



The Role of Arts Education in Developing Creativity in Elementary School Students: A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of arts education in developing creativity among elementary school students through a literature review of 12 scientific articles published between 2021 and 2026 using thematic content analysis. The findings show that arts education, including visual arts, music, dance, and integrated arts learning, plays an important role in enhancing students' creativity by providing opportunities to explore ideas, express imagination, and produce original works. In addition, arts education also contributes to the development of other essential skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, self-confidence, and students' ability to express themselves. Creativity development becomes more optimal when learning is student-centered and experience-based, allowing space for exploration, collaboration, and freedom of expression, particularly through approaches such as Project-Based Learning (PBL), Outdoor Learning, and the integration of local wisdom. Overall, arts education is proven to be effective in supporting the holistic development of elementary school students' creativity through cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. These findings indicate that arts education does not only enhance artistic skills but also plays a broader role in shaping students' character, learning motivation, and higher-order thinking skills. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of supportive learning environments, the teacher's role as a facilitator, and education policies that prioritize creativity development to optimize students' potential. Thus, arts education can serve as an effective learning strategy to create meaningful, creative, and enjoyable learning experiences in elementary schools. This study also provides important implications for the development of arts education practices in elementary education contexts, particularly in Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

Art education in elementary schools is an important aspect of the learning process, playing a role not only in developing artistic skills but also in shaping students' character and creative thinking abilities. Through art activities, students are given opportunities to express their ideas, feelings, and imagination in various forms such as drawing, music, dance, and crafts. These activities enable students to learn actively, exploratively, and in an enjoyable manner, thereby supporting the holistic development of their potential. In this context, art education is also considered an essential means of fostering creativity, particularly through the exploration of visual art elements such as line, shape, color, and texture, which encourage students to think imaginatively and expressively.

Creativity in elementary school students is a highly important ability that must be developed from an early age, as it serves as the foundation for critical thinking, innovation, and problem-solving skills in the future. At the elementary school age, children have a high level of curiosity and a strong tendency to explore. This condition provides an important opportunity for educators to design learning experiences that stimulate students' creative abilities through appropriate approaches, one of which is art education that provides space for freedom of expression and meaningful learning experiences.

Various studies have shown that art education contributes positively to the development of students' creativity. This is evidenced by research findings indicating that the exploration of visual art elements based on local wisdom in art and culture learning can enhance elementary students' visual creativity, as students not only learn technical skills but also connect visual experiences with their surrounding cultural environment (Rohim et al., 2025). In addition, other studies have shown that the application of art principles through Split Self "Face" Art activities helps students understand aesthetic elements while simultaneously improving their creative artistic skills (Hermayanti & Andaryani, 2025).

In line with this, Rukoyah et al. (2025) emphasize that "visual art learning with a practice-based approach and freedom of expression is effective in fostering students' enthusiasm, imagination, and courage in creating artworks." This finding strengthens the view that art education functions not only as an aesthetic activity but also as a strategic means for developing elementary students' creativity. However, in practice, art education in elementary schools is still often oriented toward final results, tends to be imitative, and provides limited space for free exploration, so students' creative potential has not yet developed optimally.

In addition, the position of visual arts as a subject is still often considered supplementary within the curriculum, causing the learning process to not be fully directed toward systematic creativity development. This condition indicates a gap between the theoretical expectations of art education as a means of developing creativity and its limited implementation in classroom practice. Therefore, a more in-depth study is needed to understand how visual arts learning actually contributes to the development of students' creativity, particularly at the elementary school level.

Based on this background, this article aims to examine the role of art education in developing elementary school students' creativity through a literature review of relevant studies. This study is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the relationship between art education and creativity, as well as serve as a basis for developing more effective, contextual, and meaningful learning strategies in elementary schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Creativity in Art Learning

Creativity is the ability of an individual to produce something new, whether in the form of ideas, concepts, or works that have value and usefulness. According to Aziizah et al. (2025), creativity is the ability of students to create something original based on their ideas and concepts.

In the context of art education in elementary schools, creativity is very important because it serves as the foundation for producing artworks such as drawing and painting. Painting is an activity of expressing ideas or thoughts into visual form by using color as the main element of the artwork.

In addition, Aziizah et al. (2025) explain that creativity consists of several cognitive aptitude aspects, namely fluency of thinking, flexibility of thinking, originality, elaboration skills, and evaluation skills. These five aspects are important indicators in measuring students' level of creativity, especially in painting activities.

Creativity in art learning does not appear spontaneously but can be developed through appropriate learning processes. A learning environment that provides freedom of expression, opportunities for exploration, and encouragement to try new things greatly influences the development of students' creativity. Therefore, teachers play an important role in creating a learning atmosphere that supports the emergence of students' creative ideas.

In addition, students' creativity is also influenced by direct experience in observing objects to be drawn or painted. The more visual experiences students have, the richer the ideas they can express in their artworks. This shows that contextual learning strongly supports the development of creativity in art education.

Art Learning in Elementary Schools

Art learning in elementary schools is an essential part of education that aims to develop students' aesthetic abilities, motor skills, and imagination. Through activities such as painting and drawing, students are trained to express their ideas and feelings creatively. According to Aziizah et al. (2025), art learning plays an important role in fostering students' creativity and imagination. In addition, it also helps students understand artistic concepts more deeply through direct experience in creating artworks.

However, in practice, art learning often faces challenges such as low student motivation, limited space for exploration, and conventional classroom-based teaching methods. According to Marni et al. (2023), art plays an important role in elementary education because it can develop students' visual abilities,

imagination, and creative skills. Through art learning, students are able to express themselves visually, understand their surrounding environment, and improve their appreciation of art and culture.

Furthermore, Marni et al. (2023) also explains that one of the effective strategies in art learning is the use of art projects. Art projects provide opportunities for students to be actively involved in the creative process through planning, exploration, and creation of artworks, making learning more meaningful and enjoyable.

In its implementation, effective art learning requires an approach that focuses not only on the final product but also on the students' creative process. This process includes observing, experimenting, exploring media, and reflecting on the results of their work. Thus, students not only produce artworks but also experience meaningful learning in developing their creative thinking skills.

In addition, the integration of active learning strategies such as art projects can help overcome the limitations of conventional teaching. By providing space for students to work individually or in groups, art learning becomes more interactive and increases student engagement in the learning process.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a literature review method with a descriptive qualitative approach. This method is applied to examine, analyze, and synthesize various research findings related to the role of arts education in developing elementary school students' creativity. The literature review is conducted to obtain a comprehensive understanding of concepts, research findings, and the development of studies related to arts education and students' creativity.

The data sources in this study are Indonesian-language national scientific articles obtained from the Google Scholar database. The article search process was carried out using several keywords, such as arts education, elementary school students' creativity, elementary school visual arts, music education and creativity, elementary school dance education, and arts and culture learning. The selected articles are those that are relevant to the research topic and published in scientific journals.

The inclusion criteria in this study are: (1) articles written in Indonesian, (2) articles discussing arts education for elementary school students, (3) articles focusing on students' creativity, (4) full-text articles, and (5) articles published between 2021 and 2026. Meanwhile, articles that are not relevant to the research topic, do not have full access, or are not published in scientific journals were excluded from the analysis process.

A total of 12 articles were selected and analyzed in this study. The data analysis technique used content analysis by identifying main themes, comparing research findings, and grouping results based on the study focus. The analyzed data were then presented descriptively to explain the role of arts education in developing elementary school students' creativity based on previous research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the literature review show that arts education plays a very important role in developing creativity among elementary school students. Based on a thematic analysis of various scholarly articles published between 2021 and 2026, several dominant themes were identified, including visual arts education, music education, dance education, Project-Based Learning (PBL), and exploratory approaches in arts education. The findings also indicate that the integration of local wisdom, the use of innovative learning models such as Outdoor Learning and PjBL, and the provision of freedom of expression can enhance students' creativity, imagination, and thinking skills.

In addition, most studies emphasize that art activities not only contribute to cognitive development but also support students' affective and psychomotor growth, such as self-expression, self-confidence, and problem-solving skills. Learning environments that provide opportunities for students to actively participate, explore ideas, and engage in creative processes are consistently associated with increased creativity among elementary school students. The following table summarizes the main findings from previous studies related to the role of arts education in developing creativity in elementary school students.

Table 1. Literature Review Findings on the Role of Arts Education in Developing Creativity among Elementary School Students

No	Researcher & Year	Journal / Source	Main Research Findings
1	Rohim, Hartono, Rokhman & Wagiran (2025)	<i>Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar</i> Vol. 10 No. 03 (Sept 2025)	The integration of local wisdom in arts learning through the exploration of basic visual art elements can enhance students' visual creativity.
2	Hermayanti & Andaryani (2025)	<i>Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar</i> Vol. 10 No. 01 (March 2025)	Students are able to apply the principles of visual arts in Split Self "Face" Art, although they still struggle with balance and proportion.
3	Rukoyah, Nursobah & Jaelani (2025)	<i>Jurnal INTISABI</i> Vol. 3 No. 1 (Sept 2025)	Visual arts learning effectively improves students' creativity, imagination, and confidence through practical activities and freedom of expression.
4	Nadiyah, Dewi & Wijayanto (2026)	<i>Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai</i> Vol. 10 No. 1 (2026)	Exploration of batik motifs in arts education enhances students' creativity, fine motor skills, and understanding of local culture.
5	Aziizah et al. (2025)	<i>Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar</i>	The Outdoor Learning model significantly improves

		Vol. 10 No. 01 (2025)	students' painting creativity compared to conventional methods.
6	Gladish D.P. et al. (2024)	<i>Jurnal Penelitian Multidisiplin Terpadu</i> Vol. 8 No. 11 (Nov 2024)	Visual arts help improve students' creativity, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving abilities in elementary school.
7	Herlianti et al. (2025)	<i>Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar</i> Vol. 10 No. 02 (June 2025)	SBdP using PBL and differentiated learning improves creativity despite challenges in facilities and students' self-confidence.
8	Nisa & Kurnia (2025)	<i>Jurnal Kiprah Pendidikan</i> Vol. 4 No. 3 (July 2025)	Project-Based Learning (PjBL) effectively enhances students' creativity through active and collaborative project work.
9	Marni, Desyandri & Mayar (2023)	<i>Didaktik: Jurnal Ilmiah PGSD</i> Vol. 09 No. 02 (June 2023)	Art projects are effective in improving creativity, student engagement, and self-expression in arts learning.
10	Putra & Wati (2026)	<i>Indonesian Journal of Education Methods Development</i> Vol. 21 No. 2 (May 2026)	Project-based drawing activities improve students' creative character, especially originality and learning participation.
11	Fitri, Junindra & Mayar (2022)	<i>Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai</i> Vol. 06 No. 2 (2022)	PjBL-based SBdP learning enhances students' creativity in music, dance, and visual arts through active learning experiences.
12	Atmijaya & Andaryani (2024)	<i>Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar</i> Vol. 09 No. 03 (Sept 2024)	Exploration of students' talents and interests shows that visual arts is the most preferred field and effectively develops creativity.

Based on the literature review presented in Table 1, it can be concluded that arts education plays a highly significant role in developing creativity among elementary school students. Various studies indicate that arts learning, particularly visual arts, music, and dance, effectively enhances students' creativity through exploratory, practical, and experience-based activities. The integration of local wisdom in arts education, such as the exploration of visual art elements and batik motifs, not only improves students' visual creativity but also strengthens their understanding of local culture. In addition, innovative learning models such as Outdoor Learning, Project-Based Learning (PjBL),

project-based art learning, and differentiated instruction consistently create a more active, enjoyable learning environment that encourages students' freedom of expression. In this context, students' creativity develops through learning processes that provide opportunities for experimentation, the production of original works, and the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Furthermore, the findings from various studies also emphasize that the effectiveness of arts education extends beyond creativity development to include improvements in other aspects such as self-confidence, imagination, fine motor skills, and students' collaborative abilities. Project-based and practice-oriented learning has been proven to increase students' active engagement in the learning process, making learning outcomes more meaningful. However, several studies also identify challenges such as limited facilities, low student confidence, and insufficient technical skills; nevertheless, these challenges can be addressed through the teacher's role as an adaptive facilitator. Overall, the literature demonstrates that arts education designed with creative, contextual, and student-centered approaches is an effective strategy for developing elementary school students' creativity in a holistic manner.

The findings from the literature review indicate that arts education plays a highly important role in developing elementary school students' creativity through the interconnected dimensions of cognitive, affective, and pedagogical processes. The reviewed studies consistently show that students' involvement in visual arts, music, dance, and integrated arts learning significantly contributes to the development of creativity, imagination, self-expression, and problem-solving skills. From a cognitive perspective, arts activities encourage students to think critically, generate original ideas, and produce creative works through processes of exploration and experimentation. This is in line with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that knowledge is actively constructed through experience, reflection, and interaction in meaningful learning environments. Therefore, creativity in arts education is not only understood as the final product of artistic work but also as a thinking process shaped through active learning experiences.

The dominant findings also show that innovative learning approaches such as Project-Based Learning, Outdoor Learning, and exploratory arts activities create more effective learning environments for fostering students' creativity. These approaches consistently shift learning from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered learning, providing opportunities for students to actively participate in creating, collaborating, and freely expressing ideas. In this context, creativity emerges as a result of students' engagement in authentic, contextual, and meaningful learning experiences. In addition, the integration of local wisdom, such as batik motifs and traditional art elements, enriches learning experiences while strengthening students' cultural awareness. However, several challenges are still identified in implementation, such as limited facilities, differences in teacher competencies, and low student confidence. These conditions indicate that the success of arts education does not solely depend on

instructional models but also on supportive learning environments and the teacher's role as a facilitator.

From a broader perspective, the development of creativity through arts education is also influenced by social, cultural, and educational policy factors. In many educational systems, academic achievement is still prioritized over creativity development, which limits students' opportunities for artistic exploration. This creates a gap between the goals of education that emphasize creativity and classroom practices that remain focused on cognitive outcomes alone. Therefore, flexible, inclusive, and student-centered learning environments are essential to support optimal creativity development. In addition, the teacher's role as a facilitator is crucial in creating a learning atmosphere that encourages experimentation, builds student confidence, and values individual expression.

This review also highlights that creativity development in arts education is a multidimensional process involving cognitive, emotional, social, and cultural aspects simultaneously. Creativity should not be viewed as a single ability, but as the result of dynamic interactions among learning models, teaching strategies, and cultural contexts. Innovative approaches such as project-based and exploratory learning not only improve students' artistic outcomes but also strengthen their motivation, engagement, and learning independence. Thus, arts education serves as a holistic learning space that supports the simultaneous development of various student competencies.

Theoretically, these findings reinforce the importance of constructivist and student-centered learning approaches in arts education as a foundation for developing creativity in elementary schools. Practically, the results suggest that teachers should design learning activities that emphasize exploration, experimentation, and project-based experiences while integrating local cultural values into the learning process. Schools should also provide adequate facilities and supportive environments to ensure effective arts learning. From a policy perspective, education systems need to position creativity as a core learning objective alongside academic achievement. Further research is recommended to explore classroom-level implementation of arts education in more contextual settings, particularly in Indonesian elementary schools, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how students' creativity can be optimally developed.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the research indicate that arts education plays an essential role in developing creativity among elementary school students. Based on the findings, creativity development occurs through various forms of arts learning, including visual arts, music, dance, and integrated arts activities. These learning experiences provide students with opportunities to explore ideas, express imagination, and produce original works. In addition, arts-based learning contributes not only to creativity but also to other important student abilities such as critical thinking, problem-solving skills, self-expression, and confidence.

Furthermore, the findings show that arts learning becomes more effective when students are actively involved in learning activities that encourage

exploration and expression. The learning environment also plays an important role, especially when it provides space for students to experiment, collaborate, and express ideas freely. In this context, creativity is not only seen as the final result of student work, but also as a process that develops through continuous learning experiences. Therefore, arts education can be considered a meaningful approach in supporting the holistic development of elementary school students.

Based on the research findings, it is recommended that teachers create learning environments that support creativity by providing opportunities for students to actively participate in arts activities. Teachers are encouraged to facilitate learning that allows students to explore ideas freely and express their creativity without excessive limitations. In addition, schools should provide adequate support in terms of learning resources and facilities to ensure that arts education can be implemented effectively.

For future studies, it is recommended that further research focus on classroom-based investigations to better understand how arts education influences students' creativity in real learning situations. Additional studies may also explore students' learning experiences directly to obtain more in-depth and contextual insights.

FURTHER STUDY

This study has several limitations. The data sources used in this research are limited to articles obtained from Google Scholar, meaning that the findings are highly dependent on the availability and quality of publications indexed in this database. As a result, relevant studies that are not indexed in Google Scholar or are available in other databases are not included in this review, which may limit the comprehensiveness of the analysis. In addition, there is a possibility of selection bias, as well as variations in research contexts, methodologies, and study quality among the analyzed articles, which may influence the interpretation of the findings. For future research, it is recommended to expand the literature sources by including international databases such as Scopus, ScienceDirect, ERIC, and other reputable databases to obtain a more comprehensive, diverse, and representative review.

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