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Evaluating a New Creative Arts Curriculum: Assessing the Impact of Supervision and Classroom Instruction in Ghana

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Abstract: ***This study aimed to evaluate the influence of supervision and classroom teaching in Ghana through the assessment of a novel creative arts curriculum. By employing the descriptive cross-sectional survey design, online Google forms were utilized to survey a sample of 768 in-service teachers out of a total of 1,321. Data was gathered for the research using a modified form of the Sharma and Sharma (2018) scale on creativity supervision and classroom instruction behavior, consisting of 15 items and with a reliability coefficient of α=.79. The information was analyzed both descriptively and inferentially. In general, the research discovered that most participants showed minimal creativity in managing and teaching in the classroom. In particular, the majority of participants showed moderate degrees of curiosity and motivation for creativity, while a few participants exhibited low levels of abstract thinking and critical analysis. Once more, the research found that there was no distinction between male and female participants in terms of their creative oversight and teaching methods in the classroom. In-service teachers did not show differences in creativity supervision and classroom instruction behaviors based on experience. It was discovered that teachers currently working lack adequate understanding of innovative teaching methods. Hence, it was suggested that current teachers should undergo retraining in the essential skills of the updated standard-based curriculum.***

Keywords: Teaching Curriculum, Creativity, Teachers.

1. INTRODUCTION

Creative Arts includes visual arts, music, and dance [1]. The Creative Arts syllabus for Primary Schools in Ghana, released in 2007 by the Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) of Ghana Education Service, defines Creative Arts as a subject that combines Performing Arts (Music, Dance, and Drama), Literary Arts (Poetry, Recitals), and Visual Arts, encompassing

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drawing, weaving, carving, modeling, casting, and sewing. School teachers are required to teach these subjects in a cohesive way. Despite their distinct appearances and approaches, the various creative arts disciplines utilize comparable cognitive processes, ultimately enabling the expression of language and thought through diverse representations. The creative arts are expressed not through traditional written language but through visual, kinesthetic, aural, and tactile means. Involving kids in creative arts enables them to express themselves in deeply meaningful ways.

2. RELATED WORKS

Artistic expression encompasses visual arts, music, and dance [1]. The Creative Arts syllabus for Primary Schools in Ghana defines Creative Arts as a subject that combines Performing Arts (Music, Dance, and Drama), Literary Arts (Poetry, Recitals), and Visual Arts, which encompass drawing, weaving, carving, modeling, casting, and sewing. School teachers are required to teach these subjects in a cohesive way. Even though the creative arts disciplines have distinct appearances and methods, they share common cognitive processes that enable the expression of language and thought through various forms of representation. The arts are expressed through visual, kinesthetic, aural, and tactile means, rather than traditional written language. Involving kids in artistic activities enables them to express themselves in deeply meaningful ways.

According to Russell-Bowie [4], the arts have the ability to express and convey emotions, concepts, convictions, principles, and interpretations using aesthetic forms and symbols that elicit emotional reactions to life, with or without using words. Having the skill to lead children in expressing themselves through abstract symbols and understanding others' communications is crucial for successful education in Creative Arts [5]. The development of a child's emotional, material, spiritual, and intellectual lives is greatly impacted by participating in Creative Arts, which is a vital part of learning. According to Bogen and Bogen [6], students can foster creativity by engaging in diverse creative activities that prompt them to think and generate new ideas using different approaches. While it may not transform students into artists, this approach can aid in guiding their creative growth by teaching them problem-solving skills necessary for future challenges.It is widely accepted worldwide that creativity is crucial for both social and economic advancement, as well as for the personal and professional satisfaction of individuals [7]. Collard and Looney [7] state that in a knowledge-based society, creativity is necessary for progress as work is done in temporary project-focused teams, where each member carries a significant level of accountability. Individuals must continuously acquire new problem-solving methods and adapt to new situations through their creativity. The capability to customize services and products to suit individual preferences is growing in people's personal situations. Besides the economic reasons to promote creativity, there is also a recognition of the benefits of fostering creativity for social well-being at both personal and societal levels. It is not surprising that creativity is considered a key focus in education worldwide and is central to conversations about learning in the 21st century. According to the OECD, it is important to ready students for unforeseen jobs, technologies, and issues that may arise in the future [10].

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Moreover, the OECD Innovation Strand prioritizes nurturing creative skills in youth globally. According to this, schools must educate and assess creativity in the upcoming workforce, as there is a need for employees who can be innovative at work [11]. Teachers are solely responsible for overseeing and teaching creativity in students, as it not only affects their own teaching methods and habits, but also influences students' capacity for generating new and unique ideas [12].

Education, particularly in a time of computerization, standardization, accountability, and testing, has significantly impacted teachers and their professional work. According to Sahlberg [14], teachers face two main obstacles when trying to foster creativity and innovation in the classroom. Initially, they perceive themselves as lacking originality, and furthermore, school policies and regulations hinder creative teaching initiatives. Sahlberg [14] also identifies a hurdle in the form of standardized teaching and learning practices, which focus on standardized assessment and predefined outcomes, causing a reduction in teacher collaboration and innovation.

Doyle [15] and Har and Abd-Razak [16] emphasize that teacher creativity has always been acknowledged as crucial in guiding students to cultivate imagination and innovation in their daily lives. Baruah and Paulus [17] and Karwowski et al. [18] suggest that fostering teacher creativity and innovation is a key aspect of the teaching profession. Once more, teachers who possess sufficient creative skills improve the interaction between teacher and student [19]. Likewise, Davies and colleagues [20] along with Ucus and Acar [21] stated that fostering creativity in the classroom enables students to hold diverse expectations, interact with mutual respect, demonstrate innovative behavior, adaptability, and dialogues. Saibon et al. contended that traditional teaching methods should be replaced with innovative training for a more creative classroom environment. Enhancing creativity and critical thinking skills are crucial in achieving 21st-century teaching and learning goals [23]. This occurs because creativity has the necessary drive to stimulate positive change in methods that could enhance teaching and learning, creating a vibrant and engaging learning environment.
Nevertheless, limited literature indicates that students' creative skills are not developed in the educational setting due to teachers lacking expertise in fostering these innate abilities [24]-[29]. As stated by Apak et al. [30] and Karpudewan and Chong-Keat [31], the reason for this pattern could be that education still mainly revolves around memorizing facts, hindering the exploration of innovative ideas for economic growth in different countries. Teachers' apparent lack of understanding about fostering creativity in the classroom contradicts the idea that modern teaching and learning should promote the development of a future workforce equipped with knowledge and skills to tackle global challenges. Being a complex concept, creativity cannot be easily defined. Therefore, creativity can be described as cognitive skill, a procedure, and human conduct [33]. Creativity can be seen in two ways: novelty, which is common and found in everyone, and usefulness, which involves evaluating the value of new ideas. In this study, teachers' nurturing behavior involves utilizing their scaffolding skills to help students excel in their learning environments and achieve brilliance. In Ghana, the introduction of the New Standard-based Curriculum has led to a significant demand for creativity in education. To help students succeed, the

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Government of Ghana integrated creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem-solving into the core competencies, which should be developed by teachers during their service. The teachers were given a significant role in promoting the government's initiative to implement the New Standard-based Curriculum through the curriculum reform. Prior to the rollout, certain educators (from kindergarten to primary six) were provided with training on the principles of the updated curriculum for five (5) days from 13th to 19th August 2019. Following that, additional groups of active teachers (Junior High School 1 to Senior High School 1) underwent training on the updated curriculum from the 11th to the 15th of January 2021 [38]-[39].

Examining the training durations for both groups, it seemed like the time allotted was not enough due to the comprehensive topics covered. Nevertheless, in-service teachers needed to understand all aspects of the subject areas quickly to prepare for teaching students in the future. Creativity training in Ghana did not last the ideal two academic semesters and was limited to introductory aspects. This is worrying because a lot of in-service teachers responsible for implementing the New Standard-based Curriculum might lack creativity since they are still focused on the old or exam-oriented curriculum. Beghetto [43] suggested that teachers who are trained with curriculum based on objectives and examinations tend to favor standardization over originality, as it encourages the replication of ideas instead of promoting comprehension. Current research on creativity indicates that teachers have negative opinions about characteristics and actions linked to creativity due to their own lack of creativity. Therefore, current teachers may lack the necessary skills to educate and mentor students in developing creativity and adapting to the constantly evolving technological landscape. This indicates that teachers who value creativity are more prone to being creative themselves, however, their ability to cultivate students' creativity largely relies on their training level [45].

Similar to numerous education system changes in Africa, the Ghanaian curriculum reform also followed a top-down method that excluded teachers from contributing their ideas. Nevertheless, these educators are the sole group needed for carrying out the curriculum in the educational field. The responsibility for teachers' lack of creativity cannot solely be attributed to in-service teachers but also to the creators of the curriculum (Government of Ghana, Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service, and NaCCA) due to the perceived rush in implementing it. This apparent hurry may prevent teachers from having enough time to cover the entire curriculum package. This study aimed to investigate the given questions and hypotheses using the provided circumstantial information.

Purpose

This work aimed at assessing the impact of supervision and classroom instruction in Ghana by evaluating a new creative arts curriculum:

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Research Questions

1. What is the level of supervision and classroom instruction in the new creative arts curriculum?
2. What type of training is given to teachers to enable them to teach creative art?
3. How do the support systems promote effective teaching of Creative Arts in Ghana?

3. METHODOLOGY

The research utilized a quantitative cross-sectional survey methodology. This design was suitable due to the statistical inferences drawn from the data gathered from the participants. By utilizing this method, participants were not influenced, instead, information on their innovative abilities were collected. The selection of this design is consistent with Allen's [1] and Ihudiebube-Splendor and Chikeme's [2] belief that cross-sectional survey designs are used to characterize a specific population at a particular moment. Cross-sectional survey designs are appropriately used by researchers to gather data without altering variables. Once more, cross-sectional surveys gather data from a significant number of individuals simultaneously to determine attributes of the population like age, gender, and location, among other variables. These tests can typically be finished quickly and are priced fairly. Nevertheless, cross-sectional survey designs are unable to determine causal relationships between variables due to the fact that data collection occurs at one specific point in time [1], [2].

The researcher conducted a survey of 768 in-service teachers enrolled in post-diploma teaching programs at satellite campuses of the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, across the five regions of the country: southern, northern, eastern, central, and western. The satellite campuses are strategically located to offer every practicing teacher the chance to elevate their qualifications to a degree level, which is the minimum requirement for teaching in Ghana. In this regard, participants were selected from various regions of Ghana in a sufficient number to make valid conclusions about teachers and their nurturing behaviors in the country. There were 375 male respondents and 393 female respondents. The participants had teaching backgrounds ranging from 1 to 20 years. Information for the research was gathered through a modified edition of the Sharma and Sharma creativity fostering behavior scale (15 items; α=.79). Examples of statements included in the scale are "I frequently assign group projects for teaching purposes" and "I prefer to allow students time to think before responding to their suggestions". The rating was calculated by measuring levels of agreement from 1 to 4. The survey was tested on 40 randomly chosen teachers in Cape Coast, with early analysis showing a strong internal reliability score of 0.76. The internal reliability of this scale, as suggested by Ritter [4], can be considered satisfactory with a reliability coefficient higher than 0.6 for data collection purposes.

Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were utilized to analyze the data gathered from the instruments. Frequency and percentage were used as descriptive statistics to measure the survey participants' creative nurturing behaviors levels. The statistical methods utilized included independent samples t-test and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The researcher utilized

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the independent samples t-test to compare male and female responses, and the one-way ANOVA to compare responses based on teachers' experience with creative nurturing behaviors.

4. RESULTS/DISCUSSION

The collected data underwent cleaning and testing of assumptions before the analysis was conducted. Essentially, the assumptions like normality and homogeneity tests were satisfied. The research focused on the ways in which in-service teachers demonstrate creative nurturing behaviors while carrying out their in-service duties. The creativity-nurturing actions of teachers currently working were assessed with a 15-item scale that focused on four (4) aspects: abstraction, curiosity, drive, and analytical thinking. The researcher studied creativity-enhancing behaviors in various dimensions to determine which aspects of learners' creativity were being developed by teachers and identify areas where teachers needed guidance through creative workshops. Findings indicate the extent of creativity-enhancing actions displayed by teachers in service, as measured by scale dimensions and the overall scale. In terms of abstraction as dimension one, the research found that most of the in-service teachers have low levels. This means that teachers could have trouble instructing students through abstract methods like assignments, group projects, and getting feedback from students. When it comes to curiosity as dimension two, the research found that most of the teachers currently working have average levels. This means that teachers find ways for students to communicate thoughts and ideas, teachers comprehend students, and teachers monitor student advancement. In terms of motivation as the third aspect, the research showed that most of the teachers undergoing training had moderate levels. This means that teachers strive to motivate their students by providing support, highlighting the significance of the material being taught, and taking the time to hear out any students who may be struggling. In dimension four, the study found that most in-service teachers have low levels of critical thinking skills, as they do not put much effort into developing this skill in students. Teachers may struggle to implement teaching in various scenarios, lack motivation to help students apply their knowledge elsewhere, skip asking for student input, and assess student contributions in class. Overall, teachers currently working possess few behaviors that promote creativity. These results show a bleak outlook for young individuals being instructed by these educators as their teachers are not sufficiently providing opportunities for academic exploration in key areas. Teachers might not necessarily lack creativity knowledge to incorporate it into their teaching; rather, it could be attributed to political interference causing teacher training institutions to shift from objectivity to subjectivity.

The research examined variations in the teaching background of working educators as evident in behaviors that support creativity. The in-service teachers' teaching experiences were divided into four categories based on a single continuous variable. Due to the variable combinations' characteristics, One-Way ANOVA was deemed suitable for the analysis. While analyzing the outcomes of One-Way ANOVA, it was discovered that equality of variance was not met since Levene's test showed a significance level of 0.034, which is below .05. This may have happened due to the significant disparities in the teaching backgrounds of the in-service teachers. Nevertheless, the

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Welch findings, exceeding .05, offset this. Additionally, analysis of the ANOVA findings showed that there were no notable distinctions in the creativity-encouraging actions of the educators in relation to their years of teaching, with $F(3, 33.49)=2.59$ and $\omega=.069$. The findings indicate no significant difference in student creativity nurturing among teachers with 6-10 years (n=214, M=49.51, SD=4.95; 95% CI=48.02 to 49.56) and 11-15 years of experience (n=24, M=45.96, SD=7.14; 95% CI=42.95 to 48.97) compared to those with 1-5 years (n=520, M=49.51, SD=4.95; 95% CI=49.08 to 49.94) and 16-20 years (n=10, M=49.20, SD=5.27; 95% CI=48.83 to 49.58). The difference was minor with a .1 effect size as reported by Cohen in the study. This means that teaching experience of in-service teachers accounted for 1.0% of the variance in creativity-nurturing behaviors.

The research showed that the majority of teachers exhibited minimal levels of behavior that foster creativity. As a result, current teachers may struggle to foster students' creativity in their education. The disclosure depicts the teachers in a fuzzy light, revealing that their lack of ability could hinder their advancement in the constantly evolving educational environment. The insufficient actions that teachers in service display towards nurturing creativity go against OECD's belief that teachers must be creative in order to prepare students for future challenges like future job opportunities, new technologies, and unforeseen problems. The disclosure did not align with the notion that teachers with sufficient creative skills enhance teacher-student engagement [3]. In addition, the disclosure disproves the claim that modern teaching and learning necessitate educators to possess creative skills in order to cultivate creativity and critical thinking in students [4].

Once more, the research showed that male and female in-service teachers exhibited similar low levels of behaviors that nurture creativity, based on their average scores from the independent samples t-test. There is no doubt that the discovery is not surprising as both genders experienced traditional methods of educating students and embraced innovative teaching approaches with creative concepts and strategies. The results of the present research do not align with a previous study by Zetriuslita et al. [5], which reported notable discrepancies in the creative skills of male and female teachers. Nevertheless, the results of the present study support the conclusions of Chan [6] and Torrance [7]. In their research, they discovered that there were no notable distinctions in creative skills between men and women.

In the end, the research found no significant differences in the creative nurturing behaviors of in-service teachers, depending on their years of teaching experience. This is not unexpected because these teachers were sourced from comparable teacher training schools in Ghana, where it seems that teachers are not being trained to be creative with content. Additionally, less experienced teachers in Ghana may have better skills in creative teaching compared to their more experienced counterparts. This is because many teacher training institutions in the country have been adapting to a new standard-based curriculum, which some of these teachers have been trained in since 2017. The study partially confirms and contradicts certain empirical studies. Dikici's study showed that less experienced teachers have a more positive attitude towards creative thinking and teaching compared

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to their more experienced counterparts, whereas Huang et al. and Taat and Suki's studies found that more experienced teachers exhibit higher levels of creativity and originality than less experienced teachers.

5. CONCLUSION

The research looked at how teachers encourage creativity and discovered that the majority of them scored poorly in this crucial skill. The creativity nurturing ability of these teachers was not influenced by their gender or experience when compared to their low ability.

It is important to point out that the limited creative nurturing behaviors observed may result in decreased academic reasoning in both teachers and students, as creativity and reasoning/imagination possess similar qualities. Due to their limited abilities, in-service teachers may struggle to envision new ideas, resulting in a lack of innovation in their professional practice despite resources like a standard-based curriculum. In order to achieve this goal, it is crucial for the Government of Ghana, along with educational organizations like the Ministry of Education, the Ghana Education Service, and the National Council for Curriculum Assessment (NaCCA), to ensure that all in-service teachers under their watch undergo an extensive and gradual curriculum retraining lasting at least one academic year. This is achievable at the different circuit capitals of educational classification in Ghana. This could allow resident trainers to decentralize the training process. Considering this, the advantages outweigh any potential costs as trainers would not have to leave their comfort zone for remote locations that demand extensive preparation and financial investment. It is crucial to mention that the lack of creative skills among in-service teachers is hard to comprehend and surprising. Typically, senior teachers should mentor junior teachers based on their level of experience, but this was not the situation. In order to alter the story, the Ghana Education Service needs to create rewards for teachers who show creativity in their work to prevent them from stagnating over time. This action would strengthen educators by emphasizing the importance of expanding their knowledge base and getting them mentally ready for any upcoming changes in the curriculum.

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