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TEACHERS' PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF PLAY BASED LEARNING ACTIVITIES ON PUPILS' CREATIVE KNOWLEDGE IN KWARA STATE

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ABSTRACT

The persistent use of traditional teaching methods in many primary schools by teachers has limited pupils' opportunities to develop creativity and participate actively in play-based learning. The situation creates need to assess the teachers' perceived influence of play based learning activities on the creative knowledge of primary school pupils in Kwara State. The research design employed for this study was descriptive research design of survey type. The population of the study consisted of all public primary schools teacher in Kwara State. Sample size was 297 public primary school teachers which were selected from three local government for three senatorial district using Multi-stage sampling procedure. A research question and one hypothesis were raised to guide the study. Mean was used to answer the research question, while ANOVA was used to test the hypothesis. The results revealed that the extent of play-based learning activities in enhancing the creative knowledge of primary school pupils in Kwara State was high with a grand mean of .3.37, and there was significant difference in teachers' perceived influence of play-based learning activities on the creative knowledge of primary school pupils based on teaching experience. $F(4.438) = 0.00 < 0\ .05$. It was concluded that while play-based learning is effective in enhancing pupils' creativity, teachers' characteristics play an important role in its implementation and outcomes. It is therefore, recommended that education stakeholders should encourage the regular use of play-based learning activities in primary schools, training and workshops should be organised for teachers.

Keywords: Play-Based Learning, Creative Knowledge, Teacher

1.0 INTRODUCTION

As the world grapples with increasingly complex problems, the need for creative thinkers has never been more pressing, making the exploration of play-based learning as a catalyst for

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creativity a timely and urgent endeavour. Creative knowledge is a dynamic and multifaceted skill that develops through a combination of cognitive, emotional, and environmental factors. Rachel Parker et.al (2022) emphasize the importance of fostering creativity in pupils, as it equips them with the tools to navigate an ever-changing world. Schools, teachers, and parents must collaborate to create an environment where creativity can thrive, ensuring that pupils are prepared for both academic and life challenges (Aguilar, 2024).

Creative knowledge in pupils is the ability to generate original ideas, think critically, and solve problems in innovative ways. This type of knowledge is essential for academic success and personal development, as it allows children to apply learned concepts in unique and practical ways. According to Guilford's theory (1950), creative knowledge includes several dimensions such as fluency (generating many ideas), flexibility (shifting perspectives), originality (creating unique ideas), and elaboration (adding details to ideas). Also, Jean Piaget emphasized that creativity in children develops as they actively construct knowledge through exploration and problem-solving. Pupils learn to think creatively by experimenting and interacting with their environment. However, Studies by Craft (2019) show that creative knowledge supports deeper learning and better retention of knowledge by connecting abstract concepts to practical applications.

Play-based learning has a profound impact on fostering creative knowledge in children, by combining the freedom of play with intentional learning opportunities, this approach nurtures creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills in a natural and enjoyable manner. Play is an essential part of a child's life, and Play-Based Learning (PBL) capitalizes on this natural instinct to create an engaging and effective educational approach. PBL integrates various forms of play, both structured and unstructured, into the curriculum to foster a child's holistic development (Education Development Center [EDC], 2014). This approach goes beyond simply incorporating fun activities into the classroom. PBL strategically utilizes play as a powerful tool for learning, fostering cognitive, social, emotional, and physical growth in young children (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2018).

Play-based learning allows children to explore different scenarios and ideas without fear of failure. Activities such as building with blocks, role-playing, or crafting encourage them to think outside the box and approach problems innovatively. Play helps children learn and develop holistically, encompassing the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical domains (Kejo, 2017). This approach highlights the use of play in stimulating various areas of children's development and learning, particularly in their holistic development.

In play-based learning, children have the autonomy to test ideas, explore materials, and make discoveries at their own pace (Blanche et al., 2020). This freedom enables children to take risks, make mistakes, and learn from them, which are essential components of creative thinking. For example, experimenting with colours in art or constructing unique designs with LEGO develops their ability to think creatively. Such activities deepen children's ability to create, organise, and communicate complex ideas, which enhances both their imagination and language skills.

Also, play-based learning often involves puzzles, construction tasks, or pretend scenarios that present challenges for children to resolve. These experiences teach children to think critically, brainstorm solutions, and apply knowledge creatively. For instance, figuring out how to

stabilize a tower of blocks fosters engineering thinking and ingenuity. Daniel (2018) opined that Multisensory experiences enhance neural connections, helping children develop a richer, more nuanced understanding of their world and inspiring creative thought. Play-based learning is instrumental in nurturing creativity knowledge in children. It provides a foundation for innovative thinking, problem-solving, and imaginative exploration, equipping children with the skills to tackle complex challenges and contribute meaningfully to their communities. By embracing play-based learning, educators and parents can help children realize their creative potential in both academic and real-world contexts.

The perception of teachers towards play-based learning is a major influence on how such activities get integrated in the curriculum of primary schools and eventually impact students' creative knowledge and learning process (Adebayo, 2021). Studies indicate that the teachers who have a positive attitude towards play-based learning emphasize more on the role of play as a method to energize creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking in students (Adegoke & Oredein, 2025). Teachers also typically envision themselves as facilitators and play work coaches, helping students to try out ideas and build higher-order thinking in conditions of security and non-threatening spaces (Adeshina, 2025). The scaffolding by the teacher of children's learning through play is of utmost significance in fostering creativity, imagination, and social capabilities such as cooperation and negotiation (Oluyide, 2024).

Teachers' perceived influence of play- based learning activities plays pivotal role in shaping the creative knowledge development of primary school pupils by various factors including their educational training, personal beliefs about teaching and institutional expectations regarding curriculum delivery and assessment (Paul, 2024). While many acknowledge the potential benefits of play to encourage creativity and holistic development, challenges such as lack of resources, time constraints and pressure to meet academic standards can hinder effective implementation (ERIC, 2023). However, educators play a critical role in ensuring that play-based learning is effectively integrated into children's educational experiences. Play-based learning combines the joy and freedom of play with intentional teaching to support cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development (Ijeoma, 2023). Educators create a physical environment rich with diverse materials, tools, and resources (e.g., toys, art supplies, blocks, and outdoor equipment) to encourage exploration and creativity.

According to Milne and Mclaughlin (2018) they was of the opinion that a safe and secure environment is essential for children to play freely without fear of harm. Teachers arrange distinct areas for different types of play, such as sensory play zones, dramatic play corners, and outdoor activity areas. Teachers facilitate play by offering gentle guidance while allowing children the freedom to lead. This encourages autonomy and confidence. Through open-ended questions and tasks, Teachers inspire critical thinking, problem-solving, and deeper engagement (Karen et al 2022). By aligning play activities with developmental and academic objectives, educators ensure that children gain meaningful skills and knowledge. Teachers also observe children during play to assess developmental progress in areas like language, motor skills, and social interactions, by paying attention to what children enjoy, Teachers can tailor play-based activities to individual needs and preferences. Teachers record observations and achievements to share with parents and inform future lesson planning (Jamie, 2023). Teachers encourage group play to teach teamwork, negotiation, and empathy. It is the responsibility of the Teacher to mediating conflicts especially when disagreements arise, Teachers help children

resolve them constructively, reinforcing social skills and emotional regulation. Teachers ensure that all children, regardless of ability or background, feel included and valued in play activities.

Teachers use games, role-playing, and hands-on activities to introduce academic concepts like math, science, and literacy (Adekunle, 2020). They provide a mix of guided play (to meet curriculum objectives) and free play (to encourage creativity and self-expression). Teachers incorporate themes (e.g., community helpers, space exploration) to link play activities with real-world knowledge and experiences. Teachers design activities that inspire imagination, such as storytelling, arts, and pretend play. Through active play, Teachers ensure children develop fine and gross motor skills (Adegbite, 2021). Play provides opportunities for children to express feelings, build resilience, and develop self-regulation. They are the cornerstone of successful play-based learning, by creating nurturing environments, facilitating meaningful activities, and linking play to developmental goals, they ensure that children grow academically, socially, and emotionally. Through intentional actions, educators balance the freedom of play with purposeful teaching, fostering lifelong curiosity and a love for learning.

According to Shie and Ejiga (2022) opined that the quality of education of a nation could be determined by the quality of her teachers, the most important factors in improving students achievement is by employing seasoned qualified teachers in all schools. A teaching qualification is one of major thing in academic and professional degrees that enables a person to become a registered teacher in a primary or secondary schools, such qualifications include NCE, B.Ed., B.A/B.Sc. (Ed), M.Ed., PGDE and other relevant teaching credentials. The functions of teachers span skills development, modification of behaviours, guidance of the actions and though the instrumentality of learning activities and environment (Kolo et al., 2023).

Teacher qualification is very crucial in implementing play-based learning in schools because well-qualified teachers are generally more exposed to modern pedagogical approaches, including play-based learning, constructivist learning, activity-based methods, and child development theories. Teachers with higher qualifications may have deeper understanding of how play stimulates imagination, problem-solving, divergent thinking, and creative expression among pupils.

Reed (2025) opined that gender is the social and cultural characteristics roles, behavior and attributes that a society considers appreciate for men and women. Therefore, gender is the biological and social differences between male and female teachers. Gender is important because teachers' perception, interaction patterns, and preferences in teaching strategies may differ based on gender. Male and female teachers may perceive and use play-based learning activities differently in the classroom. Ehrich (2020) suggest that female teachers have higher level of teaching efficacy than male and tend to adopt more child-centered and interactive teaching approaches, while male teachers may be more structured in classroom management by emphasizing discipline-oriented classroom methods, which may limit the use of free play.

According to Tara and Anne (2016), teaching experience is positively associated with student achievement gains throughout a teacher's career and more experienced teachers support greater students learning. Lawal et al. (2017) carried out a research on teaching experience and concluded that experience teachers often exhibited their wealth of experience in adopting appropriate methods of teaching, frequently employing appropriate instructional materials and

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exhibited positive attitude towards the teaching of any subject that will not only motivate the students but also arouse their interest. Teaching experience is the number of years a teacher has spent in active classroom instruction. It is usually categorized into ranges such as 1–5 years, 6–10 years, and above 10 years. Teaching experience plays a significant role in shaping teachers' confidence, mastery of teaching methods, and openness to innovative instructional strategies. Highly experienced teachers may have developed practical skills in classroom management and may better understand how to integrate play-based learning meaningfully. However, some very experienced teachers may be resistant to change if they are used to traditional teaching methods. Conversely, teachers with fewer years of experience may be more enthusiastic about using play-based learning due to their recent exposure to the method during training (Acevedo, 2022).

Play-based learning in Kwara State, like in other parts of the world, has significant potential to enhance children's educational outcomes. However, its implementation in the state is influenced by various factors such as educational policies, resource availability, and cultural perceptions of play. The Nigerian National Policy on Education of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) emphasizes the importance of play in childhood education. In Kwara State, many primary schools incorporate elements of play, especially in private institutions, where resources and trained educators are often more available, while some public primary schools in Kwara State include play-based activities, the emphasis is often limited due to constraints such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of materials, and a focus on rote learning. Many communities in Kwara State, believes that play is traditionally viewed as separate from formal learning. This perception sometimes hinders the integration of play-based approaches in schools. Play-based learning helps children in Kwara State, especially in primary school education, to develop critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills (Asiata, 2018). By using locally available materials (e.g., sand, stones, and sticks), educators can implement low-cost Play-based learning which has the potential to transform education in Kwara State by making learning engaging, inclusive, and impactful. Despite existing challenges, concerted efforts from educators, policymakers, and communities can ensure that children benefit from this innovative approach to education, laying a strong foundation for lifelong learning and success.

2.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although the Nigerian primary school curriculum emphasizes the use of activity-based and child-centered approaches to promote creativity among learners, classroom practices in many public primary schools still tend to be dominated by teacher-centred, textbook-driven, and rote instructional methods. In this situation, pupils often learn to memorize rather than to think, imagine, create, or explore ideas on their own. One of the methods recommended to stimulate creativity in young learners is play-based learning, which allows children to express ideas freely, solve problems, work collaboratively, and use imagination in learning situations. However, despite the recognized value of play-based learning, some teachers in public primary schools do not have the in-depth understanding of play-based learning, in fact, many of them even have negative perception towards the use of play based learning, with the thought that it's a waste of time, that will not allow them to cover up the curriculum as expected (Lawal, 2023). The problems of some teachers is that play should be used by female teachers because there believe is that male are not expected to participate in play (Tsai, 2016).

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Teachers' perceptions and classroom practices have not been adequately explored, even though teachers' beliefs strongly influence whether play-based learning is implemented or neglected in actual classroom instruction. This situation suggests that teachers' perceptions of the value of play-based learning may influence the extent to which it is implemented in classrooms.

Many scholars have carried out studies on areas which are related to play based learning activities in primary schools. For instance, Adubuola et al (2023) carried out research on influence of play-based learning on socio-emotional development among early childhood children in Afijio local government area of Oyo State, Nigeria. Owolabi (2025) conducted a study on educating through play- based learning for creativity and Skills development in early childhood education. Edutopics (2025) examined the impact of Play-Based learning strategy on performance of public primary school pupils in Jos North LGA of Plateau State. Ibrahim (2019) investigated the effectiveness of Play in Gwale Local Government area of Kano State, Nigeria. Considering the exiting mentioned studies none of them has carried out research on Teachers Perceived Influence of Play-Based Learning Activities on the Creative Knowledge of Primary School Pupils in Kwara State. This is the gap the study filled.

3.0 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study is to assess teachers' perceived influence of play-based learning activities on the creative knowledge of primary school pupils in Kwara State, Nigeria. Four specific objectives are raised for this study:

1. To assess the extent at which play-based learning activities enhance the creative knowledge of primary school pupils in Kwara State.
2. To examine teachers' perceived influence of play-based learning activities on the creative knowledge of primary school pupils based on their teaching experience.

3.1 Research Question

In line with the purpose of the study, a research question was raised to guide the conduct of the research:

1. To what extent do play-based learning activities enhance the creative knowledge of primary school pupils in Kwara State?

3.2 Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant difference in teachers' perceived influence of play-based learning activities on the creative knowledge of primary school pupils based on teaching experience.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate teachers' perceptions of the influence of play-based learning activities on the creative knowledge of primary school pupils in Kwara State, Nigeria. The target population comprised 10,728 public primary school teachers across the state. A multi-stage sampling procedure was employed to select 297

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teachers. Initially, Kwara State was stratified into its three senatorial districts, from which three local government areas were selected through simple random sampling. Subsequently, 30 public primary schools were randomly selected across the sampled local governments, and systematic sampling was used to select participating teachers. Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire titled Teachers' Perceived Influence of Play-Based Learning Activities on Creative Knowledge Questionnaire (TPIP-BLACKQ), which consisted of demographic items and 15 perception statements rated on a four-point Likert scale.

The instrument underwent face and content validation by experts in measurement and evaluation and specialists in primary education to ensure its adequacy and relevance. A pilot study involving 20 public primary school teachers outside the study sample yielded a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.78, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, to address the research questions, while one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed to test the hypotheses concerning differences in teachers' perceptions based on gender, educational qualification, and teaching experience at a 0.05 level of significance. All statistical analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

4.1 Data Analysis and Results

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Teaching Experience		
0-5yrs	13	4.9
6-10yrs	66	24.7
11-15yrs	48	18
16-20yrs	50	18.2
21-25yrs	31	11.6
26-30yrs	59	22.1

Results in Table 1 shows that out of 267 respondents involved in this study, 13 out of 267 respondents had an experience between 0-5years with the percentage of 4.9%, 66 of them had an experiences between 6-10yrs with the percentage of 24.7%, 48 (18%) of the respondents had 11-15yrs teaching experience, 50 (18.7%) of the respondents had 16-20yrs teaching experience, 31 (11.6%) of the respondents had 21-25yrs teaching experience and 67 of them had an experiences of 26-30yrs with the percentage of 22.1%. Also, out of 267 sampled respondents, 87 of them are on 7-9 grade level, 113 (42.3%) of the respondents are on 10-12 grade level while 67 of them are on 13-15 grade level.

4.2 Answering Research Question

One research question was raised in the study and answered using descriptive statistic of mean.

Research Question One: To what extent do play-based learning activities enhance the creative knowledge of primary school pupils in Kwara State?

Table 2: Play-Based Learning Activities on Creative Knowledge

S/N	Items	CT	MT	ST	NT	X
1	On many occasions I have observed pupils demonstrating musical skills during play-based activities	163 (61)	81 (30.3)	14 (5.2)	9 (3.4)	3.49
2	Pupils act skillfully when assigned role during play–based classroom activities	144 (53.9)	81 (30.3)	29 (10.9)	13 (4.9)	3.33
3	Implementation of play-based activities allow pupils to showcase their natural talents	149 (55.8)	87 (32.6)	17 (6.4)	14 (5.2)	3.38
4	I have observed time without numbers high level of thinking being demonstrated by pupils during play activities	144 (53.9)	93 (34.8)	21 (7.9)	9 (3.4)	3.39
5	Pupils demonstrate fluency in generating ideas during brainstorming sessions	148 (55.4)	91 (34.1)	15 (5.6)	13 (4.9)	3.40
6	Pupils show high level of enthusiasm and engagement during play-based learning activities	145 (54.3)	98 (36.7)	15 (5.6)	9 (3.4)	3.41
7	Pupils participation in play-based activities enhances overall academic performance and creativity	139 (52.1)	93 (36.7)	20 (7.5)	15 (5.6)	3.33
8	Arts and crafts projects helps pupils develop their imagination and self-expression	123 (46.1)	94 (34.8)	41 (15.4)	9 (3.4)	3.23
9	The application of stimulation strategy helps pupils demonstrate unimaginable career skills during classroom presentations	141 (52.8)	87 (32.6)	26 (9.7)	13 (4.9)	3.33
10	Play-based activities increases pupils confidence and self-esteem	170 (63.7)	64 (24)	17 (6.4)	16 (6)	3.45
11	Role-playing helps pupils develop their communication skills and creative expressions	163 (61)	40 (15)	41 (15.4)	23 (8.6)	3.28
12	Play-based learning encourages pupils to explore and discover new concepts and ideas	172 (64.4)	64 (24)	14 (5.2)	17 (6.4)	3.40
13	Imaginative play allows pupils to demonstrate their understanding of social skills and empathy	147 (55.1)	81 (30.3)	30 (11.2)	9 (3.4)	3.46
14	Play-based learning fosters pupils critical thinking and analytical skills	146 (54.7)	81 (30.3)	24 (9)	16 (6)	3.37
15	Play-based learning increases pupils and school identity	152 (56.9)	81 (30.3)	25 (9.4)	9 (3.4)	3.33
	Grand Mean					**3.37**

Note: Mean value range from 1-1.75 = Very Low Extent, 1.76-2.50 = Low Extent, 2.51-3.25 = High Extent, 3.26-4.00 = Very High Extent.

Table 3 shows the mean of what extent do play-based learning activities enhance the creative knowledge of primary school pupils in Kwara State where the mean scores of 3.49, 3.33, 3.38,

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3.39, 3.40, 3.41, 3.33, 3.23, 3.33, 3.45, 3.28, 3.46, 3.37, 3.33, and 3.40 for items 1 to 15 respectively was found to be high. Therefore, the grand mean of 3.37 revealed that the extent at which play-based learning activities enhance the creative knowledge of primary school pupils in Kwara State was high.

Research Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in teachers' perceived influence of play-based learning activities on the creative knowledge of primary school pupils based on teaching experience.

Table 2: ANOVA Summary of the Variation in Teachers' Perceived Influence of Play-Based Learning Activities on the Creative Knowledge Based on Teaching Experience

Source of Variable	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Group	9.980	5	1.996	4.438	.000	Ho_3 Rejected
Within Group	117.391	261	.450			
Total	**127.371**					

*Significant P< .05

As shown in Table 2, the F-value of 4.438 with a p-value of .000 computed at 0.05 alpha level. Since the p-value of .000 obtained is lesser than 0.05 level of significance, the hypothesis three which stated that there is no significant difference in teachers' perceived influence of play-based learning activities on the creative knowledge of primary school pupils based on teaching experience is rejected. This implies that there was significant difference in teachers' perceived influence of play-based learning activities on the creative knowledge of primary school pupils based on teaching experience.

5.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section gives detailed explanations on the various findings discovered from the research question and the hypotheses tested. For instance, the findings on to what extent do play-based learning activities enhance the creative knowledge of primary school pupils in Kwara State as indicated in Table 2 showed that the extent at which play-based learning activities enhance the creative knowledge of primary school pupils in Kwara State was high with a grand mean score of 3.37. The study corroborates with Obijiofor, Ugwele and Onyenwe (2024) who reported a significant positive relationship between play-based learning and the development of social skills such as cooperation, sharing and empathy among children in southeastern Nigeria. Similarly, Adubuola et al. (2023), noted that play- based learning contributes significantly to children's socio-emotional development, while Owusi and Godfrey-Kalio (2025) affirmed that play-based learning has a strong positive influence on pupils' creative knowledge.

However, the study negates the findings of Suleiman et al. (2025) in another perspective, where it was reported that teachers' poor understanding of play-based learning pedagogy can limits its effectiveness in classroom practice. This suggests that while play-based learning is effective,

its successful implementation depends on teachers' competence and proper training. The implication of the study was that the integration of play-based learning activities into primary school classrooms can significantly improve pupils' creative abilities and overall learning outcomes. It also implies that teachers need adequate training and support to effectively implement these strategies for maximum benefit.

The findings from hypothesis revealed that there was significant difference in teachers' perceived influence of play-based learning activities on the creative knowledge of primary school pupils based on teaching experience. The finding is consistent with that of Owushi and Godfrey-Kalio (2025), who found that experienced teachers are more effective in implementing play-based learning due to their classroom management skills and familiarity with diverse teaching strategies. However, the results contradicted the findings of Adubuola et al. (2023), who reported that younger or less experienced teachers tend to adopt innovative teaching methods, such as play-based learning, more readily than their older counterparts.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

The study has demonstrated that play-based learning activities have a strong positive influence on the creative knowledge of primary school pupils in Kwara State. This is evident from the high grand mean score, which shows that such activities actively promote pupils' imagination, critical thinking, and self-expression. It was also concluded that teaching experience was found to significantly influence teachers' perceptions. More experienced teachers may have deeper insights or different attitudes toward play-based learning compared to less experienced ones.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are further raised that:

1. Education stakeholders should encourage the regular use of play-based learning activities in primary schools, as they have proven to enhance pupils' creativity and overall learning outcomes.
2. Training and workshops should be organized for teachers to promote a unified understanding of play-based learning, regardless of gender differences, so that all teachers can apply these methods effectively.
3. Government and educational bodies should support continuous professional development programmes, especially for teachers with lower qualifications, to improve their competence in using creative and play-based instructional strategies.
4. Mentorship programmes should be introduced where experienced teachers guide less experience

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