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## **Creativity: A Blind Spot in Quality Teacher Education in Anambra State of Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*Creativity has been mentioned prominently in Nigeria's objectives for teacher education in the National Policy on Education for over 30 years. Still, one is worried that teacher education institutions appear to inadequately foster the spirit of creativity in the students. The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which creativity was enhanced in teacher education curriculum delivery in Anambra State based on the views of students. Three research questions were formulated and answered. The descriptive survey design was adopted. Sample involved four hundred students selected through random sampling technique. A 40-item questionnaire was validated, tested for reliability and used to collect data. Data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Results showed that the lecturers did not use a variety of learning experiences to encourage creativity among students. The use of instructional technologies to promote creativity was low, students' have a good understanding of the implementation of creativity across the curriculum, and the present curriculum assessment tends to stifle creativity rather than promote it. Going by this finding, creativity remains a blind spot in quality teacher education in Nigeria. Some recommendations were made.*

## **Introduction**

The aim of teacher education is to equip students with quality education and the various professional competencies that will enable them work efficiently with students when they become teachers. The importance of quality in teacher education is well recognized in Nigeria as in all education communities all over the world. Its National Policy on Education affirms that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers (Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). In fact nothing is as important to learning as the quality of the competencies of the learner's teacher (Ajeyalemi, 2007). Teacher competencies involve subject knowledge as well as pedagogical knowledge and skills which enable teachers to work with individuals and groups, with colleagues and other professionals. Creativity is an essential component of these competencies.

Creativity is that characteristic of human behaviour that provides one with capacity to solve problems in a new ways and to produce works that are novel, appropriate and socially valued (Kerr and Gaglordi, 2006). Boden, (1994) defined creativity as a trait of an individual that is shown through productivity. Stenberg and Lubart (1996) defined creativity on the ability to produce work that is novel (useful, meeting a specific need). Martinez (2000) added that a person's ability to produce work that is new and culturally significant requires skills and attitudes embedded in creativity intelligence. Torrance (1994: 28) summarized creativity as "a successful step into the unknown, getting off the main track, breaking out of the mold or rut, being open and permitting one thing to lead to another, recombining ideals or seeing new relationships". From these definitions, this paper sees creativity as innovativeness, flexibility, self- actualization, risk-taking, originality and ability to make positive changes in one's endeavors. It involves the ability to take risks, improvise materials, and add variety to life's endeavours.

## **Creativity for Quality Teacher Education**

The importance of creativity in Nigeria's teacher education has been recognized. Hence, the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) stated the goals of teacher education to include a) encouraging the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers, b) providing teachers with the intellectual knowledge for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations. These goals envisage a situation where teachers-in-training would acquire knowledge, skills, and competencies that would unleash their creative potentials and position them appropriately to function

effectively as teachers. Creativity is important for quality teacher education in Nigeria because history has all along been lending support to the empirical observation that the heights of progress and achievement of a given people or of a nation have a close relationship with their heights of creativity to come to terms with the contemporary problems and emerging issues. In this context, education has been perceived central to the development of creative and productive abilities among the people. As Obanya (2002) stated, recent decades has witnessed greater importance being given to teacher education curriculum on the basis that it is instrumental for enhancing the creativity, productivity and economic prosperity of the people and their nations.

It should be pointed out that all learners have creative abilities and their creativity takes a wide variety of forms. The Scottish Executive (2006) noted that each individual has a wide range of ideas, perceives things in a personal way and, at times, shows insight and inventiveness. Some learners demonstrate high levels of creativity in particular areas such as music, fashion, science or problem solving, or in maintaining positive relationships. Others may be creative in the range and quality of ideas and words that they use in language, their flair for designing and making or their ability to manipulate numbers. Some may not be creative in one particular area but show creativity in a range of contexts across the curriculum. Therefore, where staff of teacher education institutions organise opportunities for creativity across the curriculum, students would be more likely to find and develop their creative talents in particular areas. Csikszentmihalyi. (1996) studied one hundred individuals who had produced works that were publicly acknowledged as creative and who had impacted their culture in some important way. In the comprehensive study of scientists, artists, writers, educators, politicians, social activists, engineers, and religious leaders, the results show that the first and foremost characteristic of these individuals is creativity based on a mastery of a domain or skill. Without mastery of a domain, diverse thinking or ideational fluency are not likely to lead to creativity. What was extraordinary among these people, said the author, was that these people seized upon whatever opportunities they had been given and then shaped them to meet their own ends, rather than being shaped by external events or genes. Therefore, creativity in teacher education would make student- teachers engage in imaginative and wide-ranging practices to promote and develop creativity in learners when they become teachers. It will also help them understand creativity and utilize instructional technologies for teaching and leaning.

Creativity for quality teacher education curriculum should aim at equipping students with competencies for:

1. Adapting and improvising materials for curriculum implementation in their local situations,
2. Accepting more responsibility and control over the curriculum and their pedagogy,
3. Engaging in more brain storming, divergent thinking, strategic planning, and open ended tasks,
4. Passing control to children at certain critical points of a lesson, discussion, or project.
5. Working in collaboration to remove the false distinctions between individual subjects in making sense of the real world.
6. Inspiring students to use subject based knowledge skills, understanding in an authentic and engaging context.
7. Managing and devolving more time to the combined subject approach with the teacher education curriculum.
8. Working together with students as coaches and facilitators.
9. Using ICT to make connections with information and people, as well as produce something which is original to the individual or group and of high quality.

The importance of creativity for quality teacher education cannot be overstressed. The world is changing at a rapid pace, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is progressing and the importance of creativity in teaching and learning is likely to escalate (Sternberg and Lucas, 1996). Educators are now competing with technology to capture and manage learning. As Simplican (2000) pointed out, traditional rigid teaching is no longer sufficient in the 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom. Students must be encouraged to develop creative potentials through relevant learning experiences and instructional technologies, and they should be able to demonstrate a good deal of understanding on how to emphasize creativity across the curriculum. Students should be enabled to come together to spark ideas, share practice and continue to shape the vision for the future. In fact, be creative. Hence, Fafunwa in Lawal (1995) said:

if the Nigeria teacher is to cope adequately with the monumental task that lies ahead of him, he has to be well trained for his job. He must be willing to enter into the spirit of new African age, willing to share information and skills with his fellow teacher, seek more knowledge

on his own initiative, and willing to experiment and not be afraid of failure.

The secret weapon that will help the Nigeria teacher education institutions achieve a pride of place and an innovative power house is to foster creative, risk-taking, understanding and can-do-spirit among student-teachers through relevant learning experiences and instructional technologies across the curriculum.

### **Creativity as a Blind Spot in Quality Teacher Education Curriculum in Nigeria**

Despite the emphasis on creativity in teacher education curriculum, fostering the spirit of creativity have remained a blind spot in teacher education curriculum. Curriculum is defined as the entire learning experiences of students in a school setting (Baker, 2001). These experiences cover the subject matter, its organization and method of delivery, the articulation of these learning experiences and their evaluation. Creativity is enhanced through these learning experiences and instructional technologies especially the computer and Internet. Such learning experiences will help student-teachers to be able to demonstrate a good deal of understanding on how to emphasize creativity across the curriculum, when eventually they become teachers. If the curriculum of a school is its' learning expertise, then it is proper to ask the learning experiences put on place to encourage creativity in teacher education and the extent to which creativity has been achieved among graduates.

Recent studies have shown that creativity has remained a blind spot in Nigeria teacher education curriculum, and a mere rhetoric rather than practice. There are apparent mismatches between the creativity desired in the goals of teacher education and what is actually in practice in the institutions. It appears, that some of the efforts made towards educational development in Nigeria, have not fostered creativity among students. Instead, it led to unemployment and under-employment among the educated people; shortages of trained people for improving productivity in rural, non-formal and unorganized sectors; and inadequacies in preparing the people to cope with the rapid advancements in technological changes and challenges affecting every profession and walk of life (Okebukola, 2003). Obanya (2004) found that secondary school teachers in four Nigeria States studied "qualified" demonstrated poor teaching dominated classroom activities 67% of the time.

Lawal (2005) found over-direction of students at the college levels by their lecturers which results in lack of proper imagination and initiative on the part of most student–teachers. Okebukola (2007) further reported that most of the graduates from the teacher education institutions in Nigeria in the last 15 years are incompetent as teachers, when it comes to knowledge of subject matter, content, teaching and communication skills. The courses emphasise more of theory than practical, especially lacking in teaching practice (Ajeyalami, 2007). These studies suggest that in practical terms, creativity is a blind spot in Nigeria Education System. So long as this blind spot is not addressed, students might not be efficiently trained to form habits will help them become capable teachers, who will shoulder responsibilities, be initiative, and be of good conduct worthy of emulation to their future pupils.

### **Creativity in Teacher Education Institutions in Anambra State**

It appears that the present teacher-education programmes in Anambra State have other major blind spots:

1. Lack of a curriculum that focuses on international issues and prepares students to actively engage in global affairs as teachers
2. Lack of opportunities for students' teachers to innovate, brainstorm, create, and take risks through extensive clinical experiences.
3. The abuse of powerful learning environment in the institutions. There are very few existing structures, which facilitates the communication among teachers about common teaching problems or problem students (Lawal, 2005)

Worse is the situation that the academic progress achieved in many cases has been considerably neutralized due to reasons such as mediocrity, moral decadence, examination malpractice, lack of entrepreneurial skills, misplaced values, social disorders and political instability. There is non-functionality of learning as many graduates of colleges of education cannot creatively transfer what they have learned to real life situations. These problems are unfortunate because as Obanya (2000) posited, if there is disarray in the education system, either the curriculum experiences are misdirected or that the curriculum content are irrelevant and has little to contribute to the solution of important national problems .It is against this background that the present study seeks to determine the extent to which creativity is enhanced in teacher education institutions in Anambra State using relevant learning experiences and instructional technologies.

### **Research Questions**

Three research questions guided the study;

1. To what extent do lecturers use relevant learning experiences to encourage creativity among students in teacher education institutions in Anambra State?
2. What instructional technologies do the lecturers use to develop the spirit of creativity among students?
3. To what extent do the students have an understanding of the implementation of creativity across the curriculum?

### **Methodology**

The study was a descriptive survey carried out in two colleges of Education in Anambra State. Population covered all the year three NCE students in the Schools of Education in the two institutions. Simple random sampling was used to select two hundred year three students from each institution, yielding 400 students.

A researcher developed questionnaire titled “Creativity among Teacher Education Students” (CTES) was used to collect data. It contained forty items on a 4- point scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. Experts in curriculum and Instruction validated the instrument. The instrument was tested for reliability using the test-re-test method within an interval of two weeks. Twenty year three students from Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka were used for the pilot-tasting. Their responses, analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation analysis yielded a co-efficient of 0.72 which was considered satisfactory for the study.

Data was collected by administering copies of the questionnaire on the students in their schools. Three hundred and ninety- three out of the four hundred copies administrate red were retrieved and used for data analysis. The responses were tallied and the mean scores for each item computed. These mean and standard deviation scores were used in answering the three research questions.

### **Data Analysis and Presentation of Results**

Five out of the fourteen questions scored above 2.50 showing that the lecturers encouraged creativity in the ways listed in the items. The remaining nine Items scored below 2.50 showing that creativity is not encouraged as

listed. The grand mean is 2.44 which is less than the cut-off point of 2.50. Therefore, the extent of use of relevant learning experiences to encourage creativity by the lecturers is low. (See table 1)

In table 2, apart from items 25 and 27 that scored above 2.50, the rest of the items scored below 2.50. The grand mean was also below 2.50. Therefore, the use of video and film slides for micro-teaching and the improvisation of a range of instructional materials were the only instructional technologies which the lecturers used to foster creativity in the students.

As shown in table 3, only items 30, 36 and 37 scored below 2.50 while the remaining 9 items scored above 2.50. These suggest that in the views of the students, creativity should be taught, and it should not be limited to general studies courses, term papers and projects. The grand means for the entire items is 3.18 which exceeded 2.50. Therefore students show good understanding of the implementation of creativity across the curriculum.

### **Discussion of Findings**

One of the findings of the study is that lecturers did not use a variety of learning experiences to encourage creativity among students. Students-initiated discussions, explorations of alternatives to problem-solving, changes in the use of manipulatives, reflections, brainstorming and discussion of course materials, and critique of their own and other students' work, were not encouraged. This finding agreed with Ajeyalami (2007) who noted that teacher education has failed to meet with the expectations and the training programmes should be criticized as encouraging little opportunities for creative skills development.

In addition, the use of instructional technologies to promote creativity was also poor. This finding could be attributed to inadequate facilities and infrastructure (Lawal, 2005) and poor response to use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) reported by Ololube (2007). Without the use of various instructional technologies, there is likely to be lack of imaginative thoughts and initiatives on the part of student-teachers. This is because the students might depend on the lecturers' notes, handouts, textbooks, and ideas, in the course of teacher training. This would hardly allow for independent options needed for creativity.



Finally, the findings show that the students have a good understanding of creativity across the curriculum. For learners to show an understanding of creativity across the curriculum indicates that they are willing to become creative as teachers, if only the right learning environment would be provided for it. The students believed the current assessment practices (quiz and examination) stifle creativity. This might be because of rote –learning and regurgitations of facts encouraged in the assessments. It might also be because of whole–scale examination malpractices that is correctly besieging the system.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. There should be emphasis on collaborative problem-solving and competence for team work in teacher education curriculum implementation.
2. Lecturers in teacher education institutions should make efforts to implement the curricula of teacher education with focus on creative processes, problem-solving, research-orientation and inquiry-oriented learning.
3. Lecturers should also use instructional technologies to foster creativity across the curriculum.
4. The State government should provide a wide range of instructional technologies to all teacher education institutions in the state.
5. There must be considerable in-service training for all lecturers in teacher education institutions. They should attend conferences, read professional journals, and use the Internet and emerging technologies to improve their own learning, foster creativity among students.

### **Conclusion**

This study has shown that many blind spots continue to exist in teacher education institutions in Anambra State of Nigeria. This is unfortunate because to be able to teach effectively and efficiently in dynamic environment characterized by rapid changing tasks, teachers-in-training need creative capacities. These creative capacities need to be provided through powerful learning environments with stimulating learning experiences, use of instructional technologies, and emphasis on creativity across the curriculum. Students in teacher education institution of the 21<sup>st</sup> century should be talented and creative personnel for schools of the present and future. Mastery of core

knowledge, development of innovation and responsibility about learning, and ability to use Instructional technologies such as ICT across the curriculum should be implemented. Without these, creativity will remain a blind spot in the quality of teacher education curriculum in Anambra State.

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Table 1: Mean ratings and Standard Deviations of the learning experiences through which lecturers promote creativity among students

<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev</b>	<b>Decision</b>
<i>In my education courses, the lecturers:</i>			
1. Encourage students to explore alternative methods of solving problems.	2.43	0.26	Disagree
2. Allow student- initiated class presentations	2.26	0.49	Disagree
3. Encourage co-operative learning and brainstorming of ideas among students.	3.12	0.79	Agree
4. Allow students to choose seminar topics in their area of interest	2.53	0.17	Agree
5. Allow students to provide feedback during their presentations	2.62	0.26	Agree
6. Give students opportunities to change the ways they use hands-on-materials or other manipulatives in teaching.	2.31	0.44	Disagree
7. Prepare students for the kinds of expectations they would encounter in life.	2.43	0.26	Disagree
8. Allow students to reflect on course materials and discuss in class.	2.22	0.53	Disagree
9. Engage students in a critique of their own work or other students class or home work	2.15	0.59	Disagree
10. Give students assignment to design or implement their own teaching strategies	2.40	0.32	Disagree
11. Direct students to use primary sources (E.g academic or professional journals) to investigate current issues in teacher education and discusses in class	2.40	0.32	Disagree
12. Show students the importance of subject-content to every day life	2.80	0.55	Agree
13. Integrate the course curriculum with other fields of study.	3.19	0.83	Agree
14. Allow students to consider a real world problem relevant to the course and develop a plan to address it	1.29	1.10	Disagree
<b>Grand Mean</b>	2.44	0.15	Disagree

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation scores on the use of Instructional technologies to promote Creativity

S/N	Item	Mean	Std.Dev.	Decision
	Students are encouraged to:			
15	Use internet materials for indepth study of selected topics or issues	1.29	1.10	Disagree
16	Use computers for preactising skills, or solving problems.	1.46	0.02	Disagree
17	Use the Interest to access materials for submission in class	1.30	1.10	Disagree
18	Use the Internal to network with students in other institutions	1.32	1.09	Disagree
19	Respond to e-mail received from other students.	1.22	1.13	Disagree
20	Use the Internet to develop curriculum of any subject of their choice	2.22	0.53	Disagree
22	Use journals to compile references on a given topic	2.15	0.51	Disagree
23	Use the Internet for individualized study.	2.31	0.44	Disagree
24	Listen to power point presentations	1.32	1.09	Disagree
25	Use video and film slides for micro-teaching	2.55	0.59	Agree
26	Use voice- projectors for effective communication	1.22	1.13	Disagree
27	Improvise a range of Instructional materials for practice teaching.	3.00	0.71	Agree
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	1.55	0.76	Disagree

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation scores on students understanding of creativity across the curriculum

	<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev</b>	<b>Decision</b>
28	Creativity is for those in the arts	2.90	0.77	Agree
29	Creativity is also for those in the sciences	3.02	0.72	Agree
30	Creativity should not be taught but acquired through self efforts	1.92	0.76	Disagree
31	Creativity is compulsory for effective teaching	3.40	0.96	Agree
32	Creativity should be measured through examinations	3.40	0.95	Agree
33	Creativity is the same as divergent thinking	3.12	0.79	Agree
34	Creativity is a measure of learning	3.30	0.89	Agree
35	Creativity should be emphasized in all education courses	3.28	0.88	Agree
36	Creativity should be restricted to general studies courses.	1.90	0.77	Disagree
37	Creativity should be limited to term papers and projects work.	2.43	0.31	Disagree
38	Creative teachers have a lot of ideas	3.00	0.62	
39	The present assessment (quizzes, and examinations) stifle creativity.	3.18	0.71	Agree
40	Creativity requires motivation to learn	3.30	0.81	Agree
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>3.18</b>	<b>1.66</b>	<b>Agree</b>