



Developing Creative Abilities in Preschool Children through Activity-based Learning

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ABSTRACT

Creative development is an essential dimension of preschool education because it supports children's imagination, problem-solving, communication, and social interaction. This study explores how activity-based learning can foster creative abilities among preschool children. Using a qualitative design, data were collected through classroom observations, teacher interviews, and samples of children's work during a six-week implementation of art projects, storytelling, role play, and collaborative activities. Open-ended, hands-on activities encouraged originality, experimentation, confidence, and idea sharing. Teacher facilitation through questioning, flexible activity design, and positive reinforcement further strengthened children's creative engagement. The study suggests that activity-based learning offers a practical approach for integrating creativity into early childhood education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Creativity is an important aspect of preschool education because it supports children's ability to imagine, explore, communicate, and solve simple problems in meaningful ways. During the preschool years, children learn not only through direct instruction but also through play, movement, imitation, experimentation, and interaction with their environment. These forms of learning allow children to express ideas freely and develop confidence in using their own imagination [1-5].

In many preschool settings [6-9], learning activities are still organized in a highly structured manner. Although structured instruction can help children follow routines and understand basic concepts, it may also limit opportunities for independent exploration when used too rigidly. Children need learning situations that give them space to ask questions, try different materials, create new ideas, and work with peers. For this reason, activity-based learning can be used as a practical approach to support creative development in early childhood education.

Activity-based learning emphasizes children's active participation in the learning process. Instead of receiving information passively, children are encouraged to learn through hands-on activities such as drawing, storytelling, role play, art projects, movement games, and collaborative tasks. These activities provide opportunities for children to connect their imagination with concrete experiences. When children are allowed to choose materials, create stories, act out situations, or solve simple problems together, they can develop originality, flexibility, communication skills, and social creativity. The role of the teacher is essential in the teaching and learning process [10-14]. In activity-based learning, teachers do not only deliver instructions but also facilitate children's exploration. Teachers can support creativity by asking open-ended questions, giving positive feedback, arranging flexible activities, and encouraging children to express different ideas. A supportive classroom environment helps children feel safe to experiment, make mistakes, and produce creative responses without fear of being judged.

This paper examines methods for developing creative abilities in preschool children through activity-based learning. It focuses on how storytelling, art-based activities, role play, and collaborative learning can encourage imagination, originality, communication, and problem-solving. The paper also discusses the role of teacher facilitation in creating a flexible and supportive learning environment for young children.

2. METHODS

This study used a qualitative approach to examine how activity-based learning supports the development of creative abilities in preschool children. The study focused on classroom activities that allowed children to learn through direct participation, exploration, play, and interaction. A qualitative design was considered appropriate because the main purpose of the study was to describe children's creative behaviors during learning activities rather than to measure creativity through numerical scores. The participants were preschool children aged 4–6 years and their teachers in an early childhood education setting. The learning activities were implemented over a six-week period. During this period, children participated in several activity-based learning experiences, including storytelling, art projects, role play, and collaborative group activities. These activities were selected because they provided opportunities for children to express ideas, use imagination, work with materials, communicate with peers, and solve simple problems.

Data were collected through classroom observations, teacher interviews, and analysis of children's work samples. Classroom observations were used to record children's engagement, originality, imagination, communication, and problem-solving behaviors during learning activities. Teacher interviews were used to obtain information about the strategies used to support children's creativity, such as open-ended questioning, flexible activity design, encouragement, and positive reinforcement. Children's work samples, including drawings, craft products, and storytelling-related outputs, were reviewed to identify signs of creative expression. The observation process focused on how children responded to different types of activities. In storytelling sessions, attention was given to children's ability to invent characters, continue storylines, and express personal ideas. In art-based activities, the focus was on children's use of colors, materials, shapes, and visual arrangements. In role play, the study observed how children created scenarios, used dialogue, and took different roles. In collaborative activities, attention was given to how children shared ideas, responded to peers, and participated in group problem-solving. The collected data were analyzed thematically. Observation notes, interview responses, and children's work samples were reviewed to identify repeated patterns related to creative development. The analysis focused on several indicators, including imaginative thinking, originality, visual creativity, social creativity, communication, engagement, and confidence. To strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings, data from observations, teacher interviews, and children's work samples were compared with one another. This triangulation helped ensure that the findings were not based on a single source of information. Ethical consideration was maintained by keeping the children's identities confidential and using the data only for academic purposes. The study did not include full raw observation notes or complete interview transcripts in the body of the article. Instead, the main findings are represented through narrative explanation and summary tables in the Results and Discussion section.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Activity-based learning supported the development of creative abilities in preschool children. During the six-week implementation, children became more active in expressing ideas, using materials, communicating with peers, and trying different ways to complete learning tasks. Their creative development was visible through imaginative thinking, visual expression, social interaction, and collaborative problem-solving. One of the clearest findings was that children responded positively to open-ended activities. When children were not required to produce identical answers or follow one fixed model, they showed greater freedom in expressing personal ideas. In storytelling activities, several children created their own characters and added new events to the story. In art projects, children used different colors, shapes, and materials to produce varied visual outcomes. In role play, children created simple scenarios and acted out different social roles. In group activities, children shared ideas and worked together to solve simple problems.

The main creative behaviors observed during activity-based learning are summarized in **Table 1**. There are four types of activities: storytelling, art projects, role play, and group activities.

Storytelling encouraged children to use imagination and language at the same time. When children were invited to continue a story or create their own characters, they were able to connect personal experiences with imaginative situations. This activity helped children become more confident in speaking and sharing ideas. Some children who were initially quiet

became more willing to participate when they were allowed to tell short stories in their way. Art projects also provided a strong opportunity for creative expression. Children showed creativity through the selection of colors, materials, shapes, and arrangements. Because art-based tasks did not require one correct answer, children could produce different forms of work based on their interests and imagination. Visual activities are useful for preschool children because they can express ideas even when their verbal ability is still developing.

Table 1. Observed creative behaviors in activity-based learning.

ACTIVITY TYPE	OBSERVED BEHAVIOR	CREATIVE OUTCOME
Storytelling	Inventing characters	Imaginative thinking
Art Projects	Use of diverse materials	Visual creativity
Role Play	Acting out scenarios	Social creativity
Group Activities	Collaborative problem-solving	Idea sharing and innovation

Role play supported social creativity. During role-play activities, children created imaginary situations, used dialogue, negotiated roles, and responded to their friends’ actions. These activities helped children understand different perspectives and practice communication in a playful context. Role play also encouraged flexibility because children had to adjust their behavior according to the role and situation they created with their peers. Collaborative activities strengthened children’s ability to share and combine ideas. In group tasks, children learned to listen to others, suggest solutions, and participate in simple decision-making.

Although some children needed teacher support at the beginning, they gradually became more willing to cooperate. Creativity in preschool education is not only individual but also social. Children can develop creative thinking through interaction with classmates. Another important finding concerns the role of teachers. The children showed stronger engagement when teachers acted as facilitators rather than as strict instructors. Instead of giving only direct commands, teachers encouraged children through questions, flexible instructions, and positive reinforcement. This approach helped children feel safe to try new ideas and make mistakes during learning activities.

The teacher strategies that supported children’s creativity are presented in **Table 2**. Open-ended questioning was useful because it encouraged children to think beyond simple answers. Questions such as asking what might happen next in a story or how a material could be used differently allowed children to explore more than one possibility. This strategy supported children’s critical thinking and helped them explain their ideas more clearly. Flexible activity design also increased children’s engagement. When teachers allowed children to choose colors, materials, roles, or ways of completing a task, children became more involved in the learning process. This flexibility gave children a sense of ownership over their work. As a result, they were more willing to experiment and produce original responses. Positive reinforcement played an important role in building children’s confidence. When teachers appreciated children’s efforts, children became less afraid of making mistakes. This was especially important in creative activities because young children need emotional support to express ideas freely. Encouragement from teachers helped children continue their work, improve their ideas, and participate more actively. Collaborative learning improved children’s communication skills. Group-based tasks required children to talk with peers, share materials, and solve simple problems together. Through this process, children learned that ideas can be developed through discussion and cooperation. This finding shows that activity-based learning can support both creative and social development in preschool classrooms.

Table 2. Teacher strategies supporting creativity.

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	IMPACT ON CHILDREN
Open-ended questioning	Encouraging multiple answers	Enhanced critical thinking
Flexible activity design	Allowing child-led exploration	Increased engagement
Positive reinforcement	Supporting creative efforts	Boosted confidence
Collaborative learning	Group-based tasks	Improved communication skills

Activity-based learning is effective for developing creative abilities in preschool children. The combination of storytelling, art projects, role play, and collaborative activities created a learning environment that encouraged imagination, originality, communication, and problem-solving. Teacher facilitation is essential. Children's creativity developed more clearly when teachers provided guidance without limiting children's freedom to explore. Preschool classrooms should provide more opportunities for hands-on, open-ended, and child-centered learning. Creativity can be developed when children are given time, space, materials, and emotional support to express their ideas. Thus, activity-based learning should be integrated into preschool education as a practical method for supporting holistic child development. This study adds new information regarding education for children as reported elsewhere [15-17].

4. CONCLUSION

Activity-based learning can support the development of creative abilities in preschool children. Through storytelling, art projects, role play, and collaborative activities, children were able to express imagination, create original ideas, communicate with peers, and solve simple problems in meaningful ways. Creativity in preschool education develops more effectively when children are actively involved in the learning process rather than only receiving direct instruction. The study also highlights the importance of teacher facilitation. Teachers can strengthen children's creative engagement by preparing flexible activities, asking open-ended questions, giving positive reinforcement, and allowing children to explore different possibilities. A supportive classroom environment helps children feel confident to experiment, make mistakes, and express their ideas freely. Activity-based learning is therefore a practical approach for integrating creativity into early childhood education. Preschool teachers are encouraged to design activities that are hands-on, open-ended, and suitable for children's developmental needs. Future studies may examine the long-term impact of activity-based learning on children's creative thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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