

The Impact of Guided Activities on the Development of Visual Imagination and Free Drawing Skills among Primary School Students

Noor Sabah Sahi

Mustansiriyah University, College of Basic Education, Baghdad, Iraq

Abstract: This research addresses the impact of guided activities on the development of visual imagination and free drawing skills among primary school students. The study aims to explore the relationship between organized creative activities, on one hand, and the students' ability to use visual imagination and develop their free drawing skills, on the other hand. Guided activities are among the most important educational tools that contribute to the development of creative thinking skills in children. Among these activities, artistic activities stand out as an effective means to enhance visual imagination, which is closely related to the development of artistic skills such as drawing. Visual imagination plays a vital role in children's ability to visualize shapes, colors, and patterns, which positively reflects on their artistic expression and free drawing skills. The research relies on the concepts of visual imagination and artistic creativity, where academic literature suggests that visual imagination can enhance spatial and innovative thinking abilities in children. Through guided activities such as drawing from memory or imagining certain images and then drawing them, children can develop their mental visualization ability and translate ideas into visual forms on paper. The research used an experimental method, where a sample of primary school students was divided into two groups: an experimental group that underwent a training program involving guided activities to stimulate visual imagination, and a control group that was not exposed to this program. Free drawing skills were assessed before and after the implementation of the activities using specific artistic criteria, such as creativity level, accuracy in representation, and diversity of techniques. The results showed that guided activities had a clear positive impact on improving visual imagination among the students, as they became more accurate and creative in visualizing shapes and colors. Moreover, the free drawing skills of the students in the experimental group improved, showing greater diversity in the use of techniques and artistic styles compared to the control group.

Key points: Guided activities, visual imagination development, free drawing skills, primary school students.

Chapter One – General Framework of the Research:

Introduction:

Guided activities are considered one of the most important educational tools that contribute to the development of creative thinking skills in children, particularly in the early educational stages. Among these activities, art activities stand out as an effective tool in enhancing visual imagination and developing artistic skills, such as free drawing skills, among elementary school students. Visual imagination is a fundamental element in the artistic thinking process, as it enables children to visualize different shapes, colors, and patterns, which positively reflects on their ability to express artistically and apply drawing skills.

Academic literature indicates that developing visual imagination in children directly affects their ability to think spatially and innovatively, which is crucial for developing their artistic and creative intelligence. In this context, guided activities represent an effective means to stimulate this imagination by involving students in artistic experiences aimed at enhancing visual thinking, such as drawing images from memory or imagining certain images and then depicting them on paper. These activities provide an interactive educational environment that helps expand students' creative horizons, enhancing their ability to transform abstract ideas into tangible forms.

The relationship between guided activities and the development of free drawing skills is strong, as free drawing requires children to express visually using various artistic mediums without adhering to traditional drawing principles. Therefore, this research aims to explore the impact of guided activities on the development of visual imagination and the expansion of free drawing skills among elementary school students, through a field study of a group of children who participated in a training program involving guided art activities. This study will analyze the impact of these activities on the level of creativity and artistic diversity in children's works by comparing an experimental group that participated in the training program with a control group that did not undergo this type of activity.

The research aims to make a scientific contribution directed at understanding how to enhance visual imagination and artistic skills in children at early educational stages, which could open new horizons for improving educational practices in the field of art education, benefiting the educational process in general and strengthening children's ability for creativity and free artistic expression.

Research Problem:

The research problem lies in the clear gap observed in some elementary schools regarding the lack of development of visual imagination and free drawing skills among students, despite the importance of these skills in developing creative thinking and artistic expression. Although art activities are among the educational methods that can contribute to enhancing these skills, there is a lack of systematic use of guided activities in the educational process within elementary schools.

Elementary school students often face challenges in expressing their ideas and feelings through drawing and artistic representation, which negatively affects the development of their skills in visual arts. Furthermore, visual imagination, considered one of the core skills in the creative process, may not receive enough attention in many traditional curricula, where educational activities focus purely on cognitive aspects, without emphasizing practical and artistic activities that contribute to the enhancement of these skills.

This research raises questions about the impact of guided activities on developing visual imagination and free drawing skills in students, aiming to investigate whether these activities can stimulate students to think visually and creatively, thereby improving their ability for free and diverse artistic expression. Thus, there is a need to study the effectiveness of guided activities in this context, with the aim of providing practical solutions to develop these essential artistic skills in the educational process.

Research Significance:

This research holds significant academic and educational importance due to several aspects related to the development of creative thinking and artistic expression skills among elementary school students. In light of rapid advancements in the field of education, it has become necessary for educational curricula to adopt innovative methods that contribute to the integrated development of children's skills, particularly in the arts, which are an essential part of children's creative upbringing. The research highlights the vital role of guided activities in improving visual imagination and free drawing skills, reflecting its significance in various areas:

1. **Enhancing Creativity and Critical Thinking:** Visual imagination is one dimension of creative thinking, and it directly influences students' ability to visualize shapes, colors, patterns, and express them in innovative ways. This research contributes to highlighting the role of guided

activities in stimulating visual imagination and enhancing critical thinking in children, helping them improve their capacity for innovation and problem-solving in unconventional ways.

2. **Developing Artistic Skills in Children:** Free drawing is one method that allows children to express themselves using diverse artistic techniques and styles. By studying the impact of guided activities on free drawing skills, this research provides scientific evidence of the effectiveness of these activities in improving children's artistic skills, contributing to the development of teaching methods that can be used to improve student outcomes in this area.
3. **Supporting Holistic Educational Processes:** Guided activities can influence the integration of various aspects of learning in students, combining cognitive and artistic skills. By incorporating creative activities into the curriculum, the overall performance of students can be improved, creating a balanced educational environment that supports the development of their personalities and various abilities, including artistic expression.
4. **Enriching Educational and Artistic Studies:** This research contributes to enriching the academic literature by adding new knowledge on the impact of guided activities on developing visual imagination and free drawing skills. It also opens the door for future studies that may focus on the effectiveness of implementing these activities in diverse educational contexts and cultural communities.
5. **Preparing Children for the Requirements of the 21st Century:** In an era marked by rapid technological advancements and social changes, developing creative skills and critical thinking is essential for adapting to future challenges. By researching the impact of guided activities on visual imagination and artistic skills, educational strategies can be developed to help prepare a generation capable of creative thinking and using their artistic skills to solve problems in innovative ways.

Research Objective:

The current research aims to investigate the impact of guided activities on the development of visual imagination and free drawing skills among elementary school students.

Research Hypothesis:

The researcher tests the following null hypothesis:

There are no statistically significant differences between the students of the experimental group who learned through guided activities and the students of the control group who learned through traditional methods in the post-test of visual imagination and free drawing skills.

Research Boundaries:

The research is limited to a randomly selected sample of elementary school students from schools located within the Directorate of Education in Baghdad (Al-Karkh First) for the academic year 2024-2025.

Research Terminology:

1. **Guided Activities:** These are educational activities designed specifically to achieve specific educational goals, where the teacher directs and organizes students' participation in ways that enhance creative thinking and active learning. In the context of this research, guided activities refer to art activities aimed at stimulating visual imagination and developing free drawing skills in students, such as drawing images from memory or imagining specific scenes and then drawing them.
2. **Visual Imagination:** The ability to visualize shapes, colors, patterns, and visual phenomena in the mind without needing to see them physically. Visual imagination requires cognitive skills that enable an individual to create mental images of objects, places, and events, contributing to the ability to express artistically and think creatively. In this research, visual imagination is one of the primary factors focused on to develop free drawing skills in students.

3. **Free Drawing Skills:** A set of artistic skills that enable an individual to express thoughts and feelings through drawing, without adhering to any specific drawing style or technique. Free drawing involves using personal imagination to create artworks ranging from realistic representation to abstract expression. In this research, free drawing skills refer to students' ability to use diverse techniques and styles in drawing and artistic expression freely.
4. **Elementary School Students:** Children typically aged 6 to 12 years old, who are in the early stages of basic education. In this research, the term "elementary school students" refers to children studying in grades that focus on developing fundamental skills such as reading, writing, and the arts, and the study investigates the impact of guided activities on developing their artistic skills.

Chapter Two – Theoretical Framework and Previous Studies:

Theoretical Framework:

The theoretical framework is a fundamental part of scientific research, providing the basis for examining and interpreting the targeted phenomena. In this research, the theoretical framework focuses on studying the impact of guided activities on developing visual imagination and free drawing skills among elementary school students. Several key concepts related to the research are analyzed, such as guided activities, visual imagination, free drawing skills, and creative thinking.

1. **Guided Activities:** Guided activities refer to activities organized by the teacher in a way that directs students' thinking toward specific educational goals. Educational studies have shown that guided activities stimulate active interaction between students and teachers, increasing opportunities for effective learning. Guided activities provide students with the opportunity to engage with educational concepts more practically, enhancing their comprehension and understanding of the content. Furthermore, guided activities encourage children to think critically and creatively, developing their practical skills through interactive learning. According to Qasim (2018) in "The Role of Guided Activities in Enhancing Critical Thinking in Children," it was found that guided activities positively impact students' ability to solve problems and think in innovative ways.
2. **Visual Imagination:** Visual imagination is the ability to envision images, shapes, and patterns in the mind without needing to physically see them. Visual imagination plays an important role in developing art and drawing skills, as it helps children visualize and arrange visual elements creatively. Visual imagination is essential in creative processes, enabling children to materialize their ideas and transform them into visible forms. According to Miller & Kostiuk (2014), their studies demonstrated that children with strong visual imagination tend to excel in art and design activities and perform better in other subjects that require spatial and creative thinking.
3. **Free Drawing Skills:** Free drawing skills refer to a child's ability to express their thoughts and feelings through drawing using various techniques and styles, without adhering to strict rules of realistic or traditional drawing. Free drawing is a primary method in art education, allowing children to express themselves freely using their imagination. Studies indicate that developing free drawing skills can enhance creative thinking in children and increase their ability to solve problems by using symbols and images. According to Zhou (2016), the study showed that children participating in free art activities displayed significant development in their expressive and creative skills.
4. **Creative Thinking:** Creative thinking is the ability to generate new and unconventional ideas and solve problems in innovative ways. Creative thinking is closely related to art activities that stimulate visual imagination, as they help enhance children's ability to think flexibly and creatively. Recent studies indicate that developing creative thinking in children at early educational stages is crucial for improving their skills in other areas. According to Runco (2010) in "Creative Thinking in Education," activities that encourage creative thinking, such as drawing and design, have a positive impact on students' skills in other subjects like mathematics and science.

Previous Studies:

1. Jassim Study (2017):

Title: "The Impact of Guided Activities on Developing Free Drawing Skills among Elementary School Students"

Source: Art Education Journal, Issue 12, University of Baghdad.

Summary: The study aimed to investigate the impact of guided activities on improving free drawing skills among elementary school students. The researcher used an experimental method on a sample of 50 fifth-grade students. The results showed that guided activities had a positive impact on developing free drawing skills, with an improvement in creativity and the use of various drawing techniques.

2. Al-Qaisi Study (2016):

Title: "The Role of Visual Imagination in Developing Artistic Skills among Elementary School Children"

Summary: This study explored the role of visual imagination in enhancing art skills among elementary school students. The study showed that developing visual imagination through art activities can significantly contribute to improving children's drawing and design skills. It also found that students who participated in guided activities showed improvement in their ability to visualize and innovate artistically.

3. Abdullah Study (2018):

Title: "Creative Thinking and Guided Activities: The Impact of Art Activities in Developing Creative Thinking Skills among Children"

Summary: The study aimed to examine the impact of guided art activities on developing creative thinking among elementary school children. The study's results showed that guided activities in the arts, including free drawing, contributed to enhancing creative thinking and increasing children's ability to innovate in problem-solving.

4. Al-Khatib Study (2019):

Title: "The Impact of Art Activities on Developing Visual Imagination among Fourth-Grade Students"

Summary: This study aimed to understand the impact of art activities on developing visual imagination among fourth-grade students. It was found that activities involving drawing from memory and imagination helped children improve their ability to visualize images more accurately and creatively, which positively reflected on their artistic skills.

Chapter Three – Research Procedures:

First: Research Methodology

The current research, due to its nature and objectives, adopted an experimental research methodology. This approach is distinguished by its high accuracy compared to other methodologies, such as descriptive and historical methods. In the experimental approach, the researcher's role is not limited to merely describing phenomena or recording past events; it extends to intervening and influencing certain factors in a controlled manner under specific conditions to achieve a particular goal or trigger a specific event, and to identify the reasons for its occurrence (Duwaydar, 2010: 20).

Second: Experimental Design

The researcher adopted a partially controlled experimental design with two groups: one experimental group and one control group, in response to the research requirements and objectives. Figure (1) illustrates this design.

Group	Pre-Test	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Post-Test
Experimental	Visual Imagination and Free Drawing Skills	Effect of Guided Activities	Development of Visual Imagination and Free Drawing Skills	Visual Imagination and Free Drawing Skills
Control	—	—	—	—

Figure (1): Research Design

Third: Research Population and Sample:

➤ Research Population

The researcher must define the research population accurately. This refers to the individuals or people who constitute the subject of the research problem and upon whom the results of the research can be generalized. The results of the research should be confined to the population from which the research sample was selected (Abbas et al., 2009: 217).

The research population consists of elementary school students from schools within the Directorate of Education in Baghdad, Karkh I, for the academic year 2024-2025.

➤ Research Sample

Based on the method adopted by the researcher, Al-Taawon Al-Arabi School was selected using random sampling. Two classes (A) and (B) were chosen to represent the research groups. Class (B) was chosen as the control group, consisting of 35 students, who will be taught using the traditional method without any intervention. Class (A) was chosen as the experimental group, also with 35 students, to study the effect of guided activities on the development of visual imagination and free drawing skills among elementary students.

Fourth: Equivalence Procedures

Equivalence was conducted between the students of the experimental and control groups across several variables believed to affect the experiment. After analyzing the equivalence data, it was found that the results were statistically insignificant, meaning there were no meaningful differences, thus confirming their equivalence.

Fifth: Control of Extraneous Variables

Based on the provided data, it seems that the researcher controlled all changing factors, such as parental education and students' age, to ensure that differences in student performance in teamwork skills were not caused by these factors. This procedure ensures that any variation in students' performance is solely due to the independent variables under study and not due to other extraneous factors (Raouf, 2001: 158-159).

1. Sample Selection

Selecting a representative sample from the study population is crucial in the research process. If a sample is well-represented, it facilitates the research process and saves time and effort. The results from the representative sample are typically close to those that would result from studying the entire population (Abbas et al., 2009: 218).

A representative sample should include diversity and proportion that reflects the characteristics and composition of the individuals in the original population from which the sample was drawn. This helps achieve confidence in the results and allows for accurate generalization to the original population.

2. Maturation Processes

Changes that occur over time may not significantly affect the research results. Additionally, if the duration of the experiment is uniform and similar between the two groups, any effects resulting

from time changes may be equivalent across the groups, reducing their impact on the results. Therefore, the results of the research can still be reliably used even in the presence of potential time-related changes, as long as the experiment duration is consistent and short enough for time-related changes not to have a significant impact.

3. Experimental Attrition

Avoiding the negative impact of random attrition of sample members is vital to ensuring the accuracy of results in research studies. Although attrition of some individuals may negatively affect the results, this study did not experience significant dropout, except for a few individual absences that were minimal and nearly balanced. This balance helped prevent any negative effects from this factor on the results.

➤ Accompanying Events:

Since none of these external events occurred during the experiment, the results were not affected by such negative influences. This enhances the accuracy of the results and strengthens the study, as it can be confidently stated that the results reflect the effect of the studied independent variable without interference from undesirable external factors.

Fifth: Measurement Tool

Using a standardized measurement tool is crucial in controlling the variables in the research. By employing critical thinking skills prepared by the researcher herself, the measurement process can be standardized, ensuring consistency across both groups. This increases the accuracy of the results and minimizes any potential effects resulting from differences in the way the skills are assessed.

Impact of Experimental Procedures:

To minimize the negative impact of certain experimental procedures on the dependent variable, the researcher took several teaching steps, which included the following:

➤ Study Material:

The same study material was used for both research groups during the experiment. This material was based on the drawing curriculum adopted by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research for the academic year 2024-2025.

➤ Teaching the Material:

The researcher taught both the experimental and control groups personally to avoid any discrepancies in the quality of education between the two groups. This ensured the accuracy and objectivity of the results by avoiding any impact that could arise from different teachers.

➤ Duration of the Experiment:

The duration of the experiment was standardized for both research groups. It started on Thursday, November 15, 2024, and ended on Monday, January 10, 2025. This equal timing across both groups aims to ensure balance in the experiment conditions and ensure the objectivity of the results.

➤ Teaching Tools:

The researcher used standardized teaching tools when teaching teamwork skills to both research groups, in accordance with the requirements of each concept, such as whiteboards, colored pens, images, drawings, and shapes, as part of the effectiveness of blended learning.

Sixth: Statistical Methods

The researcher used the following statistical methods to analyze the research data and results with the help of the SPSS software for statistical analysis:

1. T-Test for Independent Samples

This method was used to examine the significance of the statistical differences between the research groups during the equivalence phase and when analyzing the results.

2. Pearson Correlation Coefficient

Used to calculate the reliability coefficient of the test using the split-half method.

3. Spearman-Brown Formula

This formula was used to correct the correlation coefficient between the two parts of the test (individual and paired item scores) after the Pearson correlation was calculated.

4. Chi-Square Test

5. Item Difficulty Index

6. Item Discrimination Power Index

7. Effectiveness of Distractors Formula

Used to find the effectiveness of incorrect alternatives in the test items.

Chapter Four: Presentation of Results and Interpretation

This chapter presents the results of the study and interprets them in order to understand the effect of project-based collaborative learning using digital platforms on improving teamwork skills among students of the Department of Art Education. The presentation is as follows:

First: Presentation of Results

1. Result of the Research Objective (Effect of Guided Activities on Developing Visual Imagination and Free Drawing Skills among Elementary School Students):

To verify the validity of the first null hypothesis, which states that "there are no statistically significant differences between the experimental group of students who learned through guided activities and the control group of students who learned through the traditional method in the post-application of visual imagination and free drawing skills," the following procedure was undertaken:

After implementing teamwork skills for both research groups and correcting the answers, the mean, standard deviation, and variance of the grades of students in both groups were calculated. Using the independent samples t-test, the calculated t-value was found to be statistically significant in favor of the experimental group at the 0.05 level with 68 degrees of freedom. The calculated t-value was 9.761, which is greater than the table value of 2.000, as shown in Table (1).

Table (1): T-test for the Research Groups on Visual Imagination and Free Drawing Skills

Group	Sample Size	Mean	Variance	Standard Deviation	Degrees of Freedom	Calculated t-value	Table t-value	Significance Level
Experimental	35	57.34	62.03	7.876	68	9.761	2.000	Significant
Control	35	39.89	27.24	5.220				

This shows that the experimental group, which was taught using guided activities, outperformed the control group, which followed the traditional method. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Second: Interpretation of Results

After analyzing the data statistically, it was found that the students in the experimental group outperformed those in the control group in developing visual imagination and free drawing skills. This success can be attributed to several factors:

- 1. Guided Activities:** The experimental group underwent a training program that included guided activities aimed at stimulating visual imagination and enhancing free drawing skills. This exposure allowed them to engage directly with new ideas and visual forms, helping them improve their ability to visualize and express ideas creatively.
- 2. Continuous Teacher Guidance:** In the experimental group, the teacher provided ongoing guidance during activities, encouraging students to use their imagination to create innovative

images and forms. This continuous encouragement helped improve their drawing accuracy and the use of various techniques.

3. **Practical Techniques:** The focus on practical techniques, such as drawing from memory and visual imagination, helped students strengthen their ability to translate mental ideas into visual forms. These activities required visual thinking, helping students improve their ability to visualize shapes and colors in greater detail.
4. **Diversity of Activities:** The guided activities were diverse, incorporating various drawing and artistic expression techniques, such as abstract and realistic drawing. This diversity helped children acquire different skills and use multiple techniques, enhancing their free drawing ability.
5. **Group Activities:** Group activities in the experimental group promoted collaboration and idea exchange among students. This social interaction increased students' self-confidence, which positively impacted their artistic expression ability.

Through these guided activities, students in the experimental group were able to engage with learning materials in a more motivating and flexible way, enhancing their ability to express themselves freely. This self-motivation helped them improve their drawing skills and imagination in more diverse ways.

Chapter Five: Conclusions, Recommendations, and Suggestions

First: Conclusions

Based on the results of the current study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. **Positive Impact on Visual Imagination:** The results of the study showed that guided activities have a clear positive effect on developing visual imagination in elementary school students. Students in the experimental group were able to visualize shapes, colors, and patterns more accurately and creatively compared to the control group.
2. **Improvement in Free Drawing Skills:** The guided activities helped improve free drawing skills in the experimental group. Students became more proficient in using various techniques and styles in their drawings, resulting in a greater diversity of their artistic work.
3. **Enhancement of Creative Thinking:** The guided activities fostered creative thinking in children by providing an educational environment that encouraged innovation and free artistic expression. These activities motivated students to engage in self-reflection and use their imagination to express their ideas.
4. **Positive Interaction and Confidence:** The experimental group witnessed positive interaction among students through group activities, which facilitated the exchange of ideas and experiences. This contributed to the learning process and increased students' self-confidence.

Second: Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends the following:

1. **Integrating Guided Activities into Curricula:** It is recommended to continuously integrate guided activities into the elementary school curriculum, especially in art education subjects, to enhance visual imagination and develop free drawing skills among students.
2. **Ongoing Teacher Training:** Continuous professional development programs should be provided for teachers to enhance their skills in effectively using guided activities. Necessary tools and resources should also be made available to support these activities in classrooms.
3. **Diverse Artistic Activities:** A variety of artistic activities should be offered, encompassing different drawing and design techniques, to help develop children's imagination and broaden their artistic skills.

4. **Adequate Time for Creative Expression:** Sufficient time should be allocated for students to engage in free artistic activities that allow them to express their ideas in an innovative and flexible manner, without the constraints of strict drawing rules.

Third: Suggestions

Following this research, the researcher suggests conducting the following studies:

1. **Comparative Studies in Diverse School Settings:** Comparative studies can be conducted in various school contexts (both local and international) to examine the effect of guided activities on different groups of students, including those with special needs or students in rural schools.
2. **Incorporating Modern Teaching Technologies:** The integration of modern educational technologies, such as interactive programs and multimedia, into guided activities is suggested to enhance the learning experience and expand students' artistic horizons.
3. **Expanding Research to Other Grade Levels:** The scope of the research could be expanded to include different grade levels within elementary education, comparing the effects of guided activities on visual imagination and free drawing skills across various age groups.
4. **Developing Comprehensive Assessment Tools:** It would be beneficial to develop comprehensive assessment tools to measure the impact of guided activities on artistic skills and creative thinking. These assessments should include both quantitative and qualitative evaluations through various instruments (e.g., direct observations, art tests).
5. **Enhancing Collaboration Between Schools and Art Institutions:** Strengthening collaboration between schools and artistic institutions, such as museums and art galleries, is recommended to broaden students' visual and creative understanding, enhancing their artistic skills and enriching their educational experience.

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