TEACHERS’ AND MOTHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF USING CREATIVE ARTS TO DEVELOP CHILDREN’S POTENTIAL FOR CRITICAL THINKING

by

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This thesis is submitted as a partial fulfilment for the degree of Masters of Nursing (Research with Training) School of Nursing and Midwifery, Murdoch University.
I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

Caroline Nilson

Signature……………………………………………………

Date………………………………………………………
Teachers’ and Mothers’ Perceptions of Using Creative Art to Develop Children’s Potential for Critical Thinking

This study is based on the contention that rich descriptions of the behaviour of the children during the process of creating an art piece, as perceived by teachers and mothers of the children, will provide a better understanding of the influence of creative arts on the development and expression of critical thinking. Developing critical thinking dispositions in young people affords them the skills to make thoughtful choices.

This qualitative naturalistic, interpretive study sought to investigate the impact of children’s participation in a creative arts project on the development of critical thinking dispositions. The project was part of a major annual community event, during the first school term of 2010. Data on mothers’ and teachers’ perceptions were collected using focus groups and individual interviews, in addition to children’s letters, video footage and photographs of the activities.

The themes identified related to environmental factors influencing children’s creativity, the processes used to mobilise children’s creativity, the growth of the children through the experience of creative arts, the children’s development of confidence and the effects on the children having contributed to community event.
The finding of this study revealed creative arts participation was able to excite children’s imagination and mobilise creativity leading to an increased awareness of self and others, including the environment around them. Through the creative process children developed confidence and displayed visible indicators of problem solving and perseverance. Importantly they also demonstrated the development of skills for collaborative engagement, which is so vital in building individual, social and community capacity. In addition, this study identified the need for children to be exposed to creative environments in order to develop creativity and self-expression. These findings have important implications for the development of future education curriculum in addition to the development of community generated activities.
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