



ANALYSIS OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GHANA'S CREATIVE ARTS CURRICULUM AND HER EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION POLICY

Samuel Agbenyo

University of Education, Winneba.

Email: sagbenyo@uew.edu.gh

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ABSTRACT: *In Ghana, the creative arts constitute a crucial component of early childhood education (ECE) for the purpose of ensuring holistic child development, yet the relationship between the creative arts curriculum and the nation's ECE policy remains unclear. This study examined how the creative arts curriculum of Ghana aligns with the country's ECE policy. A qualitative research approach was employed, using bibliographic design. Relevant national policy documents were purposefully selected, and their contents were analyzed thematically. Findings revealed that the ECE policy acknowledged several benefits of early childhood care and development. However, it lacks clear guidance on how it should be implemented through creative arts instruction. The study concluded that although the policy framework aligns with global ideals of holistic development, it falls short of articulating implications for classroom practice. Similarly, the Creative Arts curriculum provides superficial pedagogical guidance on how to translate the ECE policy into practice. The study recommended a review of the current ECE policy to emphasize the role of creative arts curricula in its implementation process. Also, promotion of interdisciplinary collaboration among educators, therapists, and policymakers was deemed helpful with the view to enhancing early childhood education for all children, including those with special education needs. Ultimately, there is a need to reconceptualize creative arts not merely as a supplementary activity but as a key educational and therapeutic discipline in both the mainstream and the ECE and IE systems of Ghana in order to facilitate implementation of the nation's ECE policy.*

KEYWORDS: Inclusive, early childhood, creative arts, special needs, policy, strategies, curriculum.



INTRODUCTION

In Ghana, the creative arts constitute a crucial component of early childhood education (ECE) for the purpose of ensuring holistic child development, yet the relationship between the creative arts curriculum and the nation's ECE policy remains unclear.

The Creative Arts curriculum in Ghana is designed for two cohorts of learners at the primary school level; the first is basic one-three, and the second is basic four-six (MoE-Ghana, 2019). It is worthy of note that a similar curriculum, Creative Arts and Design, exists for the junior high school level. Furthermore, each of these curricula consists of two main strands, namely the visual arts and the performing arts. While the former offers a multifaceted subject matter that is worth discussing, the latter serves as a point of departure for this paper, partly due to the musical arts background of the author. The performing arts strand demonstrates an embodiment of music, dance, and drama with diverse cultural representations across Ghana.

Throughout history and to date, various research perspectives have highlighted the beneficial influence of creative arts education during the early stages of life, notably, from birth to about eight years (UNESCO, 2015; Glenn, 1972; Lee, 1997; Zadnik & Habe, 2017; Acquah, 2025). Historically, these views were often based on the personal insights and experiences of individuals who observed children's general and creative arts development firsthand (Torras, 2021). By the second half of the 20th century, more scientifically grounded studies emerged, providing evidence of the advantages of creative arts education during prenatal and early childhood periods (Demecs et al., 2011; Bonna, 2022). Particularly, findings related to Mozart's compositions sparked particular interest, giving rise to the concept known as "Mozart's influence." The creative arts serve as a medium for communication, emotional expression, social interaction, and cognitive development among all children, including those with special education needs (SEN) (Fischinger et al., 2020; Hughes & James, 2001; Jaušovec et al., 2006). Thus, these children represent a diverse group of learners, some of whom require additional support to reach their full potential partly due to physical, developmental, behavioral, and emotional challenges (Turnbull et al., 2015).

Despite a growing body of global evidence supporting the benefits of the creative arts for children, its embodiment of Ghana's early childhood education policies remains underexplored. Also, Pather and Slee (2019) contended that subsequent to significant developments in policies and access to formal education since the 1994 Salamanca Conference in Spain, the reality of curricular implications in Ghana "remains a castle in the air" (p. 70). Prior to this contention, Agordoh (2005) had reported that "the Ghanaian education system has not fully embraced the comprehensive utilitarian role of creative arts education," adding that "creative arts activities often serve mere entertainment purposes rather than being employed, deliberately, as child-developmental tools" (p. 32). This observation is corroborated by Asante and Ankomah (2020), who bemoaned the absence of specific guidelines in Ghana's ECE policies to direct educators on how to use creative arts effectively for children, especially those with special education needs. Motivated by the quest to know whether the Creative Arts curriculum was informed by the ECE policy goals of Ghana, this study sought to investigate how Ghana's Creative Arts curriculum aligns with the nation's Early Childhood Education policy.



In this paper, the author has, intentionally, used the phrase "... with special education needs" or its abbreviated form, "SEN," for the purpose of emphasizing that ECE and creative arts education are meant to make learning "more effective, efficient, equitable, and inclusive" for every child, whether typically developing or with disabilities, as enshrined in the ECE policy (MoE, 2004: p. 2). By doing so, the study provides valuable insights to inform educators, policymakers, and researchers regarding the relationship between policy and curriculum. Ultimately, the findings would contribute to policy reviews that meaningfully integrate creative arts as a developmental and nurturing resource for all early-grade children in Ghana, while guiding future curriculum reforms, especially in the creative arts.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in two key theoretical perspectives, namely, the Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Kozulin, 2023) and the Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1983; Qutab et al., 2024; Afnan et al., 2025). These theories constitute a meaningful lens through which one understands the role of the creative arts in supporting the development and inclusion of children through early childhood education. Sociocultural theory emphasizes that cognitive development is strongly influenced by social interaction and cultural context. According to Vygotsky, learning occurs through guided participation in activities with more knowledgeable others, such as teachers or peers. One of the central concepts in his theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the range of tasks a child cannot yet perform independently but can accomplish with support from more experienced ones around them (Lambright, 2024; Widiastuti et al., 2023). This theory supports the current study by positioning the creative arts as a cultural and interactive tool that supports the learning process. For children with special needs, the creative arts can be used within the ZPD to foster engagement, communication, and developmental progress, especially when facilitated by trained educators or caregivers.

The Theory of Multiple Intelligences challenges the traditional notion of intelligence as a single, fixed ability. Instead, this theory states that individuals possess a range of intelligences through which they experience and understand the world. These include linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic, and existential intelligences. Of particular relevance to this study is musical intelligence, which is an aspect of the creative arts. It involves diverse interactions with sound patterns, rhythms, tones, and creative arts-related activities—creating, listening to, and performing—among early grade learners. Children with special needs often display strengths in specific intelligences, and creative arts intelligence offers a powerful avenue for learning, self-expression, and social connection (So et al., 2025; Moreno et al., 2009). This theory underscores the need to diversify instructional methods and repertory while recognizing creative arts as an authentic and effective mode of teaching and therapy that meets diverse abilities and needs in the Creative Arts classroom.



Creative Arts as a Developmental Avenue for Children with Special Education Needs

The role of the creative arts in fostering development among children with special needs has garnered considerable attention within education and therapy literature worldwide (Acquah, 2025). Qutab et al. (2024) supported the view of Hallam (2010) that creative arts uniquely engage multiple brain regions simultaneously, enhancing neuroplasticity, which supports cognitive processes such as memory, attention, and executive functioning. This neurological impact is particularly relevant for children with developmental delays or learning disabilities, as creative arts can scaffold abilities that traditional verbal or visual teaching methods might not reach effectively. Also, Rickson and McFerran (2007) as well as Flesher (2025) argued that the creative arts create a nonverbal medium through which children can communicate feelings and ideas, facilitating emotional expression and self-regulation, which are often challenging for children with emotional or behavioral disorders. Reschke-Hernández (2011) supported this view by emphasizing how creative arts therapy interventions specifically benefit children on the autism spectrum, improving social interaction and reducing anxiety through rhythmic and melodic engagements.

The therapeutic value of creative arts in ECE lies not only in skill acquisition but also in fostering inclusion by providing accessible, enjoyable, and motivating learning experiences (Nzewi & Omolo-Ongati, 2014). This perspective aligns with the view Rauscher et al. (1997), who proposed that early creative arts training can enhance spatial-temporal skills, suggesting that the subject has broader cognitive benefits beyond artistic development. Despite these compelling findings, there remains a significant gap in the consistent application of creative arts within educational contexts, especially for children with special needs in many low- and middle-income countries, including Ghana. Amoako and Owusu (2016) argued that while creative arts are informally integrated into classrooms for routine activities or cultural events, their intentional use to support developmental goals remains limited. This is partly attributed to a lack of awareness among educators about the pedagogical and therapeutic potential of the creative arts, as well as insufficient training and resources.

Early Childhood Education Policy of Ghana

A policy framework serves as the backbone for educational practice, shaping what is taught (Young, 2014; Zamroni, 2024), how it is taught (Knutsson, 2025), and who teaches (implements) it, as well as who is included in learning processes, the learner (Pahrudin & Jatmiko, 2024). Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) argued that a truly effective education system requires policies that not only acknowledge content needs but also actively promote curricular strategies that meet varied learner needs. Within this school of thought, the creative arts constitute a powerful tool to facilitate differentiated instruction and social inclusion for the benefit of all children.

Similarly, Nordlund (2013) emphasized the critical role of policies in designing a creative arts curriculum as a legitimate educational and therapeutic discipline. In contexts where the creative arts curriculum is explicitly driven by policy, there tends to be better teacher preparedness, resource allocation, and research-based practices supporting its use. For example, countries like Australia and Canada have developed comprehensive education policy frameworks that are incorporated into creative arts therapy and arts education as core components of early childhood



curricula (Geretsegger et al., 2017; Ackah-Jnr et al., 2022). Ghana's 2015 ECE policy represents a progressive step towards ensuring holistic child development and accommodation of learners with disabilities, yet Asante and Ankomah (2020) observed that this policy falls short in articulating how specific pedagogical tools such as creative arts are to be employed to achieve its expected goals.

Furthermore, the Basic Education Programme (MOE, 2007) includes Creative Arts as a subject, but Naadu (2018) critiqued the curriculum for lack of clarity on how the Creative Arts communicated existing policies. Boateng and Adjei (2021) further lament that curriculum guidance on Ghana's creative arts remains vague or absent as a result of fragmentation in the policy landscape where advocacy is often without details such as teacher training and resource provisions that are needed for effective implementation. This gap creates a disconnect between policy intentions and curricular realities, limiting the potential impact of Creative Arts on child development.

The translation of policy into practice rests heavily on educators' capacities to implement clear strategies in all curricula, including the creative arts. However, Amoako and Owusu (2016) found that teachers employ creative arts primarily for classroom management or entertainment rather than using them as a deliberate strategy for implementing developmental stimulation policies. This deficiency is partly attributable to a lack of articulation of policy decisions in the curriculum. This finding aligns with UNESCO's (2015) report on teacher preparedness in ECE which reveals inadequate training in both policy and pedagogy as a widespread challenge in many African education systems. The report stresses that without such systemic capacity-building, policy reforms remain superficial and are unlikely to translate into meaningful changes at the classroom level. The report further indicates a critical need to strengthen pre-service and in-service teacher education programs in Ghana to include explicit components of policies that cater to the Creative Arts curriculum and vice versa.

METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative research approach to investigate how Ghana's Creative Arts curriculum aligns with her Early Childhood Education policy. The qualitative approach was deemed appropriate since it allows an in-depth exploration of the meanings embedded within texts and facilitates a deeper understanding of how concepts such as child development, curriculum, and creativity are framed in educational discourse (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The use of bibliographic design and content analysis enabled the researcher to do a systematic interpretation of the textual data gathered in order to identify embedded themes, patterns, and meanings (Schreier, 2012). This design is especially useful in the current educational research, where policy documents often carry both manifest and latent meanings. As Hsieh and Shannon (2005) opined, corroborated by Schreier (2012), qualitative content analysis fosters inductive category development, where codes and themes emerge directly from the data rather than being imposed a priori. Their postulation was crucial for this study, which sought to eschew bias of preconceptions and rather allow the documents to provide data that addressed the research objectives.



Purposive sampling was employed to select documents that were relevant to the study and authoritative within Ghana's educational context. This sampling technique was appropriate for the study because it allowed the researcher to focus on texts that directly addressed early childhood development and creative arts education (Palinkas et al., 2015). Data collection involved retrieval from official sources and analyzing the contents of three key documents, namely the *Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Policy* of Ghana (MoE, 2004) and the *Creative Arts Curriculum for Primary Schools, Basic 1-3* (NaCCA, 2019). The review of the early childhood policy was deemed imperative because it is expected to inform the development and implementation of all early childhood curricula, including the Creative Arts, in Ghana. Also, the Creative Arts curriculum for basic 1-3 merited priority attention in this investigation; it is the most foundational curriculum that offers precise instruction on the arts (NaCCA, 2019), including the researcher's main area of interest, the "Performing Arts strand" (xxiii).

These documents were carefully read, multiple times, to identify references made to policy declarations, child development, and creative arts education. A document analysis guide was developed to support the extraction of relevant contents. This step helped to ensure consistency and rigor in how contents were selected and interpreted. The use of thematic content analysis was particularly unavoidable for identifying patterns and themes across the qualitative data sets (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process began with an initial phase of familiarization, during which the researcher immersed himself in the texts to understand the general structure and messaging of each document. Each document was, subsequently, read and color-coded, manually, to identify recurring themes. This was followed by an open coding process, where emerging text segments that were relevant to the study objectives were highlighted and labeled. These initial codes were then reviewed and grouped into broader thematic categories. As themes emerged, they were constantly refined and compared across documents to ensure they were grounded in the data. Finally, interpretations were developed in relation to the study's objectives and the theoretical underpinnings.

Although this study did not involve human participants, ethical considerations were still upheld. All data sources were publicly available, and all documents and ideas were appropriately cited to ensure intellectual integrity. The researcher maintains neutrality by analyzing the data objectively, avoiding cherry-picking quotes, and ensuring transparency throughout the analytic process as recommended by Miles et al. (2019).



DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section presents a discussion of findings on the main objective of the study: to investigate how Ghana's Creative Arts curriculum aligns with her Early Childhood Education policy. Thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach, was used to explore patterns and meanings across selected texts as follows.

Relationship Between ECE Policy Creative Arts Curriculum of Ghana

Ghana's Early Childhood Education (ECE) policy, which is also known as the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) policy, was formulated in 2004 and launched in 2005. It aimed to provide holistic development for children aged 0-8 years, directing attention to social, emotional, physical, and spiritual growth (Government of Ghana, 2004). Unfortunately, however, the focus of the entire policy is found to be on kindergarten pupils (aged 4-5) only, apparently ignoring the crucial ages of 0 to 4 and 5 to 8 in the early childhood period.

The policy neither suggested precise guidelines for implementation nor mentioned the Creative Arts as a strategy for implementation. Nonetheless, it states that the Ghana Education Service had developed guidelines for implementing the ECE policy, emphasizing stakeholder support for achieving desired outcomes (MoE, 2015). This provision, probably, implies a shared responsibility between policy development by the Ministry of Education and policy implementation by the Ghana Education Service. While the ECE policy clearly specifies responsibilities of the MoE to include the development of policy to regulate the operations at the preschool level, the institutional task for implementation is widely open-ended. This is evident in the policy document, which states:

The policy has a multi-sectoral nature, and it supports policy development and decisions from multiple ministries, i.e., Health, Education, Nutrition and Protection. The multi-sectoral nature and institutional accountability for execution under the custodianship of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) has over the years demonstrated progressive understanding of childhood development from 0 to 8 years and assigned responsibilities to multiple institutions, including the MoGCSP, MoE, Manpower Development and Employment (MMDE), Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD), and Ministry of Health (MOH) (MoE, 2005, p. 3).

This multi-sectoral approach to assigning implementation responsibility fails to clarify the expected roles to be performed by each of these multiple sectors in the policy implementation process. The likely repercussion is that either these sectors end up playing duplicated roles or overlooking some aspects of the policy; the latter has mostly been the case.



Early Childhood Education Policy Implementation Partners

“The ECE Policy partners key stakeholders whose programs and activities have a direct or indirect bearing on early grade children and require collaboration and coordination” (MoE, 2005, p. 8). Partners/stakeholders listed in the policy document are:

- Service providers and primary caregivers
- Parents, family members and others who provide care for children in their absence
- Communities that support families and alternative caregivers that provide for the holistic needs of young children and safeguard their rights
- KG practitioners, teachers, resource persons, and assistants
- Key stakeholders in the KG space that implement innovative concepts for collective KG impact, such as NGOs, private providers, etc.
- Ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) that facilitate smooth linkages and connectedness across national and sub-national levels.

The broad goal of the policy was to create a systematic accountable framework to strengthen the education sub-sector for efficient and effective KG service delivery to improve equitable access and quality education for all four- to five-year-olds, including children with disabilities.

Premised on this goal, it becomes a concerning observation that in the explicit listing of ECE policy implementation partners/stakeholders, the document omitted the Ghana Education Service, the statutory institution whose direct function is to implement educational policies of the country. This omission posed a threat to efficient, effective, and successful implementation of the policy since the level of GES commitment seems to be in doubt. Furthermore, the policy focused solely on KG children (ages 4-5 only), thereby neglecting other crucial stages in the child development span. Furthermore, the restriction of the policy goal to only KG service delivery implied apparent omission, neglect or exclusion of the Creative Arts which are offered from basic 1 to 3 as well as from basic 4 to 6. This omission raises a concern since basic 1-3 (ages 6-8) forms part of the early childhood period (Government of Ghana, 2004; UNESCO, 2015).

Creative Arts as Avenue for Early Childhood Education and Development

The analysis of Ghana’s early childhood education policy documents revealed that creative arts constituted a critical medium for fostering holistic development in young learners. Contrary to earlier findings (Amoako & Owusu, 2016), which suggested that teachers employed the creative arts mainly for classroom management or entertainment and other merely supplementary activities, the Creative Arts was found to be an integral curricular element that was meant to support children’s cognitive, emotional, physical, and social growth. This view was evident in the Creative Arts curriculum for Basic 1- 3 (NaCCA, 2019), which explicitly stated that “creative arts enable children to express their feelings and emotions freely while developing their creativity and coordination skills” (p. 3). This curriculum embeds children’s creative activities within the broader



framework of Creative Arts Education, presenting the subject as a foundational medium for early childhood expression and skill acquisition.

The emphasis on emotional expression and physical coordination in the Creative Arts curriculum reflects an understanding and appreciation of learning that transcends academic cognition, embracing a holistic and affective approach to child education and development. Similarly, the ECCD Policy emphasizes the need for early learning environments to be “stimulating and enriched with creative play, including song and dance” (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 2004, p. 12). This policy prioritizes play-based learning, signifying the power of creative arts to enhance engagement, curiosity, imagination, and expression in young learners. It required that children’s experiences should be enriched with sensory and expressive stimuli, including auditory, rhythmic, and kinetic inputs. These modalities are essential for children’s neurological and psychological development, particularly during the formative early years. According to Nzewi and Omolo-Ongati (2014), guiding learners through such interactive activities in their indigenous settings plays a significant role in promoting their holistic-humanistic development.

What emerges clearly from these documents—the ECE policy and the Creative Arts curriculum—is a developmental philosophy that aligns closely with Howard Gardner’s (1983) Multiple Intelligences Theory, which identifies musical (creative arts) intelligence as one of several distinct ways in which individuals process information and express understanding. Gardner argues that musical (creative arts) intelligence, like linguistic or logical-mathematical intelligence, should be recognized and nurtured as a valid domain of human capacity. In early childhood education, this perspective reinforces the notion that some learners may be more attuned to sound, rhythm, and melody, and therefore, creative arts may serve as a primary channel through which they make sense of the world and communicate their inner experiences.

Emotional and Cognitive Expression through the Creative arts

The analysis of the selected policy and curriculum documents indicated that the Creative Arts curriculum is recognized not only as a developmental tool but also as a powerful medium for emotional and cognitive expression for all learners, including those with special education needs. This theme is strongly reflected in other related documents such as the Creative Arts Curriculum Basic 4-6 (NaCCA, 2019), the Inclusive Education Policy (MoE, 2015), and the Teacher Resource Packs for Primary 1-6 (GES, 2018). Collectively, these texts suggest that the creative arts serve as both an affective outlet and a cognitive scaffold, particularly for young learners navigating early stages of self-awareness, communication, and learning.

In the Creative Arts Curriculum, creativity was linked explicitly to emotional development and expression. The curriculum emphasizes that through the creative arts, “children can express their feelings and emotions freely,” encouraging teachers to use singing, rhythmic games, and dance as part of classroom activities (NaCCA, 2019, p. 3). This positioning aligns with broader educational research that affirms the role of the creative arts in fostering self-expression, emotional literacy, and psychological well-being in children as clearly expressed in the ECE goal (Hallam, 2010; Barrett, 2011). Thus, the creative arts allow children to externalize their emotions in nonverbal forms, which is particularly beneficial for those who may struggle with traditional verbal or written



forms of communication. The Teacher Resource Packs further elaborate on this point by offering practical strategies for integrating creative arts into the learning environment. One means of meeting this expectation is by “using familiar songs and musical games to help children transition between activities, calm down after high-energy play, or reinforce a sense of classroom routine” (GES, 2018, p. 18). These practices are grounded in the understanding that creative arts can modulate arousal levels, soothe anxiety, and promote a sense of safety and predictability factors essential for emotional regulation in young learners (Koelsch, 2010; Darrow, 2008).

Additionally, the creative arts are a universally accessible form of expression that transcends linguistic, cognitive, and physical barriers. It can, therefore, be used to help all children understand complex emotional concepts, such as happiness, sadness, fear, or excitement, through lyrical content and melodic tone in their developmental process. Hence, the curriculum demands the use of flexible, inclusive pedagogies such as accommodation, differentiation, and scaffolding as strategies to meet diverse learning needs among learners. These are approaches, methods, and strategies for ensuring that every learner benefits from appropriate and relevant teaching and learning episodes that are timely assessed and feedback provided to the learner and other stakeholders such as parents and education authorities. It includes the type and use of appropriate and relevant teaching and learning resources to ensure that all learners make the expected level of learning outcomes as expressed in the ECE broad goal. The curriculum emphasizes:

... the positioning of inclusion and equity at the center of quality teaching and learning, the use of differentiation and scaffolding as teaching and learning strategies for ensuring that no learner is left behind, the use of Information Communications Technology (ICT) as a pedagogical tool, the identification of subject-specific instructional expectations needed for making learning in the subject relevant to learners, the integration of assessment for learning as learning and of learning into the teaching and learning process and as an accountability strategy, and the use of questioning techniques that promote deeper learning (MoE, 2015, p. xvii).

The creative arts allow children with speech impairments, autism, learning disabilities, or developmental delays to engage in communicative and expressive acts that might otherwise be inaccessible to them through conventional instruction (Gold et al., 2006; Darrow, 2008). For example, rhythmic repetition and predictable patterns in the curriculum can help children with autism spectrum disorders process sensory information and structure their responses more effectively (Simpson & Keen, 2011).

However, a limitation noted in the ECE policy analysis was that while creative arts’ expressive potential is acknowledged in general terms, the documents hardly provided guidance on how to utilize creative arts, specifically for learners with SEN. The recognition offered to the creative arts in the policy document remained somewhat latent, often bundled with broader statements about creative play or inclusive pedagogy without clear examples or adaptations. This gap highlights a need for policy to move beyond theoretical acknowledgement toward more differentiated, interactive strategies for using creative arts to support cognitive and emotional development in diverse learners.



This theme—provision of interactive guidance—is best understood through the lens of Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the role of mediated tools such as creative arts in cognitive development. According to Vygotsky, children internalize knowledge and meaning through social interaction and symbolic systems. Creative Arts, as a semiotic tool, mediates children’s experiences and helps them construct meaning about themselves and the world around them (Rahmah et al., 2024). When used purposefully, it can support both interpersonal communication and intrapersonal understanding, making it particularly powerful in early and inclusive educational settings. Creative arts is positioned as a form of communication that supports children’s emotional literacy and cognitive flexibility, offering pathways for both self-discovery and learning. Yet, while this recognition is laudable, the documents would benefit from more explicit integration of inclusive strategies that ensure children with special needs are equally able to access and benefit from the expressive potential of creative arts.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined how Ghana’s Creative Arts curriculum aligned with the nation’s Early Childhood Education policy. Using a qualitative research approach and bibliographic design, the study employed content analysis to arrive at its findings.

First, based on findings emanating from the data, it was concluded that Ghana’s Early Childhood Education policy recognizes the developmental benefits of creative arts. However, the policy fell short in articulating the place of the Creative Arts curriculum in the policy implementation strategies towards achieving stated goals. The policy neither provided necessary guidelines on adaptive creative arts instruction pathways nor offered clear, actionable strategies for its delivery.

Secondly, despite its alignment with global educational ideals that support holistic development, the ECE policy framework lacks precision in assigning responsibilities to relevant institutions towards its implementation in the Creative Arts curriculum. The policy framework advocates broad goals of nurturing holistic child development (focusing on KG services) in accordance with global conventions and suggested a multi-sectoral approach to its implementation, yet omitted the Ghana Education Service (GES) in the list of implementation partners/stakeholders. Besides, it hardly offered anticipated direction on integrating the creative arts meaningfully in diverse classrooms. These omissions are precursors to a need for future review of the ECE policy of Ghana. Similarly, the GES ought to review the current Creative Arts curriculum to demonstrate, adequately, provisions in the policy that seek to promote the discipline.

Finally, integrating creative arts therapy approaches into early childhood education practice offers a valuable opportunity for Ghana’s Creative Arts curriculum. Creative arts therapy offers emotional, cognitive, and social benefits for both the typically developing learners and especially learners with developmental challenges. As advocated by Nikolai et al. (2020), these benefits could be maximized through collaboration with creative arts therapists, who would share knowledge and exemplify best practices in the discipline.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions drawn in the preceding section call for deliberate attention towards bridging the critical gap between policy rhetoric and curriculum content as well as practice. First, there is a pressing need to review the existing Early Childhood Education policy framework. The policy requires a review so as to emphasize the place of the Creative Arts curriculum, including guidelines on adaptive creative arts instruction in the policy implementation strategies towards achieving stated policy goals. The ministry of Education ought to clarify and specify the role of each partner institution, including the GES, in the implementation pursuit. Assigning precise implementation responsibilities would not only promote commitment and efficiency but also it would ensure accountability among partner stakeholders.

Secondly, the Ministry of Education should further clarify specific roles of the various partner institutions to support the process of implementing the policies. This could include detailed curriculum suggestions demonstrating how creative arts activities can be modified to accommodate children with various forms of disabilities. These strategies may include the use of differentiated instructional materials and alternative performance methods tailored to the sensory, cognitive, or motor abilities of learners. Such diversified instructional strategies would enable educators to carry out creative arts practices effectively, ensuring that no child is excluded from the learning process.

Thirdly, as Nordlund (2013) opined, creative arts has been widely recognized for its emotional, cognitive, and social benefits, especially for learners with developmental challenges. Therefore, the Ministry of Education and analogous institutions should consider partnerships with trained creative arts therapists to support learners within schools or embed a basic introduction to creative arts therapy in teacher education programs. This would equip educators with foundational therapeutic strategies for structured, evidence-based support that makes learning more rewarding, especially, for learners with SEN. Nikolai et al. (2020) postulated that this support could be obtained through collaborative interdisciplinary training sessions, where teachers work hand-in-hand with special educators and creative arts therapists to foster knowledge sharing and best practices. Schools and educational districts are further encouraged to adopt such collaborative models in which creative arts educators, special education professionals, therapists, and administrators jointly design and deliver inclusive creative arts programs to take care of all learning needs (Gerrity et al., 2013). Partnerships of these kinds—as found in Professional Learning Communities—could lead to co-created resources, lesson plans, and intervention strategies that are adaptable and inclusive, supported by regular team meetings, joint workshops, and co-teaching models to ensure multiple expert perspectives shape teaching practices.

Finally, future research is essential to understand how the ECE and other educational policies are enacted in the school curriculum. Future studies could involve empirical investigations such as classroom observations, educator interviews, and assessments of student outcomes. These insights will help identify effective practices and address existing barriers in real educational settings, thereby providing the evidence that is necessary to inform ongoing improvements in the connection between policy and practice. The study, ultimately, calls for reimagining creative arts



not as peripheral activities, but as a vital educational and therapeutic discipline for all learners, including those with SEN.

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