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Developing Creativity through Storytelling at Kindergarten Center in the Effutu Municipality, Ghana

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Abstract:

The study essentially investigated the use of storytelling activities to enhance children's creative abilities at a kindergarten center in the Effutu Municipality. The study adopted the quasi experimental design. The simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used to select pupils for the study. A total of sixty-three (63) children were involved in the study. The instruments used was portfolio building and documentary analysis adapted from Torrance (1999) test for creative thinking. The two-way repeated measures MANOVA was used to analyze the data. The pre-test and post-test scores of each group were compared in each of the three teaching methods observed. The results show significant multivariate effects for all the teaching methods ($\eta^2=0.453$, $F(2, 124) = 74.78$, $p \leq 0.001$), $E = 0.493$. The interaction effects of the three teaching methods were statistically significant. The study further revealed that role play was significantly more effective than the traditional method with a mean difference of (0.242), $p \leq 0.001$). Another major finding was that video observation was significantly more effective than role play with a mean difference of (1.754, $p \leq 0.001$) and traditional method with a mean difference of (1.996), $p \leq 0.001$). The study concluded that video observation and role play activities have been found to be very effective teaching methods in enhancing children's creativity at kindergarten centers since children's senses are directly involved in the teaching and learning process. The end result is that pupil's creativity is enhanced. It is recommended that kindergarten centers, curriculum developers and policy-makers should therefore encourage the use of video observation and role play activities at kindergarten centers since it has been found to be useful in the development of children's creativity.

1. Introduction

Before children enter kindergarten, they are considered by the majority of theorists of child development as highly creative (Sharp, 2004; Meador, 1992). They freely express their thought in speech, drawings and through play. It is therefore important that children at this stage are given the opportunity to grow this natural creative ability to the fullest. Although some individuals are believed to be naturally creative, researchers believe that the power that education has over one's ability to be creative cannot be overemphasized since education either nurtures or inhibits creative abilities (Sharp, 2004). The Robinson Report (1999) as cited by Sharp (2004) also stresses the relationship between creativity and education when it asserted that everyone was capable of creative achievement in one area of activity or the other, if they were given the right conditions and relevant knowledge and skills. This presupposes that it is not automatic for the majority of a nation's citizens to possess creative ability; rather, conscious efforts need to be made through education to inculcate creative skills into its people, especially its young children. It therefore spells economic doom for a country whose education system reduces students to learning how to be successful repeaters of knowledge, instead of learning how to apply their knowledge to a variety of real life challenges.

Ghana like most African countries is burdened with lot of socio economic problems which require innovative and imaginative ways of dealing with them. Problems such as poor sanitation, low productivity, high rate of unemployment, inefficient production and distribution of energy and water among others have been major setbacks to the nation's development. A kind of education that fosters the development of creativity in the individuals in the country is therefore very crucial.

In Ghana, an examination oriented culture is firmly embedded in the education system. The culture tends primarily to value memory and analytical skills, but creative and practical skills are at least as important to succeed in life and may even be more important, especially after formal schooling ends. Unfortunately, a child's success in education in Ghana is measured in terms of the qualifying grades he/she gets at the various stages of the education system hence creative education or learning for development is relegated to the background.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Currently, there is a great deal of evidence that storytelling activities are useful in encouraging and facilitating language development in children and inspiring a love of reading (Block, 1997; Hamilton & Weiss, 1991; Lavo & Rietz, 1986; Peck, 1989). However, it

appears research about teaching creativity using storytelling as a teaching strategy at kindergarten centers in Ghana have not been sufficiently investigated. Similarly, definitions of creativity abound but none seems to be entirely relevant or sufficiently specific to be of help in the classroom. There is much emphasis on developing creativity but not much practical ways of fostering it in regular classroom settings. Preschool education in Ghana primarily emphasizes language development. For example, storytelling usually emphasizes children's use of language, vocabulary and expression rather than on developing children's thinking, creativity and problem solving. It is an undeniable fact that language is a great tool that enhance other aspects of a child's development, hence it is tenable to argue for the fostering of children's language and thinking in development. Henning (2000) concluded in a study that oral retelling significantly improves children's comprehension and their sense of story structure. In addition, developing storytellers learn to identify heroes and anti-heroes, but with time and practice they also create their own characters. This process allows children to use increasing higher-order thinking skills as well as creativity and problem-solving skills, concomitantly, they become aware of their own learning in creating or constructing knowledge. Although, it is a very common approach in preschool classroom, not much study has examined storytelling as a teaching technique in particular in promoting creativity in a kindergarten classroom in Ghana. Therefore, the crux of the study is to design a curriculum that uses storytelling activities as a means of promoting creativity in young children in the Effutu Municipality.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to use storytelling activities as a means of promoting creativity among kindergarten children in the Effutu Municipality. This study also explored young children's creative thinking and creative skills in the kindergarten classroom and show how variety of storytelling interventions helped to improve the creative abilities of children.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the objective of the study was to:

Examine the effects of using storytelling activities on age 4 and 5 children's creativity at kindergarten center.

1.4. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the study:

H_0 : There is no significant difference between pupil's scores on creativity and storytelling activities.

H_1 : There is significant difference between pupil's scores on creativity and storytelling activities.

1.5. The significance of the Study

This study is timely due to the importance of creativity in the 21st century. It has become critical for individuals and nations to find new and creative ways of finding solutions to problems now that the world has become very competitive. This study helped teachers at the preschool level to instill creativity and problem-solving skills in young children. Moreover, since economic development cannot be wished into existence, pragmatic steps should be taken to develop creative and problem solvers who would turn around the economic fortunes of the country. This study therefore helped curriculum developers, policy makers and educational planners to contribute their respective quotas towards the development of creativity and problem-solving skills in young children in Ghanaian kindergarten centers. Finally, this study served as a basis for further research in creative thinking skills.

1.6. Definition of Terms

- 1) Fluency : a count of the number of relevant ideas in a child's creative presentation.
- 2) Flexibility : a count of the number of ideas added in a child's creative presentation.
- 3) Originality : a count of the number of infrequent ideas in a child's creative presentation
- 4) Video observation: it is a teaching approach which involves viewing technologies which are presented through screens for increasing the understandable level of children.
- 5) Role play: it is a teaching approach which involves unrehearsed dramatization performed by children using various activities.
- 6) Traditional storytelling/method: it is a teaching approach which involves an oral retelling and brainstorming of present and past events on activities and which borders on our immediate environment.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research design

This study adopted the quasi-experimental design of research to compare storytelling activities on children's creativity and observe their effects. The design of the study consisted the pre- test, intervention and post-test. During the intervention, children were assigned to three groups namely; traditional storytelling, role play and video observation groups with each group receiving the instructional programme consisting of several sections of storytelling activities.

2.2. Population

The target population was made up of all private and public kindergarten centers in the Effutu Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana.

2.3. Sample and sampling Technique

The sample size for the study was made up of 63 kindergartens two children. The simple random sampling technique was used to select one kindergarten center from the kindergarten centers in the Effutu Municipality in the central region of Ghana. The purposive sampling technique was used to select all kindergarten two pupils of Zion Methodist basic school. Pupils were randomly assigned to three groups, namely; traditional storytelling, role play and video observation groups based on their ability levels. Each group was made up of 21 pupils.

2.4. Research Instruments and Data Analysis Procedure

The main instrument used was based on Torrance’s test of creative thinking which included participant observation, documentary analysis and portfolio building. The scoring system of this study was based on Torrance’s test of creative thinking. The test battery was initially published in 1966 and was revised several times (Torrance, 1999). The two-way repeated measures MANOVA was used to analyze the data.

2.5. Results and Discussion

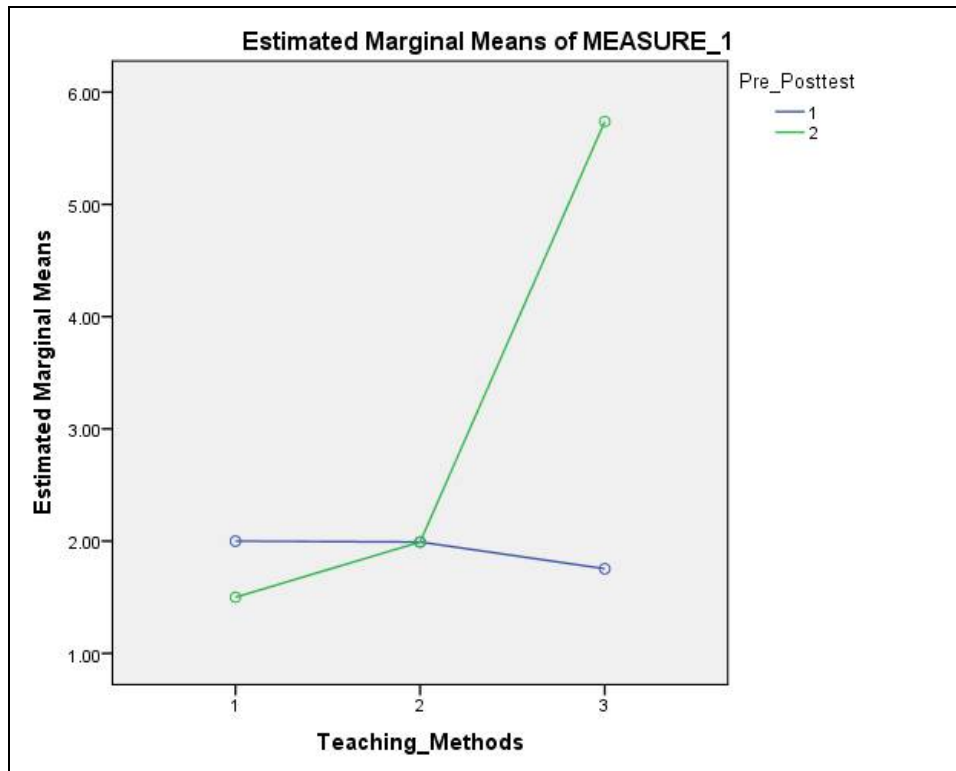


Figure 1: A diagram showing the pre-test and post-test scores of the three-storytelling technique

Creativity	Storytelling Approach	Mean	Standard Deviation
Fluency	Traditional method	1.26	0.86
	Role play	2.17	0.21
	Video observation	2.55	1.55
Flexibility	Traditional method	2.48	1.58
	Role play	1.05	0.76
	Video observation	2.45	1.67
Originality	Traditional method	0.61	0.69
	Role play	2.41	1.52
	Video observation	2.24	1.77
Overall Creativity	Traditional method	4.36	2.12
	Role play	5.62	2.72
	Video observation	7.24	4.71

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation scores for teaching methods and components of creativity

The results in Table 1 show the mean and standard deviation scores for teaching method and components of creativity. In terms of fluency; Traditional method (M= 1.26, SD= 0.86), Role play (M= 2.17, SD= 0.21) and Video observation (M=2.55, SD=1.55). With regards to flexibility; Traditional method (M=2.48, SD=1.58), Role play (M=1.05, SD=0.76) and video observation (M=2.45, SD=1.67). For originality, Traditional method (M=0.61, SD=0.69), Role play (M=2.41, SD = 1.52) and Video observation (M=2.24, SD=1.77). Finally, for overall creativity, Traditional method (M= 4.36, SD=2.12), Role play (M=5.62, SD=2.72) and Video observation (M=7.24, SD= 4.71). The analysis show that video observation scored the highest mean in fluency (M=2.55), and overall creativity (M= 7.24) while traditional method and role play method scored the highest mean in flexibility (M=2.48) and originality (2.41) respectively. This means that differences existed in the mean scores of storytelling activities.

Teaching Method	Effect Size	F	Hypothesis	Error Difference	Significance
Wilks' lambda	453	74.777	2.000	124.00	0.001
Pre-test					
Post-test					
Wilks' lambda	501	121.510	1.00	125.00	0.001

Table 2: Multivariate test for teaching methods and pre- post-test scores
Significant at level $P > 0.05$

The repeated measures MANOVA was used to analyze the data. The results show significant multivariate effects for teaching methods (lambda = 0.453, $F(2,124) = 74.78$, $P < 0.001$) partial eta square = 0.547) and for the pre-test, post –test (lambda = 0.507, $F(1,125) = 121.51$, $P < 0.001$), eta squared = 0.493. The overall interaction effect of the three-teaching method is that they were all statistically significant. Also, the overall interaction of the pre-test and post-test is that they were also statistically significant.

Teaching	Methods	Median difference	Significance
	2	-0.242	0.007
1	3	1.996	0.001
	1	0.242	0.007
2	3	1.754	0.001
	1	1.996	0.001
3	2	1.754	0.001
at level $P > 0.05$			

Table 3: Multivariate test for teaching method

Table 3, determined the effectiveness of the three storytelling methods namely; traditional method, role play and video observation. After the comparison, the following observations were made; the most significant effect on the creativity was video observation. The analysis also showed that role play method was significantly more effective than the traditional method (median difference = 0.242, $p < 0.001$) and the video observation was significantly more effective than role play (mean difference of = 1.754, $p < 0.001$) and the traditional method (mean difference = 1.996, $p < 0.001$). From the analysis, all the teaching methods were effective on creativity. The significant difference was also seen on the pre-test and post-test. With a mean difference = (1.161 $p < 0.001$). This means that all the interventions were effective but video observation as a teaching strategy was very effective. This means that the use of video observation benefits both teachers and pupils by making concepts easily understandable, overcoming physical difficulties in seeing, learning, touching, smelling and manipulating things in the environment and also inform the child what the world is like. Video observation also stimulates pupils' interest, boost their confidence, concentration and communication. Video observation improves pupils 'sensory experiences of all kinds contribute to strengthen and enrich the child's perception. Toys, building blocks, card games, puzzles as well as audio-visual aids such as pictures, charts, maps, globes, charts and flannel graphs, sound-recordings which are basically materials of sights and sound, offer a variety of experiences which stimulate the senses and promote self-activity in children. Video observation also reinforce the spoken or the written words what concrete images and serves as the basis for learning. The analysis also showed that role play method was significantly more effective than the traditional method (median difference = - 0.242, $p < 0.001$). This means that role play method have proven its effectiveness in teaching creativity, as role-play can increase children's enthusiasm, self-confidence, empathy and encourage critical thinking. Role-play as a teaching strategy gives life and immediacy to academic materials that can be largely descriptive and/or theoretical. Also, the use of role-playing to introduce a topic, using the children's 'background knowledge (schema) stimulates interest in them in new creative ways.

2.6. Conclusion

On the basis on the findings made the following conclusions were drawn, all the storytelling techniques used were effective in one component of creativity or the other, however, video observation was found to be the most effective. The findings also pointed out that our concern as teachers is to create an enabling environment to foster the talents and interests of children in kindergarten centers and provide the opportunities for them to acquire creative skills through their interaction with their immediate environment.

2.7. Recommendations

Based on the evidence and the conclusion drawn, the following recommendations were made;

1. The study showed that given the right conditions and environment, children easily explored their talents, it is therefore recommended that kindergarten educators, parents and other relevant stakeholders should create an enabling environment by supplying them the necessary play materials to foster the talents and interest of children and provide ample opportunities further to acquire knowledge based on what they learn by giving them time and space.
2. The use storytelling approaches in fostering creativity demands a lot of experimentation and practical, therefore, there is the need for Ghana Education Service through the government to seek help from international organization partners to establish centers for training and experimentation for kindergarten teachers to enhance their teaching skills and also build kindergarten centers that will serve as experimental kindergarten centers in selected metropolitan, municipal and districts centers in the country.
3. Since all the storytelling techniques were effective on a component of creativity, teachers should not stick to one particular teaching approach but rather integrate several approaches depending on its effectiveness on the concept you want to teach.
4. The study revealed that video observation is best for teaching creativity in our kindergarten centers compared to role play and traditional method, it is therefore recommended that a least every kindergarten classroom should have a television and other audio-visual materials to enable teachers use these techniques to enhance pupil's creativity

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