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Strategies for fostering creativity and innovation in public primary schools in Awka south L.G.A. of Anambra state

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Abstract

The study sought to determine the strategy for fostering creativity and innovation in public primary schools in Awka South Local Government Area. Two research questions guided the study. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. Population comprises of 665 teachers in the 45 public primary schools in Awka South Local Government Area. Simple random sampling techniques was used to sample a total of 200 teacher respondents from 20 randomly sampled primary schools in the area of study. The instrument for data collection was a 26 structured questionnaire, designed by the researchers and titled: "Fostering Creativity and Innovation in Public Primary Schools (FCIPPS)". To determine the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was used. The overall items yielded a co-efficient of 0.70 which was considered fit for the study. Findings

revealed that the benefits of creativity and innovation includes creativity improves children's imagination, it exposes pupils to learn new skills and develops problem solving skills in children among others. Findings also reveals that making use of hands-on activities, making use of scaffolding where children are allow to solve problem by themselves and allocating time in the class time table for creative work, among others are the strategies for fostering creativity and innovation among primary school pupils. Based on the findings, the researchers recommended that government should organize workshops, conferences and seminars to acquaint teachers with the various strategies for fostering creativity and innovation to ensure that children's creative and innovative abilities are constantly sharpened.

Keywords: Creativity, innovation, children, teachers

Introduction

The 21st century ushers in an era where academics alone cannot be used to solve the challenges and problems of this age. Children need to be taught early to develop their creative abilities and innovative approaches to life situations. They need to understand that things should not be done conventionally at all times, but they should always think outside the box. Thinking outside the box may involve creativity and innovation. Mulley (2012) ^[16], posits that encouraging creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship is mainly directed towards the promotion of creative, critical thinking and strengthening the sense of value and responsibility both to one's self and the society as a whole. It is thus a significant factor of social responsibility which can influence the society in different ways. According to Essa (2011) ^[8], creativity is being permeated by an attitude of openness, activity, acceptance and encouragement. Children want to always express themselves openly as they play, they bring out new ideas and new experiences. It is more likely to occur when the person possesses traits such as curiosity, flexibility and interest in investigation and exploration. According to Sharp (2014) ^[21], creativity is the process that involves a number of components most commonly; imagination, productivity (ability to generate a variety of different ideas through divergent thinking), originality (ability to come up with variety of ideas and products that are new and unusual), problem solving (application of knowledge and imagination to a given situation), the ability to produce an outcome of value or worth. Creativity according to Honig (2014) ^[11], is a combination of ability, skills, motivation and attitudes. Simply put, it is the birth of a new idea or bringing something new into being. In this context, creativity entails being original, imaginative and explorative in creating ideas that benefits both children and the society. Creativity fosters mental growth in children by providing opportunities for trying out new ideas and new ways of thinking and problem-solving. Children therefore need to develop the skill of creativity in order to solve complex problems with indigenous solutions. Creative thinking is the bedrock upon which innovation takes place. Creativity is an attribute that requires skills. One of the undeniable importance of education is to foster creativity among primary school pupils. This view is supported by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) in her National Policy on Education (NPE) (2013), which states that the objectives of primary education among others, is to provide opportunities for the children to develop life manipulative skills that will enable them function effectively in the society within the limits of their capabilities. Creativity can be inborn or learnt.

In support of this, Amabile and Pillemer (2011) ^[2], states that creativity is not a static, trait-like quality of individuals, rather, it is a skill that might be taught, learned, practiced and improved. Creativity is a basic tool for progress in any society or community. It is so important that any society that wants to make head way in any area of development must not lose sight of it.

The nation stands to benefit immensely from the education of creative pupils because of the multiplier effects of developing the potentials of such pupils which will lead to innovations. It is therefore imperative and necessary to make special provisions for the pupils in order to protect their talents from the ranges of adverse environments. This is because the conventional education system does not normally provide natural environments for the expression of creative talents, the controversial education system for example only allow for societal norms has not been particularly helpful to creative minds (Agulunna, 2012; Mangol, 2014; & Unachukwu, 2016) ^[1, 23]. Creativity with innovation will bring about positive change in the society. In order to build a creative environment for children, teachers need to be open minded, collaborate and understand that the ability to manage changes are behavioural components of innovation.

Innovation involves the process of translating an idea or invention into a good service that creates values. Innovation is the application of an idea or invention adapted or refined for specific uses or in its particular contexts (Gertner, 2012; Manzi, 2012) ^[10, 14]. In the view of Redding, Twyman and Murphy (2013) ^[19], an innovation is a deviation from the standard practice that achieves greater learning outcomes for students that the standard practice given equal (or lesser) amounts of time and resources. To innovate is to look beyond what one is currently doing and develop novel ideas that helps us to do our job in a new way. Some innovative inventions include robots, computers, flash drives for big data, innovation funnel among others. Butler (2017) ^[5], posits that education should not just be a filling of the pail but the lighting of a fire and using innovative teaching methods to teach children the benefits of innovative thinking does not just "fill a pail" but ignites a passion for learning and provides pupils with the tools they need to succeed in the 21st century innovative economy and society. The benefits of innovation according to Mckinney (2016) ^[15] includes; It helps children to learn and communicate well, it makes learning engaging and interesting especially for the younger generations raised on the latest technology like smartphones, ipad, it allows for faster and more efficient delivery of lessons both in the classroom and at home and it reduces the need for textbooks and other printed materials lowering long term costs incurred by schools and pupils. Other benefits according to Mckinney includes; it makes collaboration easier that is teachers, parents and pupils can communicate and collaborate effectively, it helps to build technology based skills, allowing children to learn early and embrace and take advantage of tools technology offers.

Creativity and innovation are important human characteristics that need to be developed through education. Sharp (2011) ^[20], states that it is seen as important not only for personal development and fulfilment but also for its contribution to economic growth. It helps develop pupils' self-worth and dignity of individual, self-confidence, be resourceful in life and self-reliance (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013) ^[9]. Creativity and innovation is the mainspring of civilization in the world. Through creativity and

innovation, steamboat and other gadgets were discovered like, the telephone, the automobile, the airplane, television, radio and computers. Creativity is the bedrock of all science and technology, arts, literature, music among others. Whatever a country, nation and world is today is the product of creativity. Hence, it is essential that creativity be developed through education and even other related avenues. The benefits of creativity cannot be overemphasized as it brings about the development and civilization of a nation. According to Lehman (2018) ^[12], the benefits of creativity include a feeling of self -worth, being able to create something new and reduces stress, anxiety and mood disturbances. Review on Current Health Literature (2010), on the connections between art, healing and public health states that creativity can decrease anxiety, stress and mood disturbances. This was in line with Connor (2010) ^[10], who posits that doing creative things predicts improvements in well-being. According to research commission by British Broadcasting Corporation Arts (2010) ^[4], even the brief time spent on a creative past time such as painting, pottery or playing piano has an impact on one's well-being. Other benefits according to the research includes; creativity helps pupils to avoid stress, creativity gives the mind space to reassess problems and make plans in ones live, creativity helps one face challenges by building up self-esteem and confidence. Others includes; helping one to become better problem solvers, expand a sense of time, self-awareness and to express freedom. According to Duckworth cited in Teach Thought Staff (2019) ^[22], the benefits of creativity includes; Creativity exposes children to different areas of life that is to say that it is multidisciplinary, creativity allows one to express themselves, creativity promotes critical thinking and problem solving skills, creativity reduces stress and anxiety, creativity allows someone to enter happy zone and have fun and creativity gives one a sense of purpose. Other benefits according to the author includes; creativity can lead one to feeling of accomplishments and pride, creativity can link one with others with the same passion thereby strengthening ones' social ties, creativity improves one's ability to focus, creativity promotes risk taking and iteration, creativity is a prerequisite for innovation and creativity encourages lifelong learners.

Fostering creativity and innovation in children plays a key role in their future life. Self-creation and self-actualization proper through creativity. Various methods have been proposed to foster creativity and innovation in children. Ancu and Unluer (2010) ^[3], considered play as one of the most important activities that promote creativity and imagination of children. Each child is a unique individual and all children are born with the ability to learn. Teachers have to do their best to draw pupils' attention so they will have to design creative activities according to the necessities of each child in order to keep interest levels high in the classroom. This can be difficult if teachers are not able to identify what pupils like doing, which has to be incorporated and used as teaching resource to maintain their attention. In this sense, teachers have to adapt their method of teaching according to pupil's motivation and provide suitable conditions to maintain high levels of motivation. Teachers have to provide the right conditions for creativity to flourish. With this, children will become enthusiastic learners and innovative which means that they will be active and creative explorers who are not afraid to try out their ideas and to express own thoughts. It is therefore really important to be a creative teacher.

Children have an amazing competence to express visions of themselves and their world. Teachers can best help children to achieve this potential. Teachers can also support children's emerging creativity by arranging aspects that involve the classroom that will provide an opportunity to improve inherent children's creativity. Radbakhsh, Mohammadi and Kian (2013) [18], posits that using games and storytelling significantly enhances children's creativity. These scholars concluded that using the method of playing and storytelling has significantly resulted in the increase of creativity among pupils and using these methods helped in removing barriers of creativity, thinking inertia and helping to solve problems with an enjoyable procedure resulted in the creativity of pupils.

Creativity and innovation requires a safe environment in which to play, exercise autonomy and take risks. According to Newtimes (2019) [17], the following measures can be put in place as a teacher to create a supportive environment and classroom by creating a compassionate and accepting environment where pupils need to trust that they can make mistakes in front of the teacher, teachers finding out pupils passion, teachers building the interests of the learners into the curriculum, re-wording assignments to promote creative thinking, creating hands-on activities, using building blocks and using play dough or plasticine manipulation. Teachers can also use scaffolding where children are allowed to solve problem by themselves and the teacher can only step in when the children have tried on their own and could not succeed. Allowing children to figure out what they want, how they want to do things or solve problems. That way, they are forced to tap into their creativity to figure out what to do in certain situations, create a space to experiment creativity. A small corner in a room can be filled with things that kids can dress up in, play-pretend with, explore and express themselves. Arrange the classroom into learning centres like arts, music, science, mathematics, literacy, tailoring centres and watch children choose areas that interest them to play in. Today millions of Nigerian people live in miserable conditions and society needs creative talents to promptly attend to the resurging problems which emanate from miserable conditions of our time. The creative talents need to be encouraged so as to help in transforming the economy by bringing about new innovations and inventions so that the populace would benefit from the product of their creative genius. The home and school role become very important. This is because they are required to help pupils in nourishing and utilizing children's creative abilities to the maximum potentials which brings innovation. Against this background therefore, the researchers sought to determine the means of fostering creativity and innovation in public primary schools in Awka South L. G. A. of Anambra.

Statement of the Problem

Overtime, parents and caregivers placed more importance on academic achievements of children rather than their abilities, imaginative thinking, manipulation of materials and exploration of new ideas. This have hindered those children that have skill of creativity in them hence, they are product oriented rather than process oriented. Also, creativity is observed to be on the decline as pupils have become too lazy to try out new ways of carrying out given task that could lead to innovation. Teachers prefers teaching pupils and doing things in the conventional way in other not to place burden on themselves. It therefore becomes important that teachers

create an enabling environment that will encourage creativity among pupils which in turn will lead to and bring about academic excellence and help them succeed in life. Again there are various educational policies and curriculum in Nigeria that made provisions for the stimulation of creativity among pupils which will lead to innovations. Unfortunately, not much have been done at the implementation level which hinders the fostering of creativity and innovation. It is against this backdrop that the researchers deem it fit to determine the means of fostering creativity and innovation in public primary schools in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to determine means of fostering creativity and innovation in public primary schools in Awka South L. G. A. of Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the benefits of fostering creativity and innovation in public primary schools in Awka South L. G. A. of Anambra State.
2. Determine the strategies for fostering creativity and innovation in public primary schools in Awka South L. G. A. of Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. What are the benefits of fostering creativity and innovation in public primary schools in Awka South L. G. A. of Anambra State?
2. What are the strategies for fostering creativity and innovation in public primary schools in Awka South L. G. A. of Anambra State?

Method

The study sought to determine means of fostering creativity and innovation in public primary schools in Awka South Local Government Area. Two research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Population comprises of 665 teachers in the 45 public primary schools in Awka South Local Government Area. Simple random sampling techniques was used to sample a total of 200 teacher respondents from 20 randomly sampled primary schools in the area of study. The instrument for data collection was a 26 structured questionnaire, designed by the researchers and titled: "Fostering Creativity and Innovation in Public Primary Schools (FCIPPS)" The instrument was validated by three experts, two from the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education and one from the Department of Educational Foundations (Measurement and Evaluation) all from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. To determine the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was used. The overall items yielded a co-efficient of 0.70 which was considered fit for the study. A four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) =2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 were used to answer the research questions.

The data collected were analyzed using mean. A mean of 2.50 indicates agreement while a mean below 2.50 indicates disagreement.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the benefits of fostering creativity and innovation in public primary schools in Awka South L. G. A. of Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean scores of teacher respondents on the benefits of fostering creativity and innovation in public primary schools in Awka South L. G. A. of Anambra State

S/N	Benefits of fostering creativity	X	Decision
1	Creativity improves children’s imagination	2.50	Agree
2	It exposes pupils to learn new skills	3.02	Agree
3	Develops problem solving skills in children	3.10	Agree
4	Boost self-confidence in children	3.00	Agree
5	Development of physical and social domains	2.95	Agree
6	Creativity makes children to be self-reliant	2.75	Agree
7	Pupils psychomotor and cognitive domains are improved through hands on activities	3.00	Agree
8	Helps in developing the critical thinking skills of children	2.75	Agree
9	Creativity makes learning interesting	3.00	Agree
10	It allows for efficient and faster delivery of lessons	2.50	Agree
11	Creativity encourages collaboration	2.65	Agree
12	It helps to develop technology based skills	2.50	Agree
13	It makes learning practical and fun	3.00	Agree
	Cluster Mean	2.82	Agree

Table 1 above shows that all the items has mean scores of 2.50 and above which indicates that the respondents agreed to all the items so listed as the benefits of fostering creativity and innovation in public primary schools in Awka South L.G.A. The cluster mean shows 2.82 which is above the

decision rule of 2.50.

Research Question 2: What are the strategies for fostering creativity and innovation in public primary schools in Awka South L.G.A?

Table 2: Mean scores of teacher respondents on the strategies for fostering creativity and innovation in public primary schools in Awka South L.G.A

S/N	Strategies for fostering creativity and innovation	X	Decision
14	Use of think-pair-share method	2.90	Agree
15	Teachers making use of hands-on activities	3.00	Agree
16	Making use of scaffolding where children are allow to solve problem by themselves	3.10	Agree
17	Allocating time in the class time table for creative work	2.96	Agree
18	Making use of real life objects (realia)	2.89	Agree
19	Creating time for both outdoor and indoor play	2.74	Agree
20	Making use of pretend play and role play	3.00	Agree
21	Using lecture method of teaching	2.40	Disagree
22	Employing the use of demonstration method of teaching	2.80	Agree
23	Using play dough or plasticine manipulation	2.80	Agree
24	Incorporating the use of music, dance and drama	3.40	Agree
25	Taking the children out for field trip	3.00	Agree
26	Discussing with the children in the classroom	2.20	Disagree
	Cluster Mean	2.86	Agree

Table 2 above shows that the respondents agreed to items 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, and 25 which has mean scores of 2.90, 3.00, 3.10, 2.96, 2.89, 2.74, 3.00, 2.80, 2.80, 3.40 and 3.00 respectively as the strategies for fostering creativity and innovation in public primary schools in Awka South L. G.A. While items 21 and 26 with mean scores of 2.40 and 2.20 were disagreed as the strategies for fostering creativity and innovation in public primary schools in Awka South L. G.A. The mean scores are below 2.50 which is the benchmark for agreement. The cluster mean shows 2.86

Discussion

The findings in table 1 revealed that the respondents agreed to all the items listed as the benefits of fostering creativity and innovation in children. The items include; creativity improves children’s imagination, it exposes pupils to learn new skills, develops problem solving skills in children, boost self-confidence in children and development of physical and social domains among others. The findings are in line with Duckworth cited in Teach Thought Staff (2019) [22], who posits that creativity exposes children to different areas of life that is to say that it is multidisciplinary, creativity allows one to express themselves, creativity promotes critical thinking

and problem solving skills, creativity reduces stress and anxiety, creativity allows someone to enter happy zone and have fun and creativity gives one a sense of purpose. Other benefits according to the author includes; creativity can lead one to feeling of accomplishments and pride, creativity can link one with others with the same passion thereby strengthening ones’ social ties, creativity improves one’s ability to focus, creativity promotes risk taking and itineration, creativity is a prerequisite for innovation and creativity encourages lifelong learners. Similarly, the findings are in consonance with that of Lehman (2018) [12], who posits that the benefits of creativity include a feeling of self-worth, being able to create something new and reduces stress, anxiety and mood disturbances.

Findings in table 2 shows that teachers agreed to making use of hands-on activities, making use of scaffolding where children are allow to solve problem by themselves, allocating time in the class time table for creative work, making use of pretend play and role play and incorporating the use of music, dance and drama among others as the strategies for fostering creativity and innovation among primary school pupils. The findings are in agreement with that of Ancu and Unluer (2010) [3], who posits that play is one of the most important

activities that promote creativity and imagination of children. Also, in line with the findings, Radbakhsh, Mohammadi and Kian (2013) ^[18], posits that using games and storytelling significantly enhances children's creativity. These scholars concluded that using the method of playing and storytelling has significantly resulted in the increase of creativity among pupils and using these methods helped in removing barriers of creativity, thinking inertia and helping to solve problems with an enjoyable procedure resulted in the creativity of pupils. Similarly, the findings are in line with that of Newtimes (2019) ^[17], who posits that creating a compassionate and accepting environment where pupils need to trust that they can make mistakes in front of the teacher, teachers finding out pupils' passion, teachers building the interests of the learners into the curriculum, re-wording assignments to promote creative thinking and creating hands-on activities among others are the strategies of fostering creativity and innovation in children.

Conclusion

Children's creativity in the early years is enhanced through experiences and materials they are exposed to through play and in their everyday lives. When this mindset is developed in them from the cradle, it will go a long way in moulding children into phenomenal, highly motivated and innovative individuals.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should organize workshops, conferences and seminars to acquaint teachers with the various strategies for fostering creativity and innovation to ensure that children's creative and innovative abilities are constantly sharpened.
2. Government should provide useful hands on materials and technology based instructional materials like slides, projectors, computers among others to facilitate teaching of creativity and innovation in primary schools.

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