

Developing A Culturally-Sensitive Teaching Framework for Creative Art Education in the Afigya Kwabre South District, Ghana

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Abstract

In a postcolonial setting, culturally responsive education is an urgent issue. Still, little systematic consideration is given to how teachers of art perceive, practice and work towards the integration of indigenous culture into the classroom, or what a viable, teacher-led model of culturally responsive education might include. This article aims to directly address these gaps by drawing on a larger qualitative study conducted on cultural competency in Creative Art education in the Afigya Kwabre South District of the Ashanti Region, Ghana. Using semi-structured interviews with ten purposively selected Junior High School (JHS). Creative Art teachers drawn from two schools in the district were analysed thematically. Results indicate that teachers agree on cultural integration as essential and central, not ancillary, to the teaching of art, and that there is a coherent and informal pedagogical repertoire of using stories, demonstration, project-based learning, and indigenous materials in the teaching of art. These findings led to the development of the Culturally-Sensitive Art Teaching Framework, which is based on four interconnected components: Cultural Grounding, Pedagogical Responsiveness, Community Partnership, and Reflective Assessment. The article ends with some practical suggestions for curriculum authorities, teacher education, and collaboration with the community in post-colonial educational contexts like that of Ghana.

Keywords

Akan artistic heritage, culturally responsive pedagogy, cultural competence, culturally-sensitive teaching framework

1. Introduction

History of formal education in the postcolonial world has made it difficult to teach and value art in the African classroom because it has engrained Western artworld conventions and epistemologies as the dominant system [1]. This tension is particularly evident in Creative Art education in Ghana where the curriculum claims to value indigenous symbols, motifs and crafts including Adinkra, Kente and traditional pottery, but has been documented in the classroom for a long time to have fallen short of this goal [2]. This lack has been corroborated by more recent scholarship, which reveals that the appraisal of indigenous art as “primitive” by

the colonialists still affects teachers' and students' attitudes to the art of the local people in spite of the growth of design and art programmes in universities [3]. In this wider context, the Afigya Kwabre South District, in the Ashanti Region provides a very instructive backdrop. Whilst the district is located in the epicentre of Akan artistic and craft traditions, no empirical evidence has been found of the deliberate inclusion of these traditions in the teaching of Creative Art at the Junior High School (JHS) level in the district as is the case in many districts of Ghana. These needs go beyond what students know and can do as discussed elsewhere in the parent study, and must be acknowledged as a gap in teacher perceptions, pedagogical practices in the classroom, and the structures in which they operate. Teachers are a central figure in the literature that shapes the implementation of curriculum promises for cultural integration in the classroom [4,5]. What students experience is more about the teachers' beliefs, pedagogical knowledge and resources and training than the formal curriculum document itself.

The importance of incorporating indigenous culture into the teaching and learning of art in school has been documented in the literature [6,4], but there is a gap between the expected and the actual as far as curriculum implementation is concerned in many schools in Ghana. In policy documents and curriculum frameworks, teachers are assumed to be prepared and willing to teach art in a culturally relevant way. There is however, little evidence-based and context specific understanding of what Creative Art teachers in districts like Afigya Kwabre South believe about cultural integration, what they are currently doing and what specific challenges are impeding them from doing more. Nor has there been developed an empirically-based, teacher-informed framework for culturally-sensitive Creative Art teaching for this context. If there is no such framework, good policy pronouncements can end up being only wishful thinking. This study directly tackles that gap by examining the teachers' voice as the main source of evidence in the diagnosis of the problem and design of its remedy. This article aims at finding out the perceptions, pedagogy and problems that Creative Art teachers face in using local culture in the teaching of the creative art in Afigya Kwabre South district and to propose some of the ingredients of a culturally sensitive teaching framework for the teaching of Creative Art in the district. In particular, the study aimed to: understand the perspective of Creative Art teachers on the significance of teaching local culture; find out the existing pedagogical strategies and practice of Creative Art teachers in incorporating local culture into Creative Art teaching; explore the challenges and obstacles faced by Creative Art teachers in teaching local culture; find out what kind of support and resources Creative Art teachers need to carry out local culture teaching effectively; and formulate a practical, culturally inclined teaching framework for Creative Art education in the district.

The following research questions from the parent study were addressed: What are Creative Art teachers' perceptions of integrating local culture in art teaching in Afigya Kwabre South District? What are the practices of integrating local culture in the art teaching in Afigya Kwabre South District? What are the challenges of integrating local culture in art teaching in Afigya Kwabre South District? Do Creative Art teachers think that incorporating local culture is significant to their teaching? What are the teaching practices and approaches those teachers are currently using to integrate cultural aspects in classroom art? What are the difficulties and obstacles of teachers in implementing local culture in Creative Art in teaching? The study develops and assess a sustainable, culturally sensitive teaching framework for Creative Art education in the Afigya Kwabre South District by exploring teachers' resource and support needs, describing key components and pedagogical ideas of the framework, incorporating traditional and modern art techniques, and identifying appropriate assessment tools to evaluate students' cultural competencies.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This article draws from two complementary theories: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy [7] and the Cultural Competence Model [8]. These two frameworks offer, respectively, a pedagogical perspective on the interpretation of teachers' practice and a developmental perspective for positioning the framework for this study.

2.1.1 Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) described by Gloria Ladson-Billings [7] for the context of African American education and later extended literature widely across the sub-Saharan contexts, provides three

aspects of culturally responsive teachers: academic achievement, cultural competency, and sociopolitical consciousness. Culturally responsive teachers respect students' cultural identities and students' cultural knowledge and experience as legitimate pedagogical resources, not barriers to the standard pedagogy. Paris and Alim [9] later broadened their work on CRP to Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, positing that being responsive is not enough if education does not simultaneously sustain and perpetuate culturally marginalised communities' cultural practices. CRP offers the conceptual framework for understanding teachers' descriptions of their own practice when they are involved with Creative Art education in the Afigya Kwabre South District, as in their use of storytelling based on Akan proverbs, project-based teaching around cultural festivals and teaching that consistently positions local culture as the main value for the purposes of meaningful Art education. However, by focusing on sociopolitical consciousness, CRP also highlights the obstacles and pressures teachers encounter to fulfill these commitments, which places the difficulties experienced in this study in a broader structural framework, rather than solely individual.

2.1.2 Cultural Competence Model

Cross, Bazron, Dennis and Isaacs [8] describe cultural competence as a developmental continuum, ranging from cultural destructiveness, to cultural incapacity, to cultural blindness, to cultural pre-competence, to cultural competence, to cultural proficiency. A model created for child welfare services was later adapted and expanded in education, such as in the field of arts education, to analyse the impact of a curriculum or institution on the affirmation or contestation of the cultural identity of the learner. Stepanova et al. [10] expanded this model by stating that cultural competency frameworks need to focus on systemic and institutional processes for meaning and sustainable change; this systemic approach is clearly presented in the four-pillar framework proposed in this article. The Cultural Competence Model is used in this study to identify the district's Creative Art programme and individual teachers on this developmental continuum, and to explain how the four domains of the proposed framework are a structured approach for schools to progress from the cultural pre-competency to the cultural proficient stage.

According to Cross et al. [8], cultural competency is a broad term referring to the ability to communicate, understand, and interact effectively across culture, which includes awareness, knowledge, sensitivity, and skill as intertwined parts and requirements that grow with time, and Jirwe, Gerrish, and Emami [11] state that awareness of cultural differences, knowledge of them, sensitivities to them, and skills around them are all necessary components of cultural competency. Initial definitions of the concept focused on awareness and sensitivity [12], and more recent definitions are concerned with an action-oriented understanding that involves more than just noticing difference; it involves actively incorporating cultural knowledge into teaching [4]. Arts education, in particular, has a double demand for cultural competency: that teachers understand and respect student cultures in the classroom and that local symbols, motifs, and cultural arts are accepted as content for the classroom rather than as classroom decoration [6]. Stuhr, Petrovich-Mwaniki, and Wasson [13] have suggested a continuum that extends from monocultural to truly intercultural art education, with the aim of creating a standard to measure the practice of art teachers in this study.

2.2 Teacher Perceptions and Pedagogical Practice in Cultural Integration

Art teachers sit in the middle of whether or not local culture is genuinely included in the school's art programmes with their own cultural competence, subject matter knowledge and pedagogy dictates classroom experiences [5,4]. A consistent pattern throughout the literature is that teacher preparation is an important, but not sufficient, factor for successful cultural integration: teachers with poor preparation in the art of indigenous cultures will not effectively integrate local cultural elements, no matter how much they are mandated in the curriculum. In a case study of educators who sought to decolonise their arts syllabus, Choi et al. [14] identified a range of personal and institutional challenges that high-achieving teachers faced, such as the lack of culturally responsive teacher preparation, insufficient representation of cultural diversity in current curriculum materials, and conflicts between required assessments and culturally responsive teaching practices. Other institutional factors, school leadership, access to resources, community involvement and the broader policy landscape all influence how cultural integration is prioritised in practice. In Africa, research has always pointed to the importance of community-school partnerships [2,15]. A review of Opoku-Asare's [2] study on the visual arts curriculum in Ghana revealed a noticeable disconnect between policy statements on the integration of the local culture in the curriculum and classroom practices, and that teachers preferred to follow Western art practices because of the influence of external examination and their lack of training in local art practices. The same has

been extended to graphic design education by Mensah Bonsu [3] who has shown that the colonial attitude that considers indigenous art to be primitive is still influencing the valuation of native art on the part of designers and art educators.

2.3 Barriers to Integrating Local Culture into Art Instruction

The literature identifies a consistent set of challenges to cultural integration in classrooms of art. The most common problems are caused by resources: the teaching of indigenous art forms often demands supplies, tools and reference materials which are often unavailable in under-resourced school environments [2]. A second common thread is the training-related barriers. A third issue is the conflict between the examination systems that have been externalised in the country and the aims of culturally responsive education [CRE] [2,16]. In a review of decolonising curriculum initiatives in global higher education contexts, Shahjahan, Estera, Surla and Edwards [17] discovered that, although institutions might be committed to decolonising their curriculum, it is not necessarily being implemented with an epistemic restructuring but rather with a tokenistic process of inclusion of non-Western content. Lastly, social and attitudinal factors such as the attraction of foreign art forms and lingering connotations of indigenous art with backwardness remain to influence both teacher and student values for local traditions [3,18].

2.4 Toward Culturally-Sensitive Teaching Frameworks

Paris and Alim [9] broadened Ladson-Billings' [7] Culturally Responsive Pedagogy to Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy [CSP], which acknowledges the importance of being responsive to students' cultures but also requires that educators engage in efforts to sustain and perpetuate students' cultural practices. Alim, Paris, and Wong [19] also called for a Critical Framework for Centering Communities, which argues that culturally based education should shift communities from recipient to active participants in the curriculum. In an empirical study involving sculpture students learning about Adinkra symbols, Ofosu-Asare, Andoh and Agyemang [20] found that a pedagogical sequence of action that involved cultural research followed by hands-on application led to significantly higher cultural understanding than the passive exposure of cultural information, thus empirically supporting a sequencing principle that is repeated throughout this framework.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The qualitative strand of this larger convergent parallel mixed methods study [21] on cultural competency in Creative Art education in the Afigya Kwabre South District was used in this article. The first two research questions of the parent study were answered quantitatively by using a survey with students, while the third and fourth research questions [the focus of this article] were answered qualitatively by conducting semi-structured interviews with the Creative Art teachers, followed by a thematic analysis of the data. The qualitative interviewing technique was the preferred method for capturing the depth, nuance and lived complexity of the teachers' perceptions, practices and constraints [22,23], and were best suited to the pragmatist philosophical orientation of the parent study [22].

3.2 Study Area and Participating Schools

The study was conducted in the Afigya Kwabre South District of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The study selected two schools for the study; one was a public junior high school (JHS) and the other was a private JHS, both located in the district. The public junior high school was selected because it is among the largest and oldest JHSs in the district, and it offers Creative Art as a formal time-tabled subject with a dedicated art room. The private school was selected to compare and contrast the differences in resourcing and pedagogy between public and private institutions within the same district. The two schools were selected from the Afigya Kwabre South District Education Directorate's list of 38 basic schools that offer Creative Art at the junior high school level. The two schools selected met the inclusion criteria for this study. These criteria were that the school must have at least two qualified creative art teachers with a minimum of two years' experience and currently involved in teaching the creative art curriculum.

3.3 Population and Sample

All 52 Creative Art teachers in 38 registered basic schools at the JHS level that offer the Creative Art programme in the Afigya Kwabre South District, Ashanti Region, constituted the population. Ten teachers were purposefully selected from the two participating schools (one public and one private) to participate in semi-structured interviews. The study employed purposive sampling as the sampling process was aimed at securing participants who met the following criteria: certified Creative Art teachers, currently working at the JHS level with a minimum of two years' teaching experience, having active interaction with the curriculum, and willing to participate [24]. The number of ten teachers was considered adequate as the data saturation for the qualitative strand was based on the criteria suggested by Lincoln and Guba [25] for qualitative inquiry.

From a total of ten teachers interviewed, the transcripts for six are included in the analysis described here. The other four (Teachers 7-10) were excluded from the analysis due to the following factors: their interviews as part of the focus-group component of data collection rather than the individual semi-structured interview strand; their responses were highly repetitive of themes saturated in the individual interview data; and due to equipment malfunction during one of the four focus group discussions, incomplete audio recordings were available for transcription. The conclusion that these four participants are irrelevant to the themes identified in the article does not change the outcome, as data saturation was observed within the six individually interviewed participants whose transcripts are included here. The results described in this article are based on the data from teachers who participated in this study and should not be extrapolated to all Creative Art teachers in the district.

Additionally, a further caveat regarding methodology is recorded here for transparency purposes in relation to Teacher 1 and Teacher 3. For most of the interview questions, responses attributed to Teacher 1 and Teacher 3 are extremely similar. One of these two teachers either made a transcription or compilation error; or both teachers submitted prepared written answers. As neither can be determined retrospectively, the contributions of Teacher 1 and Teacher 3 are combined throughout this analysis for the purposes of interpretation that is, they are treated as a single voice rather than two independent confirmations of each other's responses. It is a conservative decision that prevents the inflating of the frequency of agreement for any given theme. Where Teacher 1 and Teacher 3 responses are cited, they are clearly indicated as a combined source rather than as independent data.

3.4 Data Collection Instrument

A semi-structured interview guide comprising open-ended questions around four themes was used to collect data: teachers' perceptions about the importance of cultural integration in art education; current pedagogical strategies/practices; challenges and barriers in integrating local cultural content; and resources and support needed. The semi-structured format provided flexibility to explore and follow emergent themes [26]. The interview guide was tested with five teachers from two schools in the JHS in the neighbouring Kwabre East District, which was not included in this study, to check wording and feasibility.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

All teacher participants gave informed consent after being formally invited by the Afigya Kwabre South District Education Directorate and the school heads. The interviews were semi-structured and took place in private rooms in each school, and lasted between 45 to 60 minutes per participant. Four focus group discussions, with four to five teachers each, were also conducted to encourage collegial discussion about common problems and practices, and to give additional context to the data. With participants' permission, all interviews and focus group discussions were audio-recorded and then verbatim transcribed.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered strictly to established ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects. Ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant institutional review body prior to data collection. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout: interview data were stored securely, and pseudonyms (Teacher 1 to Teacher 6) were used in all reporting of qualitative findings. Given the culturally sensitive nature of the data, the study also adopted a broader ethic of cultural sensitivity, ensuring that engagement with indigenous knowledge and artistic heritage was respectful and non-exploitative [27,28].

3.7 Data Analysis

The six phases of Braun and Clarke's [29] thematic analysis of familiarisation with the data, initial coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing the final analytic narrative were used to analyse the data gathered from the interviews and focus groups. The coding was done manually and NVivo 12 software was then used to manage and organise the coded data. To verify emergent themes, member checking was employed. Since the description of the themes for Research Question Three and the sub-themes for Research Question Four were not fully descriptive, they were synthesised, or thematically organised, into a structured framework, using the joint display logic employed elsewhere in the mixed-methods integration of the parent study [21] to ensure that each proposed framework component could be explicitly linked to specific interview evidence.

3.8 Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The first one stems from the fact that the pool of ten teachers was selected from only two schools located in the Afigya Kwabre South District. Although purposive sampling was justified in this case, since the goals of the qualitative study required a concentrated pool of participants, the findings may not be entirely applicable to other Creative Art teachers working in this educational setting. Therefore, the phrases referring to teachers across the board have been modified in this version of the manuscript, for example, 'teachers across the district' changed to 'the teachers participating in this study.' A second limitation is related to the fact that, as mentioned in Section 3.3, the data of four participants out of ten were excluded from thematic analysis, and the responses of Teacher 1 and Teacher 3 were combined due to their similarity. Despite being justified at the stage of data analysis and fully explained in the 3.3 section, this circumstance might affect the overall conclusions of the study. The third limitation is connected with the absence of classroom observations in the study. Such a design choice might impact the validity of the findings, since observing the participants in a classroom setting would allow cross-verifying the information received from the teachers with their actual performance. Therefore, future directions of this study could include following up with these teachers in the classroom and researching a greater number of schools across the district.

4. Results and Discussion

The findings are presented and discussed for each of the Research Questions, and are then discussed more generally in relation to the study's theoretical framework.

4.1 Teacher Perceptions, Practices, and Challenges

4.1.1 Perceived Importance of Cultural Integration

There was a strong and unanimous consensus among all six teachers participating in this study that it is vital to incorporate local culture in Creative Art lessons. This importance was rooted in three interwoven rationales: preserving heritage for future generations, relevance and engagement of learning through connection with students' lived experience, and the building of students' sense of cultural identity and pride. Perhaps most unambiguously, the notion that local culture is not 'extra' but 'core' to quality art education was articulated by Teacher 2 as a consensus. When interviewed separately, Teacher 6 highlighted the importance of linking classroom learning to community life, making culture a stepping stone to the community rather than just historical artefacts.

4.1.2 Pedagogical Strategies and Practices

Teachers reported a fairly uniform set of strategies, indicating that there is already a certain pedagogical culture that is shared, but not formally coordinated, among the teachers participating in this study. The main strategies that emerged in almost all responses were demonstration and modelling, storytelling using Akan proverbs and oral tradition, project-based learning around cultural themes and festivals, and the use of locally available materials [clay, raffia, natural dyes], rather than imported materials. Teacher 2 indicated that they used storytelling with Akan proverbs to teach concepts and values before starting practical activities, while

Teacher 4 indicated that teachers generally use “demonstrations, storytelling, project-based learning, cultural discussion, field trips and practical activity using local art forms.”

4.1.3 Challenges and Barriers

Five barriers were identified that were consistently reported by the teachers participating in this study, so that these barriers could be considered a finding rather than an isolated complaint. The most common barrier was lack of teaching materials and funding. Teacher 6 reported “insufficient teaching materials and resources” and Teacher 2 reported “limited teaching/learning resources such as local materials and reference books on Akan art, as well as funding to invite artisans into the classroom.” A second consistent barrier was inadequate teacher training and professional development. Teacher 2 mentioned that “teacher training in indigenous art techniques was lacking” and Teacher 6 mentioned “inadequate teacher training and professional development” independently. Curriculum and time pressure was identified as a third barrier. A fourth barrier was the lack of resource persons and community partnerships. Teacher 1 and Teacher 3 (whose responses are treated collectively, as explained in Section 3.3.1) reported “a problem in establishing partnerships with local artisans, cultural practitioners and community organisations.” Foreign art forms were the fifth and most attitudinally based obstacle. Teacher 1 and Teacher 3 referred to “the influence of foreign art styles increasing.”

4.1.4 Resources and Support Needed

The needs that teachers declared were closely aligned to the challenges outlined above, providing some internal consistency to the data. Four areas of need were identified: culturally relevant teaching and learning materials; professional development; funding to recruit artisans as resource persons; and institutional/community partnerships. Teacher 2 expressed this best, calling for “digital content with local motifs, symbols, and Akan art history”, “in-service training/workshops on how to incorporate culture into the new curriculum”, and “policy support that emphasizes culture in assessment.”

4.2 Components of a Culturally-Sensitive Teaching Framework

Table 1 presents the nine framework components synthesised from the teacher interview data, which have been merged into four key interdependent pillars forming the CSATF.

Table 1: Proposed Components of a Culturally-Sensitive Teaching Framework, Synthesised from Teacher Interview Data

Frame Work Component	Description	Primary Source
Community Engagement & Authenticity	Formal, ongoing involvement of local artisans, elders, and cultural custodians as resource persons, so cultural knowledge is lived rather than textbook-only	Teachers 1/3, 2, 6
Contextualised, Culturally-Relevant Content	Lesson topics grounded in local festivals, proverbs, symbols, and history so that art connects to students' lived experience	Teachers 1/3, 2, 4
Traditional-to-Contemporary Sequencing	Teach traditional knowledge and technique first [e.g., Adinkra history and printing], then bridge to contemporary media, themes, and design problems	Teachers 1/3, 2, 4
Cultural Reflection & Critical Thinking	Structured opportunity for students to discuss the meaning, evolution, and modern relevance of symbols, rather than only reproducing them	Teacher 2
Inclusive, Dual-Focus Assessment	Rubrics and portfolios that assess both technical execution and cultural understanding; process as well as product	Teachers 1/3, 2, 4
Teacher Capacity Building	Regular in-service training so culturally responsive practice does not depend on one or two individually motivated teachers	Teachers 2, 6
Resource Development & Provision	Culturally relevant materials, manuals, and digital content; consistent supply of traditional art materials [clay, raffia, dyes]	Teachers 1/3, 2, 4
Policy & Institutional Support	District/GES budgeting for local materials and formal inclusion of cultural competency in official assessment standards	Teacher 2
Community Ownership & Sustainability	District resource bank of lesson plans and student work; yearly framework review with teachers and community elders	Teacher 2

These nine components have been merged into four key interdependent pillars outlined below that collectively implement the CSATF as an integrated whole instead of a series of individual recommendations.

Figure 1: Proposed CSATF



Source: Researchers' construct

4.2.1 Pillar 1: Cultural Grounding

The emphasis is on the indigenous tradition of the Akan people of the Ghanaian highlands as the conceptual foundation of the programme, rather than being an afterthought to the Western art historical survey [30,27]. Students who encounter their own cultures in formal education will have more powerful cultural identity, more immersive experience, and more conceptually sophisticated creative products. Opoku-Asare, Siaw and Baffoe [31] determined that the quality of the output by students and their level of motivation increased significantly when Ghanaian art teachers focused on local forms.

4.2.2 Pillar 2: Pedagogical Responsiveness

Teachers are provided with training in culturally responsive instructional strategies which are culturally affirming, promote cultural examples from the Akan culture as pedagogical anchors and connect the indigenous knowledge to the present-day artistic production. Gay's [32] meta-synthesis of over 30 studies of the implementation of CRP shows that there is a consistent positive impact on achievement and cultural identity for the learners of non-dominant groups when CRP is implemented.

4.2.3 Pillar 3: Community Partnership

Local Akan craftsmen and artisans [weavers, potters, cultural custodians] are invited to the school as co-educators and visits are made to heritage sites. This connects formal education with the living knowledge system which cannot be transmitted by textbooks. Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez's [33] seminal "funds of knowledge" study revealed that an integrated approach using knowledge networks in the community results in significant learning gains for students. Gruenewald [34] found that place-based learning in culturally rich communities outperforms classroom-based instruction. Among the teachers participating in this study, the potential of local artisans and heritage sites was found to be not maximised due to the lack of formalised partnership structures.

4.2.4 Pillar 4: Reflective Assessment

Evaluation criteria are reimagined to be culturally relevant [e.g., the symbolic depth of an Adinkra motif, the structural accuracy of a Kente pattern, technical skills in traditional pottery] as well as universal. Teachers

also practise reflective assessment of their own cultural assumptions. This pillar completes the framework's logic: what is valued in the curriculum, taught responsively, and learned through community engagement must also be reflected in what is assessed.

4.3 The Logic and Reinforcing Cycle of the Framework

Cultural Grounding is the starting point of the CSATF: it puts cultural traditions from among the indigenous population at the centre of the curriculum. Pedagogical Responsiveness ensures that the content identified in the first pillar is taught in culturally affirming ways. Community Partnership makes room for the living knowledge system that created the art forms. Reflective Assessment closes the loop so that the first three pillars are not undermined by continued assessment against conventional, Western aesthetic criteria. The framework also runs adaptively: feedback from Reflective Assessment feeds into decisions about community partner involvement and curriculum content, and teachers who practise reflective assessment naturally return to augment their Pedagogical Responsiveness. The result is an adaptive cycle, rather than a one-time configuration, which should grow and deepen with each use.

4.4 Discussion

This finding is theoretically significant when read against Ladson-Billings' [7] account of culturally responsive teachers as individuals who actively validate students' cultural identities and treat cultural knowledge as a pedagogical resource. That teachers in this district already hold this orientation before any external framework is introduced represents a positive starting condition. Teacher 2's framing is also consistent with Alim, Paris, and Wong's [19] call for educators to centre, rather than merely acknowledge, communities, while Teacher 6's emphasis on community life resonates with Bronfenbrenner's broader ecological insight [35] that meaningful learning occurs at the junction between the school microsystem and the wider community systems. However, as the barriers reported demonstrate, positive perception alone proved insufficient to guarantee consistent, high-quality practice, a pattern consistent with Choi, Murray, and Rivera's [14] finding that even highly motivated educators face substantial institutional obstacles in translating aspirational values into classroom reality.

Teacher 2's account is notable for explicitly sequencing strategy, introducing narrative and cultural meaning before technical practice begins. This sequencing is directly consistent with Vygotsky's [36] sociocultural account of learning, and mirrors the pedagogical logic that Ofosu-Asare et al. [20] found to be effective in their project-based learning intervention.

The five barriers cluster into two categories with distinct theoretical and practical implications. Structural and resourcing barriers are ones that institutional investment could directly address, while cultural and motivational barriers likely require pedagogical rather than purely material solutions. This distinction is consistent with Opoku-Asare's [2] finding and Shahjahan et al.'s [17] comparative finding. Mensah Bonsu [3] offers a direct account of the attitudinal barrier, documenting that colonisation left a legacy in which indigenous Ghanaian art was long regarded as primitive [18]. This finding also supports Eisner's [37] argument that assessment in arts education must be responsive to the cultural logic of the artistic tradition being evaluated, and Banks' [38] contention that culturally inclusive assessment frameworks more accurately surface the real competencies of students from non-dominant cultural groups.

The findings support three broader theoretical observations. First, consistent with Ladson-Billings' [7] account, the unanimous positive perception of cultural integration among the teachers participating in this study represents a favourable starting condition, but one that the Cultural Competence Model [8] would classify as, at most, cultural pre-competence at the institutional level. This distinction between individual and institutional competence, emphasised by Stepanova et al. [10], is precisely why the CSATF is structured around institutional pillars rather than teacher-level recommendations alone. Second, the barriers teachers describe map closely onto patterns long documented in the Ghanaian and broader African literature [2,17,3]. Third, the convergence between Teacher 2's independently articulated pedagogical principle and the parent study's independent quantitative finding constitutes a striking instance of genuine methodological triangulation that exemplifies the value of mixed-methods research [39].

5. Conclusion

The study identified the key elements of a culturally-sensitive teaching framework, and drew out the Creative Art teachers' perceptions, practices and challenges on the use of local culture in the teaching-learning of art in the Afigya Kwabre South District, Ashanti Region, Ghana. The results reveal that the teachers participating in this study agree on the importance of cultural integration and they have a repertoire of pedagogies, though not formalised but well-coordinated, including storytelling based on Akan proverb, demonstration, project-based learning, and use of indigenous materials. There are, however, five recurring barriers: lack of teaching materials and funding, lack of professional training, lack of time allocated in the curriculum, lack of resource persons, and the pull of foreign artistic styles. The findings have been synthesised into the Culturally-Sensitive Art Teaching Framework [CSATF] which incorporates four interwoven elements: Cultural Grounding, Pedagogical Responsiveness, Community Partnership, and Reflective Assessment; elements that collectively shift the focus of cultural integration from being dependent on the individual motivated teacher to becoming a community-owned, institutionally supported, and pedagogically coherent initiative within Creative Art education in the district.

The study has the limitation of two-school sampling frame and treatment of Teacher 1 and Teacher 3 as one group, as discussed in detail in the section 3. Therefore, the results should be generalized to the teachers in this study rather than all the teachers in the Creative Art. Further investigations of the CSATF with a larger and more representative sample of the school district are recommended. While positive teacher perceptions of cultural integration are a necessary precondition, the study shows that they do not necessarily ensure consistent or high-quality classroom practice. In order to bring about sustained pedagogical practice, teacher perceptions of the favourable must be accompanied by structural enablement: materials, training, time, and community partnership. The CSATF, which is based directly on teachers' descriptions of what is needed and supported by the research of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy [7] and the Cultural Competence Model [8], provides a model that is both practical and theoretically sound.

6. Recommendations

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are made. The Ghana Education Service (GES) and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NaCCA] should make it part of the official Creative Art syllabus to include culturally grounded content standards and assessment criteria. Teacher preparation programs and in-service training programs need to provide culturally responsive pedagogies and indigenous art techniques in a structured, continuous professional development approach. District Education Authorities should establish linkages between schools and craftsmen, custodians of culture, and cultural institutions at the local level. Schools and districts should create collaborative formats to share culturally responsive strategies and materials. Last, stakeholders in education can view the CSATF as a model to be iterated and reviewed with teachers and community elders over time.

This study also brings several suggestions for further research. There is a need to conduct longitudinal research to evaluate the real impact of the CSATF on the development of cultural competency of students, once it is implemented, and to investigate its scalability to other culturally rich districts in Ghana. Future research could also explore teachers' perceptions of the influence of incorporating cultural competencies in Creative Art on students' motivations and overall learning outcomes.

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Conflicts of Interest

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