

Chapter 25

RELEVANCE OF INFUSION OF CREATIVITY IN PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOLS: EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOLS' TEACHERS' PERCEPTION AND ENGAGEMENT IN MAINLAND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, LAGOS STATE

Christy Owolemi Omotuyole

Abstract

This study examined teachers' perception of the relevance of infusion of creative activities and engagement in pre-primary schools in Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State. Descriptive survey design was used for this study. **The population comprised all pre-primary schools' teachers** in Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State. In all, 100 pre-primary schools' teachers constituted the sample for this study. Two instruments were validated by research experts to gather data for this study. The first one was titled "Questionnaire on Teachers' Perception of Infusion of Creative Activities in the Early Years Classroom (QTPICAEYC)" (0.76). The second instrument was observation rating scale titled "Teachers' Engagement of Children in Creative Activities Rating Scale (TECCARS)" (0.88). The data were collected by the researcher and five other trained research assistants. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Findings showed that pre-primary schools' teachers in Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State had positive perception of creative activities in the early years; but the extent to which pre-primary schools' teachers engage children in creative activities in the early years is low. In light of the findings from the study, it is recommended that workshops, seminars or training programmes should be organised by both federal government and private schools' owners for the pre-primary schools' teachers to acquaint them with required skills and techniques of guiding and engaging children in varieties of creative activities. Such trainings should be anchored by early childhood education professionals. Again, both federal government and private school owners should employ ECE trained teachers as they are experts who can promote creativity and enhance innovation among children in classrooms.

Keywords: *Infusion of Creativity, Pre-primary Schools' Teachers, Perception, Engagement*

Introduction

The skills children acquire during the early years have significant impact on their lives and it showcases their hidden productive potentials in future. This points to the fact that the experiences of young children in the early years cannot be belittled due to how these experiences shape and promote their holistic development. In light of this, Olowe, John and Okoroafor (2017) posited that deliberate early exposure of children to activities that would enhance mastery of life time skills in the early years is highly imperative. Among activities that can enhance rapid mastery of skills in the early years are creative activities.

Creativity is the process of bringing to existence a novel idea (Henriksen, Mishra & Fisser, 2016). It is the capacity of producing a new project or an idea based on imagination (Cropley, 2001). Amabile (1996) views creativity as a process or a product, and is generally thought of as the production of useful solutions to problems and effective ideas. Zeynep (2019) maintained that creativity is the procedure to create original things. These definitions have emphasised that creativity deals with thinking novel idea and engaging in a systematic procedure of transforming and showcasing this novel idea to the world. Creativity in the early years is very important because it showcases young children's hidden productive potentials and it is most prevalent in young children than adult (Sternberg, 1999). This is why infusion of creativity in the early years is important because it enables children to have better understanding of whatever is being taught creatively. In the words of Fletcher (as cited in James, 2016), people remember 20% of what they hear, 40% of what they have seen and heard and 75% of what they see, hear and do. This position is a confirmation that creativity makes learning permanent, since whatever learners hear, see and do take utmost priority. Ari (2017) reiterated that when learners are taught in a way that fits how they think, they do better in schools. This submission implies that creativity is a stepping stone towards developing other competencies in classrooms (Gurak-Ozdemir, 2016; Ahmadi & Besancon, 2017). Again, Dipanwita (2019) posited that for creativity to flourish in an educational setting, it is necessary for learners to be actively involved in the process of their own learning.

At this juncture, it is imperative to reiterate that teaching creativity skills in the early years cannot be over emphasised. Teaching creativity refers to the capability of the teacher to make learning more interesting by using creative approaches. When teachers use creative approaches, it makes the learners to actively engage in the lesson and makes learning permanent. Due to the importance of creativity in the early years, Gurak-Ozdemir (2016) conducted a study on teachers' perceptions of students' creativity characteristics. His finding showed that teachers had positive perception of creativity. In relation to teachers' engagement of children in creative activities, literature showed that there is dearth of studies on the issue of engaging children in creative activities despite the fact that creativity plays significant roles in the lives of children in the 21st century education system. If children are not engaged in creative activities, there is no doubt that many of them endowed with substantial creative potentials would not be able to showcase their talents (Akinbote, Olowe & John, 2017). In the light of this, there is need to close huge empirical gap left unattended to. It is on this premise that this study **examined pre-primary schools' teachers' perception of the relevance of creative activities and engagement of children in pre-primary schools.**

Statement of the Problem

Creativity in the early years is very important because it showcases every human being's hidden productive potentials and it is most prevalent in young children (Sternberg, 1999). This is why infusion of creative activities in the early years is important because it enables children to have better understanding of whatever is being taught and makes learning permanent (Dipanwita, 2019). Despite the importance of creativity in the early years, literature showed that few empirical studies exist on the issues of teachers' perception and engagement of children in creative activities in the early years. There is no doubt that many children who are endowed with unique creative potentials would be frustrated and would

not be able to showcase their talents if they are not engaged in creative activities (Akinbote, Olowe & John, 2017). It is on this basis that the author considered it imperative to examine teachers' perception of the relevance of infusion of creative activities and engagement in pre-primary schools.

Objectives of the Study

This study examined teachers' perception of the relevance of infusion of creative activities and engagement of children in pre-primary schools in Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State. The specific objectives are to:

1. **examine** teachers' perception of the relevance of infusion of creative activities in pre-primary schools in Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State; and
2. **examine the extent to which** teachers engage children in creative activities in pre-primary schools in Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State.

Research Questions

1. **What is the** perception of teachers on the relevance of infusion of activities in pre-primary schools in Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State?
2. **To what extent did** pre-primary schools' teachers engage children in creative activities in pre-primary schools in Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State?

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was used for this study. The population comprised all pre-primary schools' teachers in Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State. In all, twenty-five pre-primary schools were purposively selected to represent the entire schools in the Local Government Area. Thereafter, four teachers were selected from the twenty-five schools using purposive sampling technique. Therefore, a total of 100 participants constituted the sample for this study. The participants were selected based on the criteria that they are early childhood education practitioners; they had a minimum of NCE Certificate and have been facilitating learning in the pre-primary schools for over 5 years. Two instruments were designed to gather data for this study. The first one was titled "Questionnaire on Teachers' Perception of Infusion of Creative Activities in the Early Years Classroom (QTPICAEYC)". The instrument had two sections (A and B). The first part sought demographic information of the participants which included gender, class and qualifications. Section B contained twelve items that were constructed based on creativity activities in the classrooms. The response type used was the Rennis 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The second instrument was Observation Rating Scale titled "Teachers' Engagement of Children in Creativity Activities Rating Scale (TECCARS)". This instrument also had two sections (A and B). The first part sought demographic information of the participants. Section B contained ten items that were constructed based on how to engage children in creative activities in the early years. The type of response employed Not Engaged, Sometimes Engaged and 'Always Engaged. The instruments were paired validated. At first, they were submitted to research experts in the Department of Creative Arts, University of Lagos for

constructive scrutiny and criticisms in a bid to ascertain their content, construct and face validity. Secondly, the instruments were finally validated by the researcher experts in the Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education (Early Childhood Education Cohort) to ensure consistency of the instruments. The corrections were used to rework the instrument. Thereafter, they were taken to the field to gather relevant data for the study.

Twenty copies of QTPICAEYC were administered to pre-primary teachers that were not part of the model area to test its reliability. The data collected were subjected to a reliability test through Cronbach's Alpha technique and yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.76. The data of TECCARS being observation instrument, was subjected to a reliability test through inter rater scale techniques and it yielded 0.88. Hence, the instruments were reliable. Data were collected by the researcher and five other trained research assistants. When the research assistants got to the schools covered for the study, they sought permission and after permission had been granted, they administered the questionnaire to the teachers and collected them back that same day, while the TECCARS instruments were used to observe the teachers during classroom activities. The observation technique adopted was the non-participatory method. The items in the instrument were rated based on the level of engagement of children in creative activities in the classrooms. The observation duration was six (6) weeks.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentage, mean and standard deviation.

Results

Answers to the Research Questions

Research Question 1. What is the perception of teachers on the relevance of infusion of creative activities in pre-primary schools in Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State?

Table 1: Perception of Teachers on the Relevance of Infusion of Creative Activities in Pre-primary Schools

Items	SD	D	A	SA	Mean (\bar{x})	Std. D
Creativity serves as a stepping stone towards developing other competencies of children in the classrooms.	2 (2.0)	10 (10.0)	74 (74.0)	14 (14.0)	2.51	.56
When teachers use creative approaches, they make the learners to actively engage in lessons.	2 (2.0)	6 (6.0)	40 (40.0)	52 (52.0)	2.56	.62
Adopting creative approaches in teaching, makes learning more interesting to learners.	4 (4.0)	2 (2.0)	56 (56.0)	38 (38.0)	3.72	.78
Engaging children in creativity activities makes learning faster and permanent.	0 (0.0)	2 (2.0)	67 (67.0)	31 (31.0)	3.30	.68
It is necessary for learners to be actively involved in the process of learning and this can only be done through creativity.	0 (0.0)	8 (8.0)	46 (46.0)	46 (46.0)	3.50	.71
Even if children are not engaged in creative activities, their creative potentials will still be nurtured.	0 (0.0)	59 (59.0)	41 (41.0)	0 (0.0)	2.26	.49
In learning, whatever learners hear, see and do take utmost priority as a result of creativity.	0 (0.0)	2 (2.0)	54 (54.0)	44 (44.0)	3.38	.57
When learners are taught in a way that fits how they think and create, they do better in school.	0 (0.0)	4 (4.0)	54 (54.0)	42 (42.0)	3.42	.67
Weighted Average					3.21	

N = 100

Key: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree

Decision Value: *Negative Perception* = 0.00-2.44, *Positive Perception* = 2.45-4.00

Note on Decision Value: Mean values of all the items in table 1 were added and divided by the number of items in table 1. This gave the weighted average value of which 4.00 is the maximum value that can be obtained. Any value of the weighted average that is between 0.00 and 2.44 was taken to stand for *Negative Perception* while the one between 2.45 and 4.00 was taken to stand for *Positive Perception*.

Table 1 showed perception of pre-primary schools' teachers on relevance of infusion of creative activities in pre-primary schools in Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State. Table 1 showed that the teachers agreed to the following items: creativity serves as a stepping stone towards developing other competencies of children in the classrooms (\bar{x} = 2.51), when teachers use creative approaches, they make the learners to actively engage in lessons (\bar{x} = 2.56), engaging children in creativity activities makes learning faster and permanent (\bar{x} = 3.30), in learning, whatever learners hear, see and do take utmost priority as a result of creativity (\bar{x} = 3.38) and when learners are taught in a way that fits how they think and create, they do better in schools (\bar{x} = 3.42). Table 1 further showed that the teachers strongly agreed

that adopting creative approaches in teaching, makes learning more interesting to learners (\bar{x} = 3.72). However, the teachers disagreed with this negatively worded item that even if children are not engaged in creative activities, their creative potentials will still be nurtured (\bar{x} = 2.26). Meanwhile, based on the value of the weighted average (3.21 out of 4.00 maximum value that is obtainable), which fell within the decision value for positive perception, it can be inferred that pre-primary schools' teachers in Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State had positive perception of relevance of infusion of creative activities in pre-primary schools.

Research Question 2. Towhat extent do pre-primary school teachers engage children in creative activities in pre-primary schools in Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State?

Table 2

Extent to which Pre-primary Schools' Teachers engaged Children in Creative Activities in Pre-primary Schools

Items	Not Done	Sometimes Done	Always Done	Mean (x̄)	Std. D
The teachers engage children in classroom activities like hands-on creative activities.	44 (44.0)	50 (50.0)	6 (6.0)	1.34	.56
The teachers bring building blocks to the classroom and constructs different categories of building structures with children in the classroom.	38 (38.0)	55 (55.0)	7 (7.0)	1.32	.62
The teachers engage children in fine motor activities like weaving of basket in the classroom.	23 (23.0)	65 (65.0)	12 (12.0)	1.30	.71
The teachers provide sufficient opportunities for children to build a sandcastle or play a drum.	35 (35.0)	54 (54.0)	11 (11.0)	2.28	.78
The teachers give things like string, wrapping paper scraps, patty pans, paddle pop sticks, stickers and straws to children to make whatever they want.	34 (34.0)	57 (57.0)	9 (9.0)	1.30	.68
The teachers use cardboard box to create things like a puppet theatre with.	35 (35.0)	53 (53.0)	12 (12.0)	1.12	.80
The teachers give empty cardboard boxes to children make a house, a robot, a truck, an animal of their choices.	29 (29.0)	56 (56.0)	15 (15.0)	1.30	.71
The teachers engage children in creative plays like dolls, vehicles, blocks, rocks, cardboard, or boxes.	27 (27.0)	50 (50.0)	13 (13.0)	1.26	.69
Weighted Average				1.40	

N = 100

Key: 1 = Not Done, 2 = Sometimes Done, 3 = Always Done

Decision Value: Low Extent = 0.00-1.44. High Extent = 1.45-3.00

Table 2 showed the extent to which pre-primary schools' teachers engaged children in creative activities in pre-primary schools in Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State. The table showed that the teachers did not: engage children in classroom activities like hands-on creative activities (\bar{x} = 1.34), bring building blocks to the classroom and construct different categories of building structures with children in the classroom (\bar{x} = 1.32), engage children in fine motor activities like weaving of baskets in the classroom (\bar{x} = 1.30), give things like string, wrapping paper scraps, patty pans, paddle pop sticks, stickers and straws to children to make whatever they want (\bar{x} = 1.30), use cardboard boxes to create things like a puppet theatre with (\bar{x} = 1.12), give empty cardboard boxes

to children to make a house, a robot, a truck, an animal of their choices ($\bar{x} = 1.30$) and engage children in creative plays like dolls, vehicles, blocks, rocks, cardboard, or boxes ($\bar{x} = 1.26$). However, table 2 showed further that the teachers sometimes provided sufficient opportunities for children to build a sandcastle or play a drum ($\bar{x} = 2.28$). Based on the value of the weighted average (1.40 out of 3.00 maximum value that is obtainable), which falls within the decision value for low extent, it can be inferred that the extent to which pre-primary schools' teachers engaged children in creative activities in pre-primary schools in Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State was low.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding from the study showed that the pre-primary schools' teachers in Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State had positive perception of the relevance of infusion of creative activities in children of pre-primary schools. This result is in consonance with the result of Gurak-Ozdemir (2016) who found that teachers equally had positive perception of creativity in his study. Furthermore, the reason for this positive perception was unconnected to the fact that the teachers sampled were aware that creativity made learning permanent. This submission corroborates the fact established by Fletcher (as cited in James, 2016), that learners remember 75% of what they see, hear and do.

The second result showed that the extent to which pre-primary schools' teachers engaged children in creative activities in pre-primary schools in Mainland Local Government Area of Lagos State was low. This implied that the teachers did not sufficient engagement of children in creative activities. This fact substantiated the position of Akinbote, Olowe and John (2017) that if children are not engaged in creative activities, there is no doubt that many of them endowed with substantial creative potentials would not able to showcase their talents.

Conclusion

The justification from the study has authenticated that pre-primary school teachers' level of engagement of children in creativity in the early years was low. It was established therefore, that children with innate creative potentials would be deprived of projecting their talents since the human resources guiding them do not display appreciable level of creativity while teaching them in their early years' classrooms.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings, the study recommended that workshops, seminars or training programmes should be organised by both federal government and private schools' owners for the pre-primary schools' teachers to acquaint them with required skills and techniques of engaging children in varieties of creative activities. Such training should be anchored by early childhood education professionals. Again, both federal government and private school owners should employ ECE trained teachers as they are experts who can promote creativity and enhance innovation among children in their early years classrooms..

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