

## Teaching for Creative Thinking

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### Abstract

*This paper has examined the concept of creativity, and considers its relevance in the school system and the need to teach it. Hence, the topic “Teaching for Creativity”. Creativity though, a familiar concept, has been defined based on the contents for learning, as the ability to discover new solution to problems or to produce new ideas, inventions or works of art. It is a special form of thinking, a way of viewing the world and interacting with it in a manner different from that of the general population. Relevant contents of the definition have been used in conjunction with teaching concept. That creativity is universal, not everybody is creative therefore, the topic is apt and relevant to develop the students in this direction. Three levels of ability are also discussed: synthetic ability, analytic ability and practical ability; to encourage students of their potentials in creative learning. Appropriate topics to create novel ideas have been selected for teaching with accepted strategies needed to support this innovation which our teachings have not recognized and implemented.*

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**Keywords:** *Creativity, Innovation, Novel Ideas, Synthetic Ability, Analytical Ability, Practical Ability, Embrace.*

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### Introduction

Teaching is an occupation, a profession or the work of a teacher. It is a skill and a profession which requires training and learning. The act of teaching is personal and unique to the individual. No two teachers can be the same. No one is born a teacher, but everybody can claim to be a teacher as far as one can talk and explain certain phenomenon, be it in the family with the parents in any occupation of human endeavour. It is a profession people dislike but like to hold brief to await the profession of their interest and leave after. Teaching at its most literal level is a job that encompasses the responsibility of educating, imparting knowledge to students, monitoring, supervising and creating interest and good ideas which should motivate them to attain a reasonable level of their training. Teaching should be taken as a committed job of changing students holistically with much effort relevant to their need and development towards the set goal of education which they are striving to accomplish. In every level of teachers’ teaching, including parental control and inculcation of discipline, the habit of creative thinking should not be abrogated in all ramifications. Creative development is needed among our students.

This paper therefore, is to examine whether teaching and learning make a person creative. If so, why are some people more creative than others? Is creativity for those who have good ideas and can think well and make good decisions? It is these questions that call for concern in respect of the need for creativity in schools.

## What is creativity?

Creativity is a term that has been defined in many ways. But for the purpose of the topic of this paper “Teaching for Creativity”, some definitions will be examined. Creativity is defined as the ability to discover new solutions to problems or to produce new ideas, inventions or works of art. It is a special form of thinking, a way of viewing the world and interacting with it in a manner different from that of the general population (Levin, 1978). From all indications, a novel idea is usually original. Everybody loves originality and the values attached to such phenomenon are indisputable and cannot be rejected. So, creative ideas are novel, unique, uncommon and valuable. Again, creativity is the ability to produce work that is original, appropriate and useful. According to Gardner (1993), a creative individual is a person who regularly solves problems, fashions products or defines new question in an area of activity, interest or knowledge in a way that is critically considered novel or new but that ultimately becomes accepted in a particular cultural setting. Many people are creative in a particular area as Prof. Ken Tsaro Nwiwa, Prof. Elechi Amadi of blessed memory and Prof. Wole Soyinka and others, especially in writing fictions.

The world we live is the world of decisions. Decisions pave the way out when we encounter problems or when we are found in a complex situation. The solutions that abound encourage our development. To this, Sternberg (1996) asserts that creativity is enough of much decision about an attitude towards life as a matter of ability. From the work of Levin (1978), creativity is based on ability as a way of discovering new solutions to problems. Ability is the potential or that innate tendency one has to do a thing.

According to Sternberg and Lunbart (1995), Sternberg and Williams (1996); creative work requires the balancing of three abilities that can be developed in students through teaching for creativity.

1. **Synthetic ability:** This implies what we typically think of as creativity. This is the ability to generate novel and interesting ideas in students and even adults. No thinking individual dislikes or hates novel or interesting ideas realizing the important outcomes of such ideas. Note that anybody that is creative is equally a good synthetic thinker. Such an individual makes connections between things that other people do not acknowledge involuntarily.
2. **Analytic ability:** This word analytic connotes reasoning or thinking about things in detail intelligently with relevant ideas. This idea gave Carl Jung the interest to separate from Sigmund Freud and established his school of thought called Analytical Psychology which was a way of propagating his ideas. Therefore, analytical ability is considered holistically as critical thinking ability. Individuals in this ability or skill analyses and evaluates ideas. It is an obvious fact that everyone educated with intelligence, even the most creative persons sometimes disclose better and worse ideas. This implies that without well-developed analytic ability, the creative thinker may likely pursue bad ideas instead of pursuing good ones. If an individual is creative, he/she uses analytic ability to work out the implication of a creative idea and test it for reality.
3. **Practical ability:** An ability is termed practical when theory is translated into practice and abstract ideas of practical accomplishments. The creative person uses practical ability to convince other people that an idea is worthy. Most organizations have a set up ideas that inform how things should be done (Sternberg, 1996). Also, practical ability is used to perceive ideas that have potential audience.

Creativity needs a balance among the three abilities discussed above. It becomes clear that only synthetic person has the potential for innovative ideas and to recognize or sell them if

impossible. Similarly, a person with only analytic ability may excellently criticise other people's ideas but cannot develop his own creative ideas. To the practical person only, he is an excellent salesman. Such a practical individual can sell ideas or his product of little or no value than to sell a genuine creative idea.

The importance of good creativity in terms of good ideas cannot be overemphasised. Therefore, it becomes imperative to develop creativity in students by teaching them to learn to find a balance among synthetic, analytic and practical abilities.

### **What is thinking?**

Thinking is part of human processes of development. Any thinker is a developer of himself, his family and he is an individual of good ideas. According to Valentine (1965) in strict psychological discussion, it is well to keep the thinking for an activity which consists essentially of a connected flow of ideas which are directed towards some purposes. A thinking person is a creative person. Thinking is a cognitive aspect of development. It is worthy to note that cognitive abilities like thinking, reasoning and problem-solving is considered the chief characteristic which distinguish human beings from any higher animal. Today's highly developed technology is the product of creative thinking, reasoning and problem-solving capabilities of the creative and inventive individual (Mangal, 2002).

Thinking is a problem-solving process in which ideas are applied for overt activity. The concept of thinking posited by Mangal (2002) constitutes the past, present and the future. The aspect of thinking which is described as analytic thinking is a sure process of thinking ability which explains the behaviour of a complex system from an outside perspective to the inward cognitive processes. Similarly, synthetic thinking explains behaviour of a complex system from an inside perspective to outward development. These are the foundations of creative thinking.

### **What is creative thinking?**

Creativity, as an inward process of cognition is the ability to see things in a new and unusual light, to see problems that no one else may see or even realises that it exists (Paplia and Olds, 1987). Problem-solving are apt and relevant to the need for teaching students in the light of this process of creativity. A well developed creative attitude is very important as are creative skills (Woolfolk, 2004).

Every subject has its method or strategies of approach. To develop creativity in students, some of the following strategies which involve the teacher and students could be reliably adopted. Every competent trained teacher is a creator, builder, facilitator and a thinker. If a teacher does not think he cannot plan his lesson to befit his lesson step by step and implement his instructional objectives. Because he/she is a creator, the areas of his/her teaching that require attention to correct, is done accordingly.

### **Strategies for developing creativity**

To develop creativity is in the individual student, his ability, interest and motivation are required. To the teacher, creativity cannot be taught from any source but within the environment which must be conducive.

#### **1. Concept attainment strategy or technique**

This strategy is the introductory aspect of what creativity is. In presentation and explanation of the concept of creativity by the student, he/she will learn about what creativity means and practice thinking skill at the same time (Woolfolk, 2004). In any teacher's

introduction, he can start by saying he has an idea in mind and wants the student to figure out what it is – thinking ability. For example, teaching the concept of creativity as an absolute thing to students makes them think. This strategy is equally called use of teaching models. For example, that of Bruner’s concept attainment model helps in developing creativity in students for the attainment of various concepts.

2. **Brainstorming**

This is a strategy or technique for allowing the students to explore ideas which are free of judgment and criticism. In the process, the students may be asked to sit in a group for solving problem and attacking it without any restraint. Some possible ideas could be provided with their solution and the focus such as the problem of unemployment in the country or fallen standard of education and the way out. Any ideas by fellow students could also be tackled. These could be done without any evaluation or comment by any teacher (Woolfolk, 2004).

3. **Use of gaming strategy**

This requires a play. It can help students to develop creative traits. Both verbal and non-verbal stimulus materials are provided in such strategy.

4. **Role model**

This strategy involves somebody whose behaviour or attitude is cherished and people would like to copy. Therefore, the teacher should be such that his attitude to the students is admired. Students have the most positive interest in whom they love and always like to be closed to them. In this case, the students could develop creativity not when they are taught but the teacher’s demonstration of their thought and actions towards them as their role model can influence it. Such teachers must always balance the instructional objective with how they should think. A role model for creativity encompasses other attributes of the teacher who must be interested in values, goals and ideas and his thinking about creativity and show the students in his actions to them.

5. **Develop self-efficacy**

It has been discovered that students can do only what they think they can do. Whatever they believe that they can be capable of doing is where their interest is. Therefore they must have self-efficacy to be a creator and the joy accruing from making something new will activate their interest. Whatever a student has the capacity and interest to do, parents and teachers should not limit it because this will affect their potential achievement. Teachers should endeavour to help them to believe in their own ability to be creative without condemning them.

6. **Assess creative work**

Teachers should try to avoid much of multiple-choice tests or exam. To this, students would not think, and would apply the thinking the teacher values. To develop creativity in the students include the need for creative thought which could be class assignment and thought provoking tests.

7. **Use of creative resource**

The student should be motivated by going on field trips where they visit centres of art, scientific and industrial creative works. This will definitely stimulate and inspire them for creative work. The school should occasionally invite creative artists, scientists and creative persons from different fields to interact with the students and teachers in an effort to enhance their knowledge and thereby kindle the interest of creativity in them. Plan a visit to locations of interesting displays where they can generate and examine creative work and ideas.

8. **Class interaction for creativity**

Students should be grouped according to the nature of the topic of interaction. Topics

relating to creativity should be given and students are allowed to discuss among themselves. It could be debatable topic where the teacher could listen and judge their interaction.

9. **Find excitement**

To encourage best creative performance, students should be permitted to find what can excite them. Anybody who excels in his area of achievement whether vocational or non-vocational, always know what he/she does. Every serious creative person is always motivated in the work of his/her hand. Interest and love for creativity discussed daily among the students, and telling relevant stories of those who have excelled can influence students to be creative for life.

10. **Seek stimulating environment**

Students are always excited and happy to play where the environment is appealing and stimulating. As they play, they interact, argue, and can even fight and learn from one another. The classroom environments though for organized study, may be boring and lack such atmosphere required to stimulate their creative ability. Students can be helped to become creative by being in an environment which is conducive to the kind of behaviour required by creativity.

11. **Imagination**

This is the art of forming an enviable picture in one's mind. Teachers can help students to develop imagination from which creativity could be developed.

12. **Divergent thinking:**

Teacher should encourage students to think of different approaches to the solving of a problem. Divergent thinking which means having many possible solutions or ideas to a problem can develop creativity (Chauhan, 1978).

## **Conclusion**

Every human being is endowed with some aspects of creativity as a unique characteristic that occupies the mind. But it is observed that its distribution is limited and is neither equal nor general and some individuals possess greater potential than others. From what is gathered from the various definitions, the concept discloses that creativity is the power of the human mind, to think and create new happy and satisfied mind by transforming our relationships and thereby generate new reciprocations.

It is in this understanding that this paper examines the need and investigates how such high creative talent could be recognised and generally distributed universally through teaching. Creativity consists of the capacity of an individual to create or produce an entirely new or novel idea or programme or by the rearrangement or re-planning or reshaping of what is already known to take a novel position. Creativity is an innate as well as acquired which can be invigorated to process and get the product. This is the process by which change for a new development in our education sector can be accomplished.

The teacher as a moulder, a creator and motivator in the school should embrace the concept and accept that, for a change in the system, there is need for properly planned, contemplate with conscious reports to revamp the classroom work as a facilitator and teach the students for creativity. Stake holders of education, parents and government as well as the students themselves should be up for the appropriate nurturing and stimulation of the creative urge and potential. Creativity does not depend on very difficult facilities but the provision of adequate and conducive environment that can stimulate and help in the development of creative qualities such as originality, flexibility divergent thinking self-confident and the ability to change and embrace the learning for creativity as a novel development.

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