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Teacher Perception of the Influence of Creative Activities in Early Childhood Development Education in North Baringo Sub-county, Baringo County, Kenya

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Abstract:

The purpose of the study was to assess teachers' perception on the influence of creative activities in ECDE in North Baringo Sub-County, Baringo County, Kenya. The objectives of the study were to: Investigate teacher's attitude towards creative activities in Early Childhood development Education (ECDE) and explore the level of integration of creative activities in preparation of tools by teachers. The study was guided by the Multiple Intelligences Theory. The ontology was post-positivism and the epistemology was realist/objectivist. The research method was quantitative. The research design was ex-post-facto. A total of 166 teachers participated in the study. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample. The data was collected using a Likert scaled questionnaires. The findings reported that ECDE teachers have not fully embraced the concept of creative activities in ECDE. They confirmed that creative activities do not add any work load and that it has beneficial effects of fostering intellectual development. The study recommends that there is need for proper implementation and utilization of creative activities at ECDE. That curriculum implementation should be supervised adequately by the head-teachers, District Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (DQASO) and the Sub-County Director.

Keywords: Creative activities, teacher perception, early childhood development education, teaching, learning

1. Introduction

Education and training has been a major development platform of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, Kenya's Vision 2030, the Big Four Agenda and Africa's Agenda 2063 (TVETA, 2020). Learners' growth is guaranteed in a healthy self-esteem environment through creativity by early childhood educators (UNESCO, 2010). Creativity is defined as a state of mind where all intelligences work together (Wegerif, 2010). The search for meanings for both the present and the future generations by the integration of Drama, Music and Visual Arts brings about creative activity column and is the main role played by arts and culture. The understanding and appreciation of the inter-disciplinary arts nature by artists produced is emphasized by the integrated approach according to Iriwieri, (2009). However, for effective implementation of Creative activity curriculum there is need for teacher's attention and appreciation of creative activities that is both creative and resourceful. The Eurydice Report confirms that creative activities such as visual arts and music are given higher prominence than dance and drama in the arts curriculum in United Kingdom (UK, United States of America and other members' state through the report (European Commission, 2009).

In Irish, National Teachers' Organization argues that creativity is the power or quality of self-expression, while creative learning is an occurrence in natural process by people when curious or thrilled (Melly & Mwangi, 2018). Creative ways in learning which is sometimes considered better and faster is preferred by children rather than memorization provided by both parents and teachers. Thus, integrating creative activities in the curriculum creates plenty of opportunities to children for creative behavior. Self-initiated projects, learning and experimentations are the demands by such a curriculum. Provision of opportunities for creative learning by teachers is made easier by the use of curriculum resources that provide advanced experiences, ways that allow one thing to lead to another and the recognition and rewarding of creative thinking (Melly & Mwangi, 2018).

In Turkey, Aykaç and Ulubey (2008) studied the creative activities in terms of enabling the learners to participate actively in the process of learning, make group work, perform affective learning's among others and concluded that creative activities is a convenient method for the constructivist approach. According to Adiguel (2006), it is not possible to accept the given information without discussion in the creative activities studies. Considering from this aspect, it is seen that creative activities is a convenient method for the constructivist approach in early childhood education. One of the core subjects recognized in Nigeria by the New National Policy on Education at the pre-school level was Creative Arts but was optional at the senior level.

Government of Kenya (2012) states that Learning activities for children specified by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) early childhood education curriculum was as follows; language, physical activities, dancing and music, ecological activities and innovative activities. As stated in creative activities the curriculum preamble is important to enhancing learning (Government of Kenya, 2012). Such areas of learning through creative activities in the curriculum are as follows; Creation of new friends binds the child with the school community; appreciation of other communities music and culture, self-expression development; and language skills.

The reflection of deep understanding of music education as an education experience is brought about by the description of skills to be established, events children are to be involved with and resources that are to be used in learning process. Direct learning and cultural issues along multicultural lines are taken into consideration these guidelines (Iriwieri, 2009). However, the practice of creative activities in Early Childhood Educations (ECEs) fall far short of the curriculum requirements. It indicates that there is a gap to be addressed in order to link the distance concerning practice and requirements. Thus, through this thesis, the study wanted to explain how teachers can effectively implement creative activities to enhance skills to young learners, such as oral skills, reading readiness skills and writing readiness skills.

Scott, Lerits and Mumford (2004) meta-analysis, carefully examined 70 instructional inventions that were created to enhance and measure children's' creative performance. The outcomes were striking in that the courses that stressed techniques like constraint identification, critical and convergent thinking had the largest positive contribution. Less impact on the instructional outcomes was due to more open techniques which provided less guidance in strategic approaches. The value of being explicit was an outstanding finding; methods that clearly informed students about the nature of creativity and offered clear strategies for creative thinking were most effective. A finding to be positively correlated to high effect sizes were found by techniques that required the use of freshly learnt knowledge from approaches like social modeling, cooperative learning, and case-based (project-based). A clearly cut finding to emerge from the study of Scott *et al.* (2004) was purely to approve that creativity instruction can be highly successful in enhancing divergent thinking, problem solving, and imaginative performance.

Ogott, Indoshi, and Okwara (2011) carried out a study among a random sample of 20 teachers on teachers' perception towards selection, development and use of language materials with respects to; creative activities factors, target task, human and administrative. The study employed attitude test questionnaires only as a method of data collection though; it was based on descriptive survey design and found out that most teachers had a positive perception towards physical factors, target task human factors, and administrative factors with concern to language material selection, use in creative activities and development. This study examined teachers' roles in the integration of play activities in ECDE curriculum.

A Study conducted by Njoroge (2011) in Thogoto and Karai Zone in Kikuyu Division, Kikuyu District, Kenya on the factors that influenced creative activities in pre-school education mentioning the roles of pre-school teachers as one of the key reasons that creative activity in preschool education was influenced with. The study found out that; teachers' role in early childhood education was influenced highly by payment, attitude, training and motivation. The study comprised of a sample of 6 parents, 6 teachers and 3 head teachers. The vulnerability and ignorance of play by most ECDE curriculum implementers in Kenya, despite the accumulated weight play has in the implementation of creative activities in ECDE curriculum which points to the deprived children performance in ECDE centers as most of the Kenyan teachers prefer not to incorporate play in teaching learning process

Republic of Kenya, (2006), states that Play is vulnerable and ignored by most ECDE curriculum implementers in Kenya, despite the weight of play that may have accumulated in implementation of creative activities in ECDE curriculum which leads to the poor performance of children in ECDE centres as majority of the teachers in Kenya prefer not to integrate play in teaching and learning process. Emuhaya District condition is bad as statistics at Emuhaya DICECE shows about; 80% in 2010, 89% in 2011 and 90% in 2012 of did not fully integrate play activities in the learning and teaching process as compared to teachers from districts in Vihiga County who incorporated play fully, yet the whole learning and teaching process of ECDE children is majorly supposed to purely be based on play (Republic of Kenya, 2009).

Creative activities in Kenya ECDE are relegated to subordinate position to other subjects. Parents, encourage their children/wards to paying more attention to science based discipline. In creating activity, teachers on their own part are notable to perform to the optimum, due to extraneous factors militating against the full realization of the laid down objectives. Many adults and teachers in Njoro Sub County do not read meaning into children's creative activities. Sometimes, teachers just occupy children with Creative activity without recognizing its significance.

A great number of researchers (Ogott, Indoshi, and Okwara, 2011; Saide, 2009; Mweru, 2012; Oliveira, 2011; Silva, 2008; Sarah, 2013) among others stressed importance of creative activities in learning and teaching ECDE learners, however, a paucity of such studies are reported in Kenya. This article endeavored to demonstrate how teacher perception towards creative activities informed its implementation in ECDE in Baringo North Sub-County, Kenya.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study was to assess teachers' perception of the influence of creative activities in ECDE in North Baringo Sub-County, Baringo County, Kenya. The objectives of the study were to:

- Investigate teacher's attitude towards creative activities in Early Childhood development Education (ECDE)
- Explore the level of integration of creative activities in preparation of tools by teachers.

1.2. Method

1.2.1. Participants

To answer the research questions, the author sought views from the teachers on their perceptions of the influence of creative activities in ECDE. A sample of 166 teachers participated in the study. Questionnaires were used to collect data from public schools North Baringo sub-county, Baringo County.

Sample Group	Sample Size
Teachers	166
Total	166

Table 1: Sample Size

1.2.2. Measures and Procedure(S)

Data was generated using questionnaires from teachers who responded to a Modified Self-Description Questionnaire (MSDQ) developed by the researcher. These sections were Likert type which provided the respondents with a series of statements to which they could indicate the degree of agreement or disagreement. All participants were proficient in both spoken and written English. The participants' responses were coded and categorized into information that could answer the researchers' questions and objectives, and then analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Therefore, descriptive themes based on the research questions were developed. Then, the data was coded and entered into the computer for analysis using the Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 16.0).

3. Results

3.1. Teacher's Attitude towards Creative Activities

The study sought to analyze the perceptions of the teachers towards creative activities in North Baringo Sub-County. Interviews and focused group discussions were used to gather the different perceptions the teachers had in the areas presented in the table 2. The findings were summarized and presented in Table 2 below.

		SD	D	N	A	SA
Creative lessons are not useful in everyday life of a pre-school learner.	Freq.	0	1	23	64	78
	%	0	0.6	13.9	38.6	47
Creative activities are won't be of much use to learners when they grow up.	Freq.	0	2	19	63	82
	%	0	1.2	11.4	38	49.4
Creative activities are doesn't offer learners e any knowledge.	Freq.	11	10	38	85	22
	%	6.6	6	22.9	51.2	13.3
Pressure of subject content doesn't leave time for creative activities.	Freq.	11	17	19	74	45
	%	6.6	10.2	11.4	44.6	27.1
Learning through play increases creativity.	Freq.	11	5	43	48	59
	%	6.6	3	25.9	28.9	35.5
The creative child is a burden because of his/her disturbing behavior	Freq.	13	3	9	59	82
	%	7.8	1.8	5.4	35.5	49.4
Creativity is an essential skill to be nurtured in schools.	Freq.	13	3	26	71	53
	%	7.8	1.8	15.7	42.8	31.9
Teacher training is important to foster creativity in education.	Freq.	11	3	33	62	57
	%	6.6	1.8	19.9	37.3	34.3
Portfolios enhance pupils' creativity.	Freq.	14	14	34	81	23
	%	8.4	8.4	20.5	48.8	13.9
Creativity can be assessed.	Freq.	11	7	46	10	92
	%	6.6	4.2	27.7	6	55.4
Creativity can be taught	Freq.	12	12	34	49	59
	%	7.2	7.2	20.5	29.5	35.5
Teaching creativity is an additional work load.	Freq.	5	33	59	51	18
	%	3	19.9	35.5	30.7	10.8
Rote learning is necessary to pass exams	Freq.	32	23	51	33	27
	%	19.3	13.9	30.7	19.9	16.3
Independent learning enhances creative thinking.	Freq.	24	24	37	59	22
	%	14.5	14.5	22.3	35.5	13.3
Teaching To The Test Doesn't Leave Time For Creative Activities	Freq.	17	28	23	52	46

Table 2: Teachers' Perception toward Creative Activities in ECDE

Source: Author

3.2. Integration of Creative Activities in Preparation of Tools by Teachers

The study sought to analyze the integration of creative activities in preparation of tools by teachers in North Baringo Sub-County. Interviews and focused group discussions were used to gather the different strategies the teachers used. The finding were summarized and presented in Table 3 below.

		SD	D	N	A	SA
Using Creative activities we help learners in critical thinking & problem solving skills.	Freq.	26	23	59	26	32
	%	15.7	13.9	35.5	15.7	19.3
Using Creative activities place classroom where pupils feel safe and develop self-confidence away from criticism.	Freq.	31	23	44	29	39
	%	18.7	13.9	26.5	17.5	23.5
We can develop pupils' skills to think in a creative way with the current curricula.	Freq.	2	25	36	53	50
	%	1.2	15.1	21.7	31.9	30.1
Using Creative activities we are able to offers lots of suggestions and ideas.	Freq.	13	0	48	72	33
	%	7.8	0	28.9	43.4	19.9
Using Creative activities we are able to helps learners when they are having difficulties.	Freq.	2	11	11	93	49
	%	1.2	6.6	6.6	56	29.5
Using Creative activities we are able explains well the theme and the procedure.	Freq.	0	25	17	109	15
	%	0	15.1	10.2	65.7	9
We use creative activities to teach another subject	Freq.	2	12	46	77	29
	%	1.2	7.2	27.7	46.4	17.5

Table 3: Integration of Creative Activities

Source: Author

4. Discussion and Conclusion

4.1. Teacher's Attitude towards Creative Activities

To establish teachers' attitudes toward creative activities in ECDE, respondents were asked of their opinions and the results presented in table 2 above. The respondents were asked whether creative lessons are not useful in everyday life of a pre-school learner. The results from the study revealed that, of the total respondents, 47% (78) strongly agreed that creative lessons are not useful in everyday life of a pre-school learner, 38.6% (64) of them agreed, 0.6% (1) disagreed while 13.9% (23) were neutral. In order to find out whether, pressure of subject content doesn't leave time for creative activities; respondents were asked to state the degree to which they concurred with the above. Of the total respondents, 27.1% (45) of them strongly agreed, 44.6% (74) of them agreed, 10.2% (17) disagreed, 6.6% (11) strongly disagreed while 11.4% (19) of them were undecided. A related item on whether learning through play increases creativity revealed that, of the total respondents, 35.5% (59) of the respondents strongly agreed that learning through play increases creativity, 28.9% (48) of them agreed, 3% (5) of them disagreed, 6.6% (11) strongly disagreed while 25.9% (43) of them were neutral. The study further enquired from the respondents whether the creative child is a burden because of his/her disturbing behavior. The results revealed that 49.4% (82) of the respondents strongly agreed, 35.5% (59) of them agreed, 1.8% (3) disagreed while 5.4% (9) of them were undecided.

Also, the researcher enquired from the respondents whether creativity is an essential skill to be nurtured in schools. The results were such that 31.9% (53) of them strongly agreed that creativity is an essential skill to be nurtured in schools, 42.8% (71) of them agreed, 1.8% (3) of them disagreed, 7.8% (13) strongly disagreed while 15.7% (26) of the respondents were uncertain.

Besides, the respondents were also asked whether teacher training is important to foster creativity in education. The results showed that 34.3% (57) of the respondents strongly agreed, 37.3% (62) of them agreed, 1.8% (3) of them disagreed, 6.6% (11) strongly disagreed while 19.9% (33) of the respondents were not sure.

The respondents were also asked whether the portfolios enhance pupils' creativity, the results indicated that, 13.9% (23) of them strongly agreed, 48.8% (81) of them agreed, 8.4% (14) of them disagreed and 8.4% (14) of them strongly disagreed though 20.5% (34) of the respondents were not sure.

The study further sought to find out whether creativity can be assessed. 55.4% (92) of the respondents strongly agreed, 6% (10) of them agreed, 4.2% (7) of them disagreed, 6.6% (11) of them strongly disagreed while 27.7% (46) of them were neutral.

In a nutshell, teachers have not made full use of creative activities in ECDE. This is evidenced by their perception towards creative activities which they don't find to offer learners any knowledge or even of much use to learners when they grow up.

Contrary to the study findings, Ogott, Indoshi, and Okwara (2011) study on teachers' perception towards selection, development and use of language materials with respects to; creative activities factors, target task, human and

administrative revealed that most teachers had a positive perception towards physical factors, target task human factors, and administrative factors with concern to language material selection, use in creative activities and development. Moreover, a study by Sarah (2013) on teachers' roles in promoting literacy in the context of play among a random sample of 15 respondents showed that teachers acted as storytellers, discussion leaders, decision makers and examiners in promoting creative activities among children.

4.2. Integration of Creative Activities in Preparation of Tools by Teachers

To establish whether using creative activities helps learners in critical thinking & problem solving skills, respondents were asked their opinion and the results were such that, 19.3% (32) of the respondents strongly agreed, 15.7% (26) of them agreed, 13.9% (23) of them disagreed, 15.7% (26) of them strongly disagreed while 35.5% (59) of the respondents were neutral.

In a related item, on whether using creative activities place classroom where pupils feel safe and develop self-confidence away from criticism, the study results revealed that, 23.5% (39) of the respondents strongly agreed, 17.5% (29) of them agreed, 13.9% (23) disagreed, 18.7% (31) of them strongly disagreed while 26.5% (44) of the respondents were neutral.

With the aim of ascertaining whether pupils' skills to think in a creative way can develop with the current curricula, the respondents were asked to respond accordingly. The results revealed that, 30.1% (50) of the respondents strongly agreed, 31.9% (53) of them agreed, 15.1% (25) of them disagreed, 1.2% (2) strongly disagreed while 21.7% (36) of them were neutral.

Further, in an attempt to find out whether the use of creative activities offers lots of suggestions and ideas, the respondents were asked for their views on this and the results were such that 19.9% (33) of the respondents strongly agreed, 43.4% (72) agreed, 7.8% (13) strongly disagreed while 28.9% (48) of the respondents were neutral.

Moreover, in order to find out whether the use of creative activities helps learners when they are having difficulties, the respondents were asked for their views on this and the results showed that 56% (93) of the respondents agreed, 29.5% (49) of them strongly agreed, 6.6% (11) disagreed while 6.6% (11) of the respondents were undecided. Additionally, in a bid to establish if the use of creative activities enables an elaborate explanation of the theme and procedure, the results were such that 9% (15) of the respondents strongly agreed, 65.7% (109) of the respondents agreed, 15.1% (25) of them disagreed while 10.2% (17) of the respondents were neutral.

To sum up, 17.5% (29) of the respondents strongly agreed that they use creative activities to teach another subject, 46.4% (77) of them agreed, 7.2% (12) disagreed, and 1.2% (2) strongly disagreed while 27.7% (46) of the respondents were neutral.

In line with the aforementioned findings, Jacobson, (2007) avers that, whenever creative activities are integrated in the early childhood curriculum, children are given opportunities to express themselves visually what they may not be able to say verbally hence efficient learning in ECDE centers. Similar Findings were also reported by (Ruppert, (2010); Andiema & Kemboi, (2013); Hardman, (2008); Mahindu, (2011)) that learning experiences in the creative activities had a major contribution to the development of academic skills, including the areas of reading and language development, and mathematics. Additionally, Roberts, (2011) maintained that the usage of creative activities was beneficial to learners since it led to the enhancement of multicultural understandings, development of higher thinking skills, gaining of positive emotional responses to learning and quality engagement through a variety of learning styles and building of self-esteem.

5. Conclusion

ECDE teachers have not fully embraced the idea of creative activities in ECDE. They are aware of its benefits though they are of the opinion that creative activities do not add much to knowledge. They are also of the opinion that creative activities won't be of much use to learners when they grow up. On the other hand, the teachers confirmed that a creative activity doesn't add a work load. It is beneficial in that it fosters creativity in education and enhances pupils' creativity. As a result, more efforts need to be directed towards the implementation of creative activities at ECDE since it is of utmost importance.

Furthermore, the integration of creative activities in preparation tools by the teacher is evident. Teachers are trained on the use of creative activities and they are able to transfer knowledge acquired in training to the learners. The tools such as syllabus, record of work covered and lesson plan are also present. It is therefore easier for teachers' to make use of creating learning opportunities in the school atmosphere. As a result, open educational activities that suggest creativity are prevalent.

Creative activities have made sufficient contribution in both teaching and learning in ECDE. With respect to teaching, creative activities offers an array of ideas that enables an elaborate explanation of the theme and procedure. They also help learners overcome the challenges that they encounter in the learning process. In regards to learning, creative activities make it possible for learners to use different materials and also make use of their imaginations to learn and express their feelings. As a result, creative activities are essential for both the learning and teaching process in ECDE.

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