

Fabric Construction Techniques as Interventions to Reducing Girl-child Truancy in Ghana. A case of Trabuom Roman Catholic JHS

Linda Armah (PhD)¹, Salomey Appiah Darkoa², Daniel Akuoko Adjei³

1.Fashion Design and Textiles Technology Department, Accra Technical University, P.O. Box GP 561, Accra, Ghana.

2.Offinso College of Education,P.O. Box 7, Offinso, Ashanti Region,Ghana.

3.Industrial Art Department, Bolgatanga Technical University, P.O. Box 767 , Upper East Region, Ghana.

Abstract

Ghana as a developing country needs to educate its citizens especially the girl-child for her to become an important personality in the society in which she lives. In view of that, the government since 1992 introduced the FCUBE (Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education) in the country. This policy is to enable every child of school going age to get access to education. In spite of the provision made for the children in the country, only few girls at Trabuom in the Atwima Kwanwoma District of the Ashanti Region of Ghana attend school. Those who attend school do not complete the Junior High School. Although, the District Directorate of Education know the low enrollment level of girls at the Trabuom Roman Catholic School, very little has been researched into. The study sought to introduce some fabric construction techniques such as macramé and crocheting as interventions to reduce girls truancy in school. The qualitative research design was adopted and participatory action research method was employed. In all 45 students between the ages of 12 to 16 years were sampled for the study using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Primary data was collected using interviews, observations and focus group discussions. The data were analyzed and discussed accordingly. The findings indicate some of the girls do not attend school due to poverty, teenage pregnancy, negative parental attitude towards girl's education and sexual harassment by some male teachers. The use of some fabric construction techniques such as macramé and crocheting could significantly help increase the enrollment of girls in school.

Key words: Macramé, Crocheting, Girl-child, Education, Truancy.

1.Introduction

Education is seen as a major tool to national development. Educating boys and girls produce similar result in their subsequent earnings and expand future opportunities for both. However, when girls are educated, the society and the nation as a whole benefit much (UNICEF, 2015). According to Kennedy (2013) and Ada (2011) the introduction of vocational skills in school's increase student's enrollment, give students the opportunity to acquire special creative abilities. The study of the creative arts such as music, textiles, ceramics, basketry, leatherwork and others are all art and they play pivotal role in the life of every human being who lives on this earth (Agusiobo,2018). The practical knowledge that students acquire help them to become useful and independent in life. Doulas (2014) and Amenuke et al. (1991) also opine that the teaching of visual art disciplines like picture making, jewelry, graphic design and textiles and others in school's open students mind, enable students to exhibit their talents and skills and also help to sustain their interest in school. In affirming Doulas and Amenuke et al. assertion, Ebeli (2015) adds that music and dance and other visual art activities like painting and drawing elicit students emotion. This also helps to increase girl's enrollment and sustain their interest in school. Arku and Tetteh (2014) also claim that introducing the girl-child to the various visual art activities help increase their enrollment and sustain their interest in school.

1.1 Research Objectives

The general objective of the research was to introduce selected fabric construction activities to girl children in school. Precisely, the study sought to teach girls at Trabuom Roman Catholic Junior High School macramé and crocheting art.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Girl-child education is key to national development. Educating girls help them to develop their behaviours, abilities and skills so that they can contribute their quota to the society and nation as whole (Mortaki,2012 and Peters,2010). Tabreek, 2017 opines that giving the girl-child formal and informal education develops her holistically that is mentally, psychologically and physically. Despite the numerous advantages that education gives to individuals, some of the girls at Trabuom do not have interest in schooling. The research therefore sought to reverse the truancy rate in school by using fabric construction techniques such as macramé and crocheting as interventions.

2. Methodology

The study was carried out at Trabuom Roman Catholic Junior High School in the Atwima Kwanwoma District of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The study was a case study and the qualitative research design was adopted. Participatory action research method was employed. Participatory action research is a method in which the researcher works with the group under investigation, that is to say he or she takes a lead from the group on what is to be done (Creswell, 2012 and McAlpine,2005).

The researchers employed participant observation technique and interviews in order to achieve their objectives. Participant observation is a method of data collection in which the researchers take part in everyday activities related to an area of social life in order to study an aspect of that life through the observation of events in their natural contexts. Interviews on the other hand according to Fraenkel and Wallen (2012) are encounters between a researcher and a respondent in which the latter is asked a series of questions relevant to the subject of the research. The unstructured and semi-structured interviews were used to source information from respondents. The purpose of participant observation and the interviews was to gain a deep understanding of a particular situation through the meanings ascribed to it by the individuals who live and experience it. The researchers used the overt type of observation during the study. Thus the researchers declared their intentions to the subjects or those who were under the study that they were being observed.

Using snowball (Nederifar, Goli and Ghaljaie,2017) and purposive sampling techniques (Fraenkel and Wallen,2009),45 girls, (1) head teacher and five(5) teachers were selected for the study. Primary data was collected by the researchers through interviews and observations. The researchers took the attendance of girls in the classes that were chosen for the study. This was done for the first three months of the study in collaboration with the various class teachers. The attendance of students was taken every day continuously for the first three months to monitor the impact of the study on truancy and punctuality of the pupils. Interviews and observations made before the study indicated that the enrollment of the classes sampled for the study were as follows: JHS 1A: 36 students (10) girls and (26)boys; JHS 2A: 35 students, out of which, (11) were girls whilst (24) were boys; and JHS 3A: (37) students with (13) being girls whilst (24) were boys.

For the fabric construction techniques, the girls were engaged in macramé and crocheting art activities. The girls were introduced to the various tools and materials used in the production of macramé and crocheting art. The study lasted for six (6) months (5 days a week with 2 hours per each session- from 2.30pm-4.30pm). The girls were grouped for better participation and peer to peer transfer of knowledge. The first three weeks were used to teach the basic macramé and crocheting stitches. The following weeks consisted of the the girls using these knots and stitches to produce assorted articles. The essential tools and materials supplied to the girls. The researchers assigned various groups with specific items to produce. The groups produced the items that they were asked to do. These works were analyzed and photographs were taken to support the study. Figures 1 and 2 show the stages where the researchers were introducing the students to the basic macramé knot and how to use it to create artefacts.



Figure 1



Figure 2

Researchers introducing students to basic macramé knots and crocheting stitches in Figs1 and 2.

3.Results and Discussions

There was general increase in the number of girls in each class over the period of the study. During the first three months of the study, the records from the field notes indicated that the number of students in JHS 1A had increased from 36 to 47. Out of this number, 21 of them were girls indicating that the number of girls in JHS 1A had risen from 10 to 21 as shown in Table 1. This increment was was phenomenal given that it represented a 110% increase. JHS 2A also saw an increase in gilrs enrollment from 11 to 16. JHS 3A also saw an increase of girls from 13 to 24 withing the 6 months duration of the study. This is in line with Antwi's (1992) assertion that practical art activities which are implemented in schools help increase student's enrollment, also has the advantage of producing self-employable persons and reduce rural-urban migration.

Table 1: Enrollment

Class	Number on roll before study			Number on roll after study			Girls increament percentage
	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	Boys	Girls	Total	%
JHS 1A	26	10	36	26	21	47	110%
JHS 2A	24	11	35	24	16	40	45.5%
JHS 3A	24	13	37	24	21	45	61.5%
Total	74	34	108	74	58	132	70.6%

All girls who were in the classes selected for the study participated actively in the fabric construction activities. The study revealed that the activities that the researchers introduced to the girls helped them very well. It provided a means of generating income for them. After the study, some of the girls sold their items and were able to get substantial amount of money. Others also took the opportunity to teach the skills leant to their younger sisters. Some of the girls asserted that, they never knew all these practical activities could be taught in school and if they had known, they would not have been staying away from school. Baxter and Bethke (2009) aver that practical art activities encourage students to be punctual and regular in school. They again mentioned that alternative education may aim to support different types of skills to those in the formal system (professional and vocational training programmes) or aims to provide additional support to young children who might still have the opportunity to gain access to formal system but require a particular kind of support to enable them do so. As Rose (2007) says, alternative education covers all educational activities that fall outside the traditional school system including special programmes for school dropouts, gifted students and home schooling. This indicates that learners may acquire the fundamental knowledge and skills necessary in life through the acquisition of practical visual art activities.

Prior to the study, some of the class teachers indicated that, most of the girls were dull, lazy and not intelligent. Regarding this, It was found that the girls were not dull as some of the teachers claim because they were able to follow all the steps and procedures that were taught them and we're able to use them on their own to produce wonderful works which hey we're able to sell. Although the gilrs were not given launch or snacks, they were willing to stay and participated in the learning activities fully to the mazement of even their respective class teachThe girls exhibited high level of skills and talents in the works that they produced; they were able to use intricate knots and stitches to produce creative art works.

3.1 Macramé Art

Jules & Kliot (2005) aver that macramé is the art of using knot to create decorative artefacts. They also added that this kind of art strengthens one’s memory and again gives him or her the opportunity to express him or herself. Macramé according to Jonathan, Dutsenwai and Ada (2015) is a form of art which is under Fashion Design and Textiles Technology. This art uses a series of knots to create a complex design without the use of needle and hook. The authors assert that people use macramé techniques to produce items such as bags, belts, sandals, vests, dresses and others. Figures 3-6 are samples of some macramé bags and purses made by the gilrs during the study. The bags were made out of nylon cords which are easily available on the market and are affordable. that the girls who were sampled for the study used nylon cords to produce.



Figure 3



Figure 4

Students practicing with the basic Macramé knot in Fig 3 and 4.



Figure 5: Macrame Purses



Figure 6: Macrame hand bags



Figure 7: Macrame tote bag 1



Figure 8: Macrame tote bag 2

3.2 Crocheting Art

Crocheting is a process of creating fabric by interlocking loops of yarn, thread or strands of other materials with the help of a crochet hook. The name is derived from a French word 'croche' meaning "small hook" (Sackey,2002 and Corbman,1984). Crocheting is an extremely versatile and popular technique for making a variety of patterns and textures. Delicate fabrics are created through the basic crochet stitches. With the crocheting art, the girls were able to produce assorted articles ranging from clothing, chair backs, school bags to table place mats as shown in Figures 11-18.



Figure 9



Figure 10

Figures 9 and 10 show students practicing on how to make chain stitches in the crocheting art.



Figure 11: A net dress



Figure 12: A ladies vest



Figure 13: A girls dresses



Figure 14: Babies trousers



Figure 15: A baby's singlet



Figure 16: A school bag



Figure 17: Chair backs



Figure 18: Crocheted Place mat

5 Conclusions

The results of the study showed that in an educational setting, the school environment determines student's attendance and retention in school. The introduction of macramé and crocheting arts at Traboum Roman Catholic Junior High School helped to increase the girl's enrollment. This was evident from the class attendance records of the school. Prior to the introduction of the fabric construction interventions, girls were not punctual at school as shown in Table 1. However, in the course of introducing the interventions, enrollment began to move up from the 3rd week and stabilized at the end of the 5th week till the end of the programme. In the course of the study, the researchers identified that the teachers used only the lecture method of teaching as opposed to combining several methods such as practicals, role play etc to make the class room enjoyable to pupils, especially, the girl child. Teaching is the process by which the teacher brings the learner and the subject together (Afful-Broni & Ziggah, 2005). There are three focal points in teaching: the teacher, the learner and the subject and one of the symptoms of good teaching is the use of suitable and effective methods of teaching. A conducive and congenial environment is likely to attract and retain students in school. In view of that, teachers are required to imbue practical lessons in their teaching in order to create an interesting and enabling environment for students. This will give students the zeal and love for the school and also increase their enrollment. In view of this, the teacher must use variety of methods in teaching to help students acquire the needed skills and knowledge. Teachers could engage resource persons who are versatile in visual art practical activities. Alternative education must be introduced in the basic education system. This means that areas such as life skills, home science and vocational skills should be reintroduced in the school curriculum so that girls who are not mentally good in Maths and Science could choose such areas and specialize in any. The Visual Art subject should be a subject on its own at the JHS level. That is the Visual Art should not be put under Basic Design Technology (BDT) where Pre-technical skills Home Economics are combined with the Visual Art. The Art Teachers Association of Ghana (ATAG) should try and organize workshops and seminars for teachers at the basic school level every term to enable them acquire some knowledge and skills in art. If these and other relevant measures are taken into consideration girl-child education which has become a stumbling block to development will improve and help girls to attain a maximum height in the society.

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