

## **AN INVESTIGATION OF ASSESSMENT PRACTICES USED BY CREATIVE ARTS TEACHERS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose of the study:** To investigate the assessment practices used by creative arts teachers

**Problem:** The purpose of the standard based creative arts curriculum in Ghana requires learners to acquire, develop and demonstrate the subject specific practices and the core competencies. This calls for appropriate teacher development to understand the best practices pertaining to arts assessment strategies and assessment needs in order to align teaching, learning and assessment effectively. Hence, the need to investigate teachers' assessment practices to ascertain whether the purpose of the standard based curriculum for creative arts is on course or not.

**Methodology:** This study was a quantitative study. It was designed for investigating the assessment practices used by creative arts teachers in Domaa East Municipal, Ghana. Purposive and convenient sampling technique was used to sample 60 teachers teaching creative arts. Teachers assessment practices were measured using questionnaire designed based on the assessments for arts and the recommended creative arts assessment practices stipulated in the the creative arts curriculum by National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA, 2019), which consists of 17 item on scale of a 5-point. The Instrument was piloted with 20 creative arts teachers in the Sekyere South District of Ashanti Region which gave internal consistency reliability of  $\alpha=0.71$ . Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics.

**Results:** The findings of the study revealed that creative arts teachers are able to assess learners creative activities and artworks in relation to the curriculum with the exception of having challenges with few creative arts assessment methods.

**Recommendations:** It is therefore, recommended that training is offered to teachers on creative arts assessment and document analysis and observational study be carried on creative arts teachers' assessment practices to ascertain challenges encountered by teachers.

**Keywords:** *Assessment practices, Creative arts, Assessment for learning, Assessment as learning, Assessment of learning*

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## INTRODUCTION

This article centered on the current state of assessment as practised by creative arts teachers and what the creative arts curriculum by National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA, 2019) requires of them. Assessment requires the gathering of information about learners' learning, making important judgement about students' progress and improving educators' instruction. Educators are now encouraged to consider assessment from the perspective of purpose as well as method. Purpose includes "assessment for learning; assessment as learning; and assessment of learning" (Earl, 2006). This helps educators to utilize formative tasks for/as assessment, which support learning and summative tasks of assessment, which make valid and reliable judgments of learning and assess achievement and competence. Especially in terms of the quality of learning, it helps to see the extent of the gains and the areas where the students have difficulties in learning and the wrong learning (Sehran & Oğuz, 2020).

The information about students' learning is usually given peculiar numbers or grades and this explained what is meant by measurement. (e.g. 26 /30 on the creative arts test). The process engaged in by educators for making judgments about the assessment information (Peter, 2005) is referred to as evaluation. Judgment can be passed on individual learner's performance (e.g. Maa Mary marks or score obtained in the performance of creative arts activity can be considered as her important development in the subject ), the assessment strategy used by the educator (e.g. looking at the learner's score in the skilled-based performance, it can be concluded that, the observation checklist a useful way to acquire information about skilled-based performance), or the teaching pedagogy of the educator (learners' score in drawing this term was better than previous term as a result of the introduction differentiated instruction).

Measurement and evaluation are important in terms of revealing the effectiveness of the materials, methods, techniques and curriculums used in teaching, understanding the extent of learning, taking the necessary measures for teaching and planning the next stage. Whenever learning or performance is judged and assessed, it is important for an assessor to be confident that the processes that govern this activity are fair, rigorous (valid and reliable) and transparent. This is important because assessment affects people's confidence and ability to persist with their work as well as future directions (Boud & Falchikov 2007). Cowdroy and Williams (2006) asserted that, when assessing learners' work, teachers in the creative arts have tended to rely on their intuitive understanding of creative ability and "what teachers like" about the work.

Creative Arts Curriculum for Primary Schools in Ghana describes creative arts as an integrated subject that involves performing arts (Music, Dance and Drama) and the visual arts which is made up Two-dimensional arts: drawing, painting, colour work, printmaking, patternmaking, lettering and camera/electronic arts etc. - Three-dimensional art: modelling, casting, carving, weaving (fibre arts), paper craft (origami/quilting art), sewing/stitching, crocheting, construction and assemblage (NaCCA, MoE, 2019). Nilson *et al.* (2013), argues that critical thinking is a crucial skill, which needs to be developed in the school curriculum and that the creative arts can do this. Creative arts

curriculum for primary schools in Ghana emphasize the integration of assessment for/as learning (formative), and assessment of learning (summative) into the teaching and learning process and as an accountability strategy.

The purpose of this is to allow each educational component to work with the others, with the goal of helping students to achieve intended learning outcomes (Guzik, 2016). According to this curriculum, for creative arts assessment to be effective, it should be interlinked with the teaching content, teaching strategies, relevant teaching tools and resources. The curriculum is standard-based which required learners to acquire, develop and demonstrate the subject specific practices and the core competences (critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and innovation, communication and collaboration, cultural identity and global citizenship, personal development and leadership, and digital literacy). Therefore, as part of professional needs of the creative arts teachers, it is critical that, teachers understand the best practices regarding arts assessment strategies and the assessment needs of the creative arts curriculum, so as to align teaching, learning and assessment effectively.

Consequently, understanding creative arts teachers' ideas, views, perceptions and beliefs about arts assessment as well as that of the creative arts curriculum by NaCCA is absolutely essential in planning and implementing appropriate teacher professional development in creative arts assessment. Mbelani (2008), asserted that, the introduction of Outcomes-Based Education in South Africa saw teachers exposed to current trends in assessment through workshops, in-service training and an abundant supply of curriculum documents, all in the quest for fast-tracking transformation and the improvement of quality teaching. It is therefore imperative to investigate assessment practices used by creative arts teachers in Ghana in relation to the creative arts curriculum. This will also contribute to fast-tracking transformation and the improvement of quality teaching in creative arts in Ghana.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Creative Arts Assessment**

According to Mills (2014), creative arts are activities that actively engage children's imagination through art, dance, dramatic play or theater, puppetry, and music. The creative arts engage children across all domains—cognitive, language, social, emotional, and physical. Activities are deliberately open-ended (not prescriptive), foster divergent thinking, and support the process without particular attention on the product.

Mayesky (2013), provided an appropriate template for examining creative arts across all developmental domains. Completing art activities, for example, may foster the growth and maturation of children's fine and gross motor skills (Koster 2012). More specifically, grasping a paintbrush promotes children's use of fine motor skills, while skipping to music with a partner enhances gross motor skills. Creative arts may also help children explore their emotions, both displaying and regulating them (Koster, 2012). Drama and Music activities, for example, can help children explore their emotional range and, in play, develop emotional self-regulation and self-control. Developing the ability to control emotions during childhood is essential to the emotional regulation required in adulthood. Opportunities for collaboration, negotiation, and problem solving, all milestones in social development, are plentiful in creative arts activities (Mills, 2014). Creative arts activities also offer stimulating opportunities for exploring cultural differences in music, art, ritual, and holiday celebrations (Koster, 2012).

Arts assessment serves the important need of evaluating student achievement. Assessment of the outcomes of learning goes along with the teaching-learning process in a continuous manner. According to NCERT, (2015), during lower primary classes, learner's participation in the creative arts is an integrated experience, and as such, assessment should also be holistic. In order to undertake a holistic assessment in creative arts, all aspects of learning need to be given due recognition and thus assessment may be on daily basis. For this, assessment of the process of art-making is essential to understanding the child's learning. At this stage, the five senses and their responses are more important than what the child achieves in the form of a product. This is not the right stage to develop the skills, but the emphasis should be on multi-sensory development. In the upper primary classes, the focus shifts slightly from sensory learning to skill-based learning. Thus, it is important to evaluate the process that the child goes through, and this is especially true in the primary classes. On the other hand, assessing the product gives an insight into the skills learnt and becomes important for a learner to know how she has performed.

Creative arts teachers assessing learners should consider the following three modes in mind; the objectives set lesson which is in line with the goals of the curriculum, method of assessment (formative and summative) and tools/strategies of assessment (observation of the child, interview or interaction, student self-assessment, reflective statement, journal work, tests, questionnaires, visual identifications, portfolio). Teachers use formative assessments to determine student progress and modify their instruction based upon data gained from formative assessment. Summative assessments allow teachers to assign grades and are the basis from which educators can determine the degree to which the taught curriculum has become the learned curriculum.

Formative or ongoing assessments can be conducted through critique, interviews, journals, student self-assessment, and observations; while summative or post-productive assessments can include tests, questionnaires, visual identifications, essays, reports, and analyzing student work using portfolio reviews, checklists, and scoring rubrics (Gruber & Hobbs, 2002; Popovich, 2006). Art teachers can consider which of these assessment tools or strategies fit into their art program, and design a plan that encompasses a variety of these strategies.

### **Creative Arts Assessment Tool**

Observation as an assessment tool involves observing the learner during creative arts activities, so as to gather relevant information about their learning. Activity given to learners at the end of a content standard in creative arts referred to as a project is also an assessment tool that can be used to take decision on child's learning (NCERT, 2015). Portfolio is a collection of the work done over a longer period of time, maybe a term or a year. Checklists are a list of criteria that the teacher thinks are important to observe in a child at a particular time. Rating Scales have the same use as observation checklists (NCERT, 2015). They record the degree to which the presence or absence of a particular knowledge, or skill are found. It is used to record and judge the quality of a child's work against specified criteria. Holistic rating scales require a single, overall assessment of a piece of work. Anecdotal Records refer to written descriptions of a child's progress that a teacher keeps on a day-to-day basis. It provides observational, narrative records of significant incidents in a child's life. Wiggins and McTighe (2006) defined portfolio as a "representative collection of one's work." Portfolio assessment in creative arts is based on a collection of learners' creative process and products in both hard and soft copy by the teacher over a period of time to ascertain what students have learnt.

Individual learner is assessed in a group activity by focusing on certain qualities that are important for individuals to work in a group (NCERT, 2015). Using these qualities, the teacher can make a rubric. A rubric is a scoring scheme with a naming basis for levels of expected outcome used to assess performance, a product, or a project.

**Table 1**

***Rubric for assessing learner in creative arts group activities***

Quality	4 marks	3 marks	2 marks	Marks
Takes Responsibility	Learner in full responsibility for the task.	Learner take up some responsibility.	Learner take up little responsibility.	
Team Spirit	Learner always work well with the strengths and weaknesses of all members.	Learner always work with the members.	Learner sometimes work with members of the team.	
Leadership Qualities	Learner always leads the entire team well. Motivates members of her team.	Learner demonstrate some leadership skills.	Learner demonstrate little leadership skills.	
Striving for excellence	Learner is always striving for excellence.	Learner sometime strive for excellence	Learner hardly strive for excellence	
Cooperation	Learner is always cooperative	Learner exhibit some cooperation	Learner exhibit little cooperation	
			Total Marks	

Source: Researchers, 2022

Table 2

*Sample of Summative Assessment Rubric for scoring Outline Drawing*

Criteria (Skill Addressed)	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point
<b>Line drawing techniques</b>	The learner <b>skillfully</b> draw the outline to define the various intended artwork with the pencil and crayon using multiple lines.	The learner <b>successfully</b> draw the outline to define the various intended artwork with the pencil and crayon using at least line.	The learner was <b>not successful</b> in drawing the outline to define the various intended artwork with the pencil and crayon .	The learner was <b>not able to draw</b> outline to define the various intended artwork with the pencil and crayon but rather scribble

Source: Researchers, 2022

Table 3

*Sample of Summative Assessment Rubric for scoring learners performances on Music and Dance, reflecting on the way of life of people in the local community*

Criteria (Skill Addressed)	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point
<b>Reflection of Creative arts work (Music and Dance) performed in the local community</b>	The learner demonstrate <b>effective</b> and unique piece of music and dance to reflect the way of life of people in the local community.	The learner demonstrate <b>good</b> unique piece of music and dance to reflect the way of life of people in the local community.	The learner demonstrate <b>some good</b> unique piece of music and dance to reflect the way of life of people in the local community.	The learner demonstrate <b>little</b> unique piece of music and dance to reflect the way of life of people in the local community..

Source: Researchers, 2022

The key to using creative arts assessment tools described above effectively and efficiently, is to recognize that no single assessment tool meets all assessment needs (Boughton et al., 1996; Dorn et al., 2004; Hurwitz, 2011). As Pope (2005) reiterates, “It is generally accepted that in order to properly assess a student’s knowledge, an educator needs access to-and the use of-a variety of assessment methods “. When these assessments are integrated with the creative arts curriculum and the instructional materials, it will contribute to learning and maximize instructional time.

### Assessment practices in the creative arts curriculum of Ghana

Creative Art is taught from kindergarten to basic primary 6 in Ghana. The subject was first introduced into Ghanaian educational system by the 2007 educational reforms. The current creative arts curriculum for primary school introduced into Ghanaian educational system by NaCCA (2019), emphasized that, all forms of assessment (formative and summative) should be based on the domains of learning (Knowledge, Understanding and Application, Process Skills, Attitudes and Values) and that “Learners are to be TAUGHT and EVALUATED PRACTICALLY”. Thus, for creative arts assessment to be effective, it should be interlinked with the teaching content, teaching strategies, relevant teaching tools and resources.

NaCCA (2019) curriculum for creative arts recommended that, all forms of assessment should be based on the learning domains (Expected Learning Behaviours). The learning domains are:

- Knowledge, Understanding and Application
- Process Skills
- Attitudes and Values.

It could be deduced from the above that the creative arts curriculum aims at developing the totality of its learners. That is cognitive (head), psychomotor (hand) and affective (heart). The Curriculum provides learning indicators which are action verbs for this learning domains. The action verbs involved in the “Knowledge, Understanding and Application” domain are as follows:

Table 4

Learning domains/ outcomes	Learning indicators
Knowledge	Describe, Name, Identify, Mention, State
Understanding	Explain, Summarise, and Give examples
Application	Develop, Defend, Determine, Relate, Solve, Find, Discover
Analysis	Differentiate, Compare, Distinguish, Outline, Separate, Identify significant points
Synthesis	Combine, Compile, Compose, Devise, plan, revise, organise, create, generate new ideas, and solutions.
Evaluation	Appraise, Compare features of different things and make comments or judgment, Contrast, Criticise, Justify, Support, Conclude, Make recommendations
Creating	Plan, Compose, Produce, Manufacture or Construct other products.

From the above, “creating” is the highest form of thinking and learning, followed by the rest in ascending order with knowledge being the lowest form of thinking and learning.

**METHODOLOGY**

Quantitative research design which involves survey was used to find answers to the research questions of the study. The population of the study was 60 creative arts teachers sampled randomly from primary schools in Dormaa East Municipal of Bono Region, Ghana. The data collection process involves the use of questionnaire designed based on the assessments for arts and recommended creative arts assessment practices by NaCCA, (2019). The instrument consists of 17 item on -point scale. The Instrument was piloted with 20 creative arts teachers in the Sekyere South District of Ashanti Region which gave internal consistency reliability of  $\alpha=0.71$ . Data from the questionnaire was analysed using descriptive statistics.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Table 5**

*Responses obtained from the teachers on 5-point scale*

	<b>Items</b>	Excellent Freq./per.	Very good Freq./per.	Good Freq./per.	Average Freq./per	Poor Freq./per
<b>Assessment practices used by creative arts teachers in Ghana</b>						
1	Assessment of creative arts are done on daily basis	0 (0%)	3 (5%)	50 (83%)	7 (12%)	0 (0%)
2	Criteria for assessment of creative arts are based on the objectives set for that lesson	0 (0%)	6 (10%)	54 (90%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
3	All forms of assessment are based on the domains of learning prescribed in the curriculum	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	12 (20%)	12 (20%)	36 (60%)
4	Assessment <i>for</i> Learning (AfL) , assessment <i>as</i> Learning (AaL): and assessment <i>of</i> Learning (AoL) are used as accountability strategy	0 (0%)	6 (10%)	45 (75%)	9 (15%)	0 (0%)
5	Learning indicators are selected to ensure an assessment involves a representative sample from a given strand in the curriculum.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	12 (20%)	9 (15%)	39 (65%)
6	Assessment procedure use are developed to complement one another	0 (0%)	6 (10%)	36 (60%)	9 (15%)	9 (15%)
7	Observation, interviews, interactions, critique, leaner self-assessment are used as	0(0%)	10 (17%)	50 (83%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)



	formative assessment strategies					
8	Test, questions, visual identification, essays, portfolio are used as summative assessment strategies	0 (0%)	6 (10%)	54 (90%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
9	Checklist and rubrics are used as scoring guide in assessing creative arts	0(0%)	0(0%)	0 (0%)	21(35%)	39 (65%)
10	A rubric is designed for qualities that are important for individuals to work in a group in order to assess a learner in group activities	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	6 (10%)	54 (90%)
11	Assessment of process and product of creative activities are done	0(0%)	0 (0%)	36 (60%)	10 (17%)	14 (23%)
12	Attention are paid on process assessment (sensory) at the lower primary	0(0)%	9 (15%)	45 (75%)	6 (10 %)	0%
13	Attention are paid on product assessment (skill-based) at the upper primary	2 (3%)	3 (5%)	30 (50%)	25 (42%)	0(0%)
14	Leaners works are displayed on walls, table tops in a particular project for assessment	0(0%)	6 (10%)	36 (60%)	9 (15%)	9 (15%)
15	Interactions with leaners to offer insight into understanding, feelings, attitudes, interest, motivations and thinking process are done	9 (15%)	9 (15%)	36 (60%)	6 (10%)	0%
16	Feedback to leaners to make them aware of what part of the learning process they have been able to accomplish is done	3 (5%)	25 (42%)	30 (50%)	2 (3%)	0 (0%)
17	An assessment of written descriptions of a learner's progress on a daily basis are done.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (10%)	54 (90%)

Freq=frequency, per= percentage

Table 5 above represents 60 creative arts teachers’ responses to their assessment practices on 5-point scale (Excellent, Very good, good, average and poor).

Table 6.

***Mean percentage score of teachers’ responses***

<b>Questions Weightage</b>	<b>Mean percentage Score</b>
Excellent	1.4%
Very good	8.8%
Good	51.5%
Average	13.5%
Poor	24.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

From table 6, the question weightage “Good” obtained the highest mean percentage, followed by “Poor”, “Average”, “Very good” and “Excellent” in that order.

On the objective to examine the assessment practices used by creative arts teachers at the primary school, the results as seen from the mean percentage score of teachers’ responses indicate that, teachers’ assessment practices in creative arts are generally good. However, some assessment practices (assessment basing on the domains of learning; selecting learning indicators to ensure a representative sample from a strand in the curriculum when assessing; designing and using checklist and rubrics in scoring artwork and performances; engaging in both process and product assessment; displaying learners’ artwork for assessment; and written descriptions of a learner’s progress in creative arts on a daily basis) are poorly conducted by creative arts teachers.

**IMPLICATIONS**

**Theoretical Implications**

Developing assessment criteria is a very difficult task in creative arts. This is because creative arts activities (expression, personal development, creativity, imagination, and originality) are heculine task to measure. Thus, assessment in creative arts education is multi-dimensional (Amsami, Mohammed & Mazila, 2015). When assessment strategies of arts (Testing, observation, finished product, performance and portfolios), are used individually, there is an absolute inaccurate representation of learning in art (Amsami, Mohammed & Mazila, 2015). Thus, the creative arts curriculum by NaCCA (2019) recommend all forms of assessment are based on the domains of learning, and assessment procedure use by teachers are developed to complement one another. Theoretically teachers’ inability to engage in some of the assessment tools may create inaccuracy in certain learning of leaners. But teachers interlinking assessment with the teaching content, teaching strategies, relevant teaching tools and resources as seen in general assessment practices of creative arts teacher, theoretically will make the assessment creative.

### **Practical Implications**

Quality visual arts assessments is mandatory to assess both product and process and should be authentic in nature. An authentic visual arts assessment constitutes a performance task (a painting, sculpture or other artwork) together with constructed-response (essay questions) in which the student could describe the work, and selected-responses items (multiple choice questions) that test a student's further knowledge and understandings of process, content, or composition. Producing authentic assessments of such nature will ensure that educators get a more complete examination of student achievement (Gollan, Poole & Roeber 2016). Creative arts teachers holistic approach to assessment where all the domains of the learning (Knowledge, Understanding and Application, Process Skills, Attitudes and Values) are assessed through variety of assessment procedures, will ensure that progress of learners learning are ascertained and teachers' instruction adjusted.

### **CONCLUSION**

The researchers believe that creative arts teachers are able to assess learners creative activities and artworks in relation to the curriculum with the exception of having challenges with few creative arts assessment methods. Therefore, investigating in assessment practices used by creative arts teachers in Ghana makes it relevant contribution to overall students' academic performance. The study findings if implemented, may help in full realization of the purpose of assessment in the creative arts curriculum.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is therefore recommended that the government of Ghana offer help to Ghana Education Service to train teachers in creative arts assessment, to enable them manage challenges in assessment effectively and ensure efficient gathering of information on learners learning in the Dormaa East Municipal of Bono Region, Ghana. It is also recommended document analysis and observational study be carried on creative arts teachers' assessment practices to ascertain challenges prevalent among them.

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