



Arts and Craft Activities as Correlate to Vocational Skills Development of Primary School Pupils in the English-Speaking Regions of Cameroon

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Abstract

This study examined whether arts and craft activities correlate with the vocational skills development of primary school pupils in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon. Using a quantitative correlational survey design with additional observational and teacher-interview inputs, data were collected from 600 pupils and 60 pupils were observed during arts and craft sessions. Overall, pupils reported a strong perceived contribution of arts and crafts to vocational skill development: 92.6% (n=3333 responses; 1811 SA and 1522 A) agreed that arts and crafts contribute to their vocational skill development. High levels of agreement were recorded across key vocational-relevant domains, including creativity (98.5%), fine motor skills such as writing/drawing (98.0%), teamwork (91.5%), problem-solving (92.2%), and future vocational interest/decision-making (91.7%). In the verification of the research hypothesis, Spearman's rho indicated a significant, positive relationship between arts and crafts activities and vocational skills development: $R = 0.156$ with $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed), leading to rejection of the null hypothesis. Complementing these results, classroom observation showed that most pupils demonstrated satisfactory levels of vocationally relevant competencies during arts and craft activities (64.7% satisfactory, 32.3% excellent, 3.0% need improvement), particularly in areas such as creativity, planning, collaboration, and completion. Teacher interviews further supported the quantitative findings, emphasizing that frequent and varied arts and craft experiences strengthen critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration—skills transferable to future vocational pathways. The study concludes that integrating structured arts and craft activities into primary schooling can positively support pupils' early vocational competence and identity formation.

Keywords:

Arts and Craft Activities, Vocational Skills Development, Primary School Pupils, English-Speaking Regions.

Introduction

Choosing a vocation is one of the most important decisions individuals make in their lifetime, as it significantly influences personal fulfilment, career satisfaction, and one's contribution to society (Gati, 2013 as cited in Walsh, Savickas, & Hartung, (2013). The journey toward vocational development begins early in life, as children start to identify their abilities, interests, and values through interaction with their environment (Gibson & Chase, 2002). Primary schools play a vital role in this developmental process by creating opportunities for exploration, creativity, and hands on learning.

At this stage of education, children begin to form vocational identities that influence their future career paths (Marsh, 2019). Teachers and educational programmes support this process by exposing pupils to experiences that help them discover their strengths and develop essential life skills. One of the most effective means of fostering vocational growth in children is through arts and craft activities. These are structured programmes that go beyond the formal classroom curriculum to offer pupils practical and engaging learning experiences (UNESCO, 2015).

In Cameroon's English-speaking regions, challenges to the development of vocational skills are particularly evident. Socio-economic disparities, limited educational funding, and uneven access to vocational enrichment opportunities have made it difficult to provide children with the support they need to develop their vocational potential. Although vocational education is increasingly promoted as a national priority, the specific contribution of arts and craft activities to vocational development at the primary school level remains under researched.

Problem

Despite the importance of vocational skills for the holistic development of primary school children, many pupils in the English-Speaking Regions of Cameroon have limited opportunities to engage in structured arts and craft activities that can nurture practical abilities. In most primary schools, learning activities are often dominated by theory-based lessons, with insufficient time, inadequate resources, and weak integration of arts and craft into everyday instruction. As a result, children may leave primary school without adequate exposure to the hands-on competencies needed for basic vocational work and self-reliance.

Meanwhile, arts and craft activities such as drawing, modeling, paper folding, simple construction, weaving, and other creative making tasks—are believed to develop relevant vocational capacities. These may include fine motor skills, creativity, problem-solving, manual dexterity, planning, tool handling, and the ability to produce useful items. However, in the English-Speaking Regions of Cameroon, the extent to which arts and craft activities actually correlate with vocational skills development among primary school children remains unclear.

Therefore, this study seeks to determine the relationship between arts and craft activities and the vocational skills development of primary school children in the English Speaking Regions of Cameroon, and to identify the degree to which the availability and utilization of such activities influence children's practical skill acquisition.

Literature

Art and craft are vital components of co-curricular activities in primary education, playing a significant role in the holistic development of children. In the English-speaking regions of Cameroon, these activities are often integrated into school life through art clubs, creative workshops, cultural days, and classroom-based creative tasks. For children in Class Five and Six, engaging in art and craft not only nurtures their creativity and emotional expression but also lays the foundation for the development of practical vocational skills.

Art has been variously defined by scholars and educators. Katz, Landford, and Plant (1995) define art as “the special expression of ideas, feelings and values in perceptible form,” emphasizing its sensory basis, what is seen, heard, touched, smelled, or tasted. This highlights art as a process of engaging with and making sense of the world through sensory experience, which is foundational in developing perceptive and reflective skills essential in many vocations.

Oddlafo, (2009) expands this view, describing the arts as encompassing music, visual arts, drama, dance, literature, and creative writing. This broad definition recognizes that works of art go beyond gallery paintings or sculpture as, they include music, song, storytelling, and even cultural performances, all of which are commonly practiced by pupils during school festivities and club activities. Crum & Langer, (2007) viewing art from a cultural perspective, includes painting, architecture, music, literature, drama, and film within its scope, and notes the aesthetic, economic, social, and religious values that the arts can promote.

In practical terms, according to Crum & Langer (2007) primary school pupils who engage in arts and crafts participate in a wide range of activities, such as drawing, painting, melding, sewing, paper craft, weaving, colouring, decorating, and assembling materials. These activities train fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, precision, and patience, skills essential in vocational fields such as fashion and design, interior decoration, carpentry, tailoring, pottery, graphics, and other technical trades. For example, a child who engaged in drawing and colouring learns to work with detail and care, a trait equally necessary in vocation such as architecture or graphic design. Similarly, children’s learning basic weaving or crafting during school workshops develop the fundamental techniques used in textile production or artisan crafts. Within the primary school environment, art and craft are commonly expressed through a variety of practical activities such as:

Drawing: One of the most accessible forms is drawing which typically involves the use of pencils, crayons, or charcoal on paper. This activity nurtures children's observation skills, fine motor control, and visual-spatial awareness skills that are foundational for vocational careers such as drafting, architecture, graphic design, and illustration (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987).

Painting: Closely linked to drawing is painting which allows pupils to experiment with colour mixing, texture, and surface. Through this activity, children learn to express mood, tell stories visually, and balance elements within a composition. These skills are transferable to careers in fine arts, interior decoration, fashion design, and even advertising (Oddlafon, 2000). Painting also fosters decision-making and patience, which are important in the creative industry.

Moulding: Another important tactile art activity is moulding or clay work. Pupils use clay or locally available materials to form objects, characters, or abstract models. This three-dimensional engagement promotes spatial reasoning and hand dexterity, which are vital for

professions like pottery, ceramics, sculpture, and certain construction trades (Crum & Langer, 2007).

Sewing: Sewing, introduced through simple stitching, threading, and cloth handling, helps children develop precision, planning, and discipline. These are the same qualities needed in tailoring, embroidery, fashion design, and technical textile industries (Katz, Landford & Plant, 1995). Pupils may also create small projects like bags or cloth toys, which not only enhance their creativity but also build entrepreneurial interest at an early age.

Paper craft: Paper craft is another versatile and creative medium for children. Activities such as folding, cutting, gluing, and constructing objects from paper foster motor coordination and sequencing. These skills are crucial in vocational domains like packaging, advertising design, event decoration, and classroom materials production (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2006).

Weaving: Weaving though often overlooked, is a traditional and effective way of teaching children about patterns, rhythm, and repetition. Using materials such as wool, paper strips, or raffia, pupils develop concentration and manual control key competencies in textile production, mat weaving, basketry, and cultural crafts (Eisner, 2002). In Cameroon, especially in rural or semi-urban schools, these skills reflect local industries, making them directly applicable to the children socioeconomic environment.

Colouring: Colouring helps pupils understand visual harmony, contrast, and tone. While it might seem simple, colouring cultivates visual intelligence and focus, serving as a stepping stone toward more advanced artistic or design-based vocations such as digital art, publishing, and branding (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987).

Decorating: Decorating, which includes embellishing objects or surfaces using beads, ribbons, paints, and other materials, introduces children to aesthetics and thematic design. Pupils gain experience that relates to careers in event planning, wedding design, cake decoration, and interior design (Crum & Langer, 2006).

Materials assembling: lastly, materials assembling through activities such as collage making or model construction enables pupils to combine various textures, colours, and shapes into meaningful creations. This process promotes creativity, problem-solving, and coordination. Pupils engaged in such projects are inadvertently being introduced to skills relevant in fields such as architecture, craft making, set design, and recycling industries (Oddlafon, 2009).

Together, these artistic experiences do more than keep pupils entertained as they foster emotional expression, cultural identity, technical know-how, and creativity. Through art and craft, pupils in primary schools begin to discover their personal interests and strengths, while also gaining foundational skills that could guide them toward meaningful vocational paths in the future.

Method

This study adopted the quantitative method using a correlational survey research design. This design helped the researcher to understand the connections between the two main variables of the study by identifying links that could determine whether increased participation in arts and craft was associated with enhanced vocational skills like teamwork, leadership, and problem-

solving. Moreover, this design allowed for the collection of quantitative data from a large number of participants, providing a broader perspective on the impact of co-curricular activities. By triangulating quantitative and qualitative instruments in this study, it helped the researcher to validate findings through convergence of data, explained unexpected findings and also provided a richer context to statistical relationships.

Findings

To provide appropriate responses to the research question how do arts and craft contribute to vocational skill development of primary school children, six questions items were constructed in the questionnaire. The findings obtained are presented as follows:

Table 1: Pupils' Opinion on how arts and craft contribute to their vocational skill development

Test items	Stretched				Collapsed	
	SA	A	D	SD	SA/A	D/SD
Engagement in arts and crafts enhances my creativity	527 (87.8%)	64 (10.7%)	3 (0.5%)	6 (1.0%)	591 (98.5%)	9 (1.5%)
Participation in arts and crafts improves my fine motor skills like writing, picking, drawing etc..	298 (49.7%)	290 (48.3%)	12 (2.0%)	0 (00.0%)	588 (98.0%)	12 (2.0%)
Arts and crafts activities help me work together with my friends (development of teamwork skills)	299 (49.8%)	250 (41.7%)	51 (8.5%)	0 (00.0%)	549 (91.5%)	51 (8.5%)
Learning arts and crafts helps me solve problems in school (develop problem-solving abilities)	251 (41.8%)	302 (50.3%)	38 (6.3%)	9 (1.5%)	553 (92.2%)	47 (7.8%)
Arts and crafts activities are important for me to decide on what I want to be in future (vocational skill development)	239 (39.8%)	311 (51.8%)	37 (6.2%)	13 (2.2%)	550 (91.7%)	50 (8.3%)
Engaging in arts and crafts fosters my sense of achievement and self-esteem (self-confidence)	197 (73.8%)	305 (50.8%)	85 (14.2%)	13 (2.2%)	502 (83.7%)	98 (16.3%)
Multiple respond set	1811 (50.3%)	1522 (42.3%)	226 (6.3%)	41 (1.1%)	3333 (92.6%)	267 (7.4%)

n=600

In aggregate as shown in table 10 above, majority of the pupils (92.6%) agreed that arts and craft contribute to their vocational skill development of primary school, while 7.4% disagreed. Specifically, 591(98.5%) of the pupils agreed that their engagement in arts and crafts enhances their creativity. Similarly, 588(98.0%) of the pupils agreed that their participation in arts and crafts improves their fine motor skills like writing, picking, drawing etc. In the same light, 553(92.2%) of the pupils agreed that learning arts and crafts helps them solve problems in school (develop problem-solving abilities).

Additionally, 550(91.7%) they agreed that arts and crafts activities are important for them to decide on what they want to be in future (vocational skill development). Also, 549(91.5%) of the pupils agreed that arts and crafts activities help them work together with their friends (development of teamwork skills). Finally, majority of the pupils 502(83.7%) agreed that engaging in arts and crafts fosters their sense of achievement and self-esteem (self-confidence).

Findings from Observation

Table 2: Observation of arts and craft activities and pupils' vocational skill development

Skill Area	Observed Behavior	Stretched		
		Excellent	Satisfactory	Need Improvement
Creativity	Demonstrates original ideas in projects	35 (58.3%)	25 (41.7%)	0 (00.0%)
Technique	Uses appropriate tools and materials	19 (31.7%)	40 (66.7%)	1 (1.7%)
Planning	Plans projects effectively	14 (23.3%)	45 (75.0%)	1 (1.7%)
Collaboration	Works well with peers on group projects	16 (26.7%)	42 (70.0%)	2 (3.3%)
Completion	Finishes projects on time	13 (21.7%)	42 (70.0%)	5 (8.3%)
Multiple respond set		97 (32.3%)	194 (64.7%)	9 (3.0%)

n=60

In aggregate as indicated in table 11 above, it was observed that majority of the pupils (64.7%) exhibited satisfactory skills during arts and craft activities, (32.3%) exhibited excellent skills and (3.0%) needed improvement. Specifically, it was observed that 35(58.3%) of the pupils displayed excellent creativity skills, demonstrating original ideas in arts and craft projects. Similarly, 40(66.7%) of the pupils displayed satisfactory technique skills, using appropriate tools and materials during arts and craft activities. In the same light, 45(75.0%) of the pupils displayed satisfactory planning skills, observed as they plan arts and craft projects effectively. Additionally, 42(70.0%) of the pupils portered collaboration skills as they were observed working well with peers on group projects. Finally, majority of the pupils 42(70.0%) were able to finished the projects on time.

Presentation of Qualitative Findings

Analysis of teacher interviews on arts and craft activities and their correlation to primary school children's vocational skills development

Interviews conducted with teachers reveals that arts and crafts fulfill multiple roles in fostering vocational skills among primary school children. Key themes such as variety of activities, participation, critical thinking and problem solving illustrated the multifaceted value of these activities.

Variety of activities and consistency of participation

When asked to describe the arts and crafts activities they have been are involved in and how frequently they participate in these activities, teachers indicated that they offer a broad spectrum of activities, as expressed by Teacher 1:

"We explore everything from basket weaving, local stole making to woodworking; each session brings something new. Arts and craft help children develop fine motor skills, hand eye coordination, and creativity"

Teachers were also of the opinion that the variety of activities keeps pupils interested and caters to different interests, ensuring inclusivity which can lead to different skill sets being developed.

Teachers also intimated that they schedule arts and craft activities at all times. According to them, regular scheduling demonstrates a commitment to integrating arts and crafts into the curriculum. Such consistency fosters a reliable environment for skill development, encouraging pupils to look forward to these sessions. This idea was supported by the voice of Teacher 3:

“We meet every Wednesdays and Fridays; it’s a highlight of the week for many learners and myself” ...the more frequently learners participate in arts and craft activities, the more likely they develop a strong foundation in creativity, problem-solving and critical thinking, which are essential skills for success in many careers”.

The frequency of participation in arts and craft is crucial in children. Regular engagement in these activities can lead to improved career prospects and a strong foundation for future success.

Critical thinking and problem-solving

Teachers were asked a question on what specific skills they think children have learned from arts and craft activities. The teachers were of the opinion that arts and craft activities provide a unique platform for children to develop critical thinking skills, which are essential to various careers and industries. This was seen from the opinion of Teacher 6:

“These projects often require learners to think on their feet and come up with creative solutions when things don’t go as planned.”

This insight underscores the role of arts and crafts in enhancing critical thinking. Projects that don’t go as intended teach pupils to adapt their plans, a vital skill in any vocational path. Teachers interviewed also focused on social dynamics as a crucial component for vocational readiness. Learning to work in teams prepares learners for future professional environments where collaboration is essential. According to the teachers, collaborative projects allow pupils to practice communication and share ideas, which strengthens their social skills. Teacher 3 was of the opinion that:

“Arts and craft activities encourage collaboration, communication, and mutual respect among primary school children. These are essential skills for success in many careers. Through arts and craft, children learn to work together, share ideas, and build on each other’s strength, which fosters team work and improves vocational skills.”

Teamwork is an essential component of arts and craft activities, and it plays a significant role in improving vocational skills in children. By engaging in arts and craft, children learn to collaborate, communicate, and work together effectively, leading to improved career prospects and a stronger foundation for future success.

Verification of Hypothesis

Table 3: Relationship between Arts and crafts activities and the vocational skills development of primary school pupils

		Arts and crafts activities	Vocational skills development of primary school pupils
Spearman's rho	R-value	1.000	.156**
	p-value	.	.000
	N	600	60

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

The hypothetical statistics showed that there is a significant, positive relationship between arts and crafts activities and the vocational skills development of primary school pupils (R- value 0.156**, p -value $< 0.000 < 0.05$). The positive sign of the correlation value implies that frequent engagement in arts and crafts activities will foster pupils' vocational skill development in primary school there by enhancing their creativity, fine motor skills, teamwork skills and problem-solving abilities. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative hypothesis which states arts and crafts significantly influence pupils' vocational skills development was accepted.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that a significant proportion of pupils agreed that arts and craft contribute to their vocational skill development of primary school. The findings also revealed that there is a significant, positive relationship between arts and crafts activities and the vocational skills development of primary school pupils. This implies that frequent engagement in arts and crafts activities will foster pupils' vocational skill development in primary school there by enhancing their creativity, fine motor skills, teamwork skills and problem-solving abilities. The findings are in line with Eisner (2002) who argues that arts education promotes higher-order thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities, which are essential components of vocational competence and lifelong employability. Similarly, Winner, Goldstein, and Vincent-Lancrin (2013) provide empirical evidence that sustained participation in arts and crafts enhances fine motor skills, collaborative abilities, and adaptive problem-solving, particularly in early childhood and primary education settings.

Also findings highlight a strong consensus among pupils regarding the positive impact of engagement in arts and crafts on creativity. This alignment suggests that arts and crafts activities not only serve as a medium for self-expression but also play a crucial role in fostering inventive thinking. Craft (2005) supports this notion emphasizing that engaging in creative activities can significantly enhance cognitive flexibility and the ability to generate unique solutions, which are essential components of creativity. This creative engagement in arts fosters a nurturing environment where students can explore imaginative ideas freely, ultimately leading to broader cognitive development.

The findings also suggest that arts and crafts activities are integral in guiding pupils toward their vocational aspirations, as many students recognize these activities as critical for shaping their future career choices. This aligns with Adebayo and Eziokwu & Onuoha, (2021), who emphasize that participation in arts workshops can significantly enhance creative skill development among primary school children, ultimately informing their career decisions. By

engaging in these creative practices, children not only explore their interests but also gain exposure to potential professions in the arts and crafts sectors. This early exploration can significantly impact their long-term career aspirations, illustrating the importance of integrating vocational elements into educational curriculums that include art.

Additionally, the data indicate that arts and crafts foster teamwork skills, a crucial competency in various facets of life and work. The collaborative nature of many crafts encourages students to work together, facilitating communication and shared problem-solving. Mayer, (2021) assert that handcraft activities significantly aid in developing fine motor skills in Nigerian primary schools and concurrently foster social skills such as teamwork. Furthermore, a sense of achievement and improved self-esteem linked to these activities cannot be overlooked. Engaging in arts and crafts provides students with tangible outcomes, fostering pride in their creations. This sense of accomplishment is crucial for building self-confidence, as the act of creating something from start to finish instils a belief in their abilities and potential, positively impacting their overall development.

Finding from the observation of pupils' engagement in arts and crafts activities presents an encouraging outlook on their vocational skill development, showcasing a predominance of satisfactory and excellent skill levels among participants. The ability to exhibit creativity, with many children showcasing original ideas, is particularly notable. This aspect of creative expression is crucial not only for artistic endeavors but also for cognitive growth and problem-solving abilities in broader contexts. Creative skills foster an innovative mindset, enabling pupils to approach challenges with inventiveness, which is essential for their future vocational paths. Garcia et al. (2017) found that creative crafting activities can foster an entrepreneurial mindset in primary school students, suggesting that these activities not only develop specific skills but also cultivate broader, applicable traits.

The findings are grounded in Erik Erikson (1950) psychosocial theory, particularly the Industry versus Inferiority stage, which posits that children at this developmental stage seek opportunities to demonstrate their abilities through meaningful tasks, and success in such activities nurtures industry, while repeated failure or lack of support may result in feelings of inferiority. The observed widespread agreement among pupils and the generally satisfactory to excellent performance in arts and craft activities indicate that these experiences provide structured yet creative avenues for children to develop practical skills, perseverance, and task commitment. Through hands-on engagement, pupils refine fine motor coordination, creativity, cooperation, and problem-solving skills, all of which align with Erikson's emphasis on skill acquisition as a foundation for future vocational identity.

Concluding Remarks

The study sought to investigate arts and craft activities as a correlate to vocational skills development of primary school pupils in the English-Speaking Regions of Cameroon. From the data gathered, the findings underscore the significant role that arts and crafts play in fostering essential competencies. The positive correlation established between participation in arts and crafts and the enhancement of various vocational skills, such as creativity and teamwork, highlights the importance of integrating these activities into the primary curriculum. This aligns with the assertion that engaging in creative activities not only nurtures artistic expression but also prepares students for future vocational challenges.

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