity, 5 (22.7%) mentioned critical thinking and problem solving skills. These teachers thus gear towards the cognitive approach, which focuses on internal mental thinking and the process of perception as well as cognitive structures for learning and

problem solving as indicated by Quansah (1997). Also, 9 (40.9%) held that their pupils acquire skills in integration of knowledge. Though the teachers had different views of the skills pupils develop, the roles were like a gardener, providing the fertile ground, the enriched environment that gives a child a start in thinking and in working as an artist and this allows the child's creativity to flow in skills such as creativity, critical thinking and problem solving as well as integration of knowledge. Lay-Dopyera and Dopyera (1992) also assert that by understanding the artistic process, teachers will be better equipped to understand how young children feel as they explore the world of art. In addition, children show more constructive behaviours and relationships when their teacher is warm, friendly, actively and positively involved in their activities. For effective development of creative arts skills in pupils, it is expected that teachers acquire all these skills and have all these in mind during the teaching and learning process.

### 3.2. Research Question 2

#### 3.2.1. To What Extent Are Teaching and Learning Materials and Equipment in Suitable Conditions for General Use to Enhance Teaching and Learning?

Teaching to a large extent depends on the availability of the necessary teaching and learning resources. These resources are produced either by the teacher or the student or both and are used to facilitate the teaching and learning process. In order to enhance pupils' understanding or acquisition of knowledge, and reduce boredom, they must be presented with a wide variety of teaching and learning resources. Teaching and learning resources also help learners to form mental impression of what is being taught in the classroom. These formed the basis for formulating research question 2. The summary of the outcome of this research question have been presented in table 3.

Availability of Teaching and Learning Materials	Head Teachers				Teachers			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Are teaching and learning materials and equipment in suitable conditions for general use?	2	20	8	80	8	36.4	14	63.6
Do you have the current KG syllabuses?	7	70	3	30	13	59.1	9	40.9
Are you supplied with lesson note books?	4	40	6	60	7	31.8	15	68.2
Do you prepare your lesson notes?	0	0	0	0	22	100.0	0	0
Does your school climate encourage teaching and learning?	8	80	2	20	19	86.4	3	15.6
Do you receive grants for teaching this programme?	0	0	10	100	1	5.4	21	94.6
Does the school receive any assistance from any benevolent societies, both home and abroad?	4	40	6	60	18	81.8	4	18.2
Do you appeal to parents and guardians to provide their wards with the necessary assistance?	7	70	3	30	16	72.7	6	27.3

Table 3: Availability of Teaching and Learning Materials

Results from table 3 shows that while 8 (80%) of the head teachers held that teaching and learning materials are not in suitable conditions for general use in the schools, 2 (20%) disagreed. In this case, the effort of teaching in giving out their best might be hampered. Most of the teachers relied of obsolete or improvised resources in their lesson delivery. Again, while 7 (70%) head teachers agreed that they have the current KG syllabus, 3 (30%) of them disagreed. With regard to the provision of lesson note books, the results show that while 4 (40%) said "Yes", 6 (60%) said "No." The head teachers (70 per cent) also disagreed that the school receives assistance from the society and parents and guardians. Whilst parents who send their children to the private schools are prepared and support resourcing the schools their wards attend, the same cannot be said of the parents of children in the government schools.

On the part of the teachers, while 14 (63.6%) disagreed that teaching and learning materials in their schools are in suitable conditions, 8 (36.4%) agreed. Contrary to the views of the head teachers, 59.1 per cent teachers held that their schools have the current KG syllabus. However, the teachers held similar views with the head teachers on the provision of lesson note books. On KG syllabus, 15(68%) of the teachers disagreed that their schools are provided with current KG syllabus. Majority of the teachers agreed that their schools receive assistance from the schools' communities, parents and guardian. This was represented by 81.8% and 72.7% respectively. From the above, it is evident that TLMs are very important in the teaching and learning of creative art.

According to Stanfield (1976) when materials are in suitable conditions for general use, it plays the following roles; it reduces boredom, it focuses attention and creates interest in the class, henceforth, facilitating teaching and learning. The kind

and size of materials we should give to the child is important and worthy of note. Many adults think that small kids need small sized art materials to work with. The undeveloped conditions of the child's arm and hand muscles need to be taken into consideration. These muscles control the hand and sweep of the arm from the shoulder down to the fine movements of the hand. Little children paradoxically need larger surfaces and bold line-makers to work with in order to satisfy their inner feelings.

There is no doubt that Teaching Learning Material should be in the most suitable condition in order to fulfil the above roles it plays in teaching and learning of creative art. Despite a renewed interest in the unique benefits of creative arts learning across the world, it appears that the subject matter remains marginalised in Ghanaian primary schools mainly due to budgetary constraints. Notwithstanding, every effort should be made by the local government or the central government to provide suitable and adequate teaching and learning resource to help in the teaching process.

### 3.3. Research Question 3

#### 3.3.1. How Effective Is the Teaching of Creative Art Practical Lessons Taking Place in the K.G. Schools?

In order to find out whether practical lessons in creative art take place in the KG schools, research question 3 was formulated. The respondents were therefore required to answer by indicating Yes or No to the various items provided to them. The outcome of their views is presented in Table 4.

Effective Teaching of Creative Art	Head Teachers				Teachers			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Are effective teachings of creative art practical lessons taking place at the K.G. schools?	6	60	4	40	15	68.2	7	31.8
Do you see signs of creativity in your pupils?	7	70	3	30	14	63.6	8	36.4
Are your pupils appreciative of their performances?	8	80	2	20	18	81.8	4	18.2
Do pupils come out with their own ideas and develop them into complete works apart from works they are assigned by you?	4	40	6	60	12	54.5	10	45.5
Do pupils in this school perform better in the long run?	9	90	1	10	19	86.4	3	13.6

Table 4: Effective Teaching of Creative Art in KG Schools

A deduction can be made from table 4 that while 6 (60%) of the head teachers and 15 (68.2%) teachers held that effective teaching of creative art lesson takes place in the KG schools, 4 (40%) and 7 (31.8%) respectively disagreed. The results also show that while 7 (70%) and 14 (63.6%) head teachers and teachers held that they see signs of creativity in their pupils, 3 (30%) and 8 (36.4%) head teachers and teachers disagreed.

The results also reveal that both respondents shared similar views on how appreciative pupils are of their performance. The results indicate that while 8 (80%) of the head teachers and 18 (81.8%) of the teachers were in agreement, 2 (20%) and 4 (18.2%) respectively, disagreed. On whether pupils come out with their own ideas and develop them into complete works, both sets of respondents shared dissimilar views. While 6 (60%) head teachers agreed 4 (40%) disagreed. On the part of the teachers, while 12 (54.5%) agreed, 10 (45.5%) disagreed. Finally, both head teachers and teachers held that pupils in their schools perform better in the long run. This represents the views of 90 per cent for head teachers and 86.4 per cent of teachers.

The researchers gathered that though most of the schools did not have full complement of teaching and learning materials, teachers were still able to effectively teach creative art practical lessons at the K.G. level in the schools. Some of the teachers used their ingenuity to source for old newspapers and calendars for simple art activities in the class. Through that, they were able to inspire creativity in their pupils. In most instances, pupils were appreciative of their performances especially if they received commendations from the teachers. This boosted the artistic aspirations of the pupils and greater improvement were recorded during the study period.

## 4. Conclusions

The researchers believe that teachers are able to equip their pupils with the necessary creative art skills and new knowledge pupils need to acquire. This is made possible through the provision of the necessary reinforcement and the development of creativity among pupils. Although the KG schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis have teaching and learning materials, the materials are not in suitable conditions. This notwithstanding, effective teaching of practical creative art lesson takes place in the KG schools in the Metropolis. This is seen in the ability of pupils coming out with their own ideas and develops them into complete works. Thus, pupils in KG can be helped to develop their potentials in the creative arts when the necessary activities and inputs are provided.

Creative art was to be incorporated in the pre-school and basic school curriculum to enable every school going child go through the creative process with lots of enthusiasm and a firm foundation, before entering the JHS. This would create a very conducive atmosphere in and outside the schools as well as the communities. All the necessary resources and facilities needed to promote the teaching and learning of the creative arts should be adequately provided by GES, MOE and stakeholders in all the schools. It is also recommended that regular in-service training and workshops as well as seminars should be provided for the teachers in order to equip them with current trends in creative arts education. This will also enable them to be kept abreast with time and current issues in education especially, those who have taught creative art for over 10 years.

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