

Evolving Creativity in Nigeria Education: A Philosophy Paradigm

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Abstract

'The acquisition of appropriate creative skills, abilities and competence both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society' is one of the cardinal objectives of national policy on education by the Federal Government of Nigeria. It suffices to say, that the Nigeria educational system is presently at a cross-road, in a juxtaposed state, when compared with what is obtained in a developed nations. That the system is in state of doldrums is not an understatement. This is a system that places more premiums on certification and theoretical epistemology than innate abilities. What becomes imperative is the process of advocating empirical knowledge evolving creative skills and innovative ideas in salvaging the sector from this comatose state. It is against this background that the paper focuses on the philosophical paradigm of evolving creativity in Nigeria education.

Introduction

Since the colonial dispensation, premium has been placed on education as an instrument of socialization and national development. To this effect, the Federal Government of Nigeria has accorded education its rightful place as central to economic and national development.

The elitist or conservative education handed over to us by the colonial emperor left nothing to be desired. It suffices to say that, since attainment of political independence, the government and other agencies in education has been working assiduously towards a functional and goal-oriented educational system. Several workshops, seminars and conferences were held; all geared toward fashioning out ideal policies bearing in mind peculiarities of Africa values, norms and cultures. One of such was the curriculum conference of 1969. The aftermath of the conference spelt out the following as our national ideologies: a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united strong and self-reliant nation; and a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens (FRN,2004). These constitute Nigeria's worldview and aspirations as a nation. There is absolutely nothing wrong in drawing up an ideology for a nation since it is an ensemble and statement of a people's worldview collectively and, their aspirations as a nation.

This ensemble of worldview and aspirations as a nation often times inform(s) the selection and arrangement of priorities and a subsequent ordering of means considered requisites for the crystallization of same.

This ideological concept worked effectively for the Japan-Meiji restoration of 1868 in the inculcation and propagation of cardinal virtues of Shintoism (Bolaji, 2004). The Soviet Union as it then was, achieved tremendously with the concept in scientific and technological field to such extent as they were such as to command notice and acknowledgement. Enemu (2001) cited Russian Sputnik (1957) at which America took alarm and turned hurriedly to the schools for help and the full realization of the need for a setting within which boys and girls can grow intellectually. It is therefore, not an understatement to say education is an integral part in formulating a national ideology/objectives for a nation. In consonance with the national objectives, the Federal Government of Nigeria enunciated the following as expected of educational roles: the acquisition of appropriate/creative skills, abilities and competences both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society; the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity; the inculcation of right type of values and attitude for the survival

of the individual and the Nigeria society; and the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around.

Despite the emphasis on building effective and efficient educational structure for the nation, so as to compete favorably with the rest of the world in realization of national ideology, there exists a wide gap between the blueprint and the implementation. With the democratization, full of hopes and promises, one expects our educational policy and outcomes to be the most efficient and effective but the contrary seems to be the case.

The system is appearing to be quite unmanageable. Suffice to say, the system is at cross-road, in a juxtaposed state when compared with what is obtained in the developed nations, and where innate abilities enhance creative/ innovative skills through practice. What becomes imperative is the philosophical process of advocating empirical knowledge evolving through creative skills and innovative ideas in salvaging the sector from this situation.

Creativity: Conceptual Clarification

The concept is quite ambiguous and too complex to be defined. It has been a subject of extensive study from the perspectives of behavioural psychology, social psychology, psychometrics, cognitive science, artificial intelligence, history, research design among others. There is actually no definition of creativity that everyone can agree with. Researchers, mostly in the field of psychology, usually claim that being creative means being novel and appropriate. Simply put, it is a mental process involving the generation of new ideas or concepts or new association between existing ideas or concepts. Creativity involves the translation of our unique gifts, talents and vision into an external reality that is new and useful. This simply means that the usefulness of the gifts or the ideas is germane to being creative. Traditionally, creativity has been viewed as an easy process, something that people with certain traits were able to do while others without those traits could not. What this clarification connotes is that some individuals are more endowed or gifted than others. As our views of creativity have become more informed, we have come to appreciate the role of hard work and revision in the process. Osche (1993) asserts that the single criterion that mattered most is the willingness of creative people to work hard and put in the extra time necessary to turn out a quality product in a given domain. To Ericsson et al (1996), practice, not innate talent, is what separates creative producers from merely competent technicians.

In the area of education, we are frequently stymied by the need to make judgments about student evidence of creativity and many times feel the need not to judge but rather to accept any product as an example of creative response. This dilemma raises the issue of thinking about creativity at several levels and rendering judgments accordingly. The more we define creativity by identifying with specific sets of values, meanings, beliefs and symbols, the more our creativity will be focused and limited; the more we define creativity by focusing on how values, meanings, beliefs, and symbols are formed, the greater the chance that our creativity will become less restricted.

Runco (1994) opines that creativity is in terms of cognitive processes that leads to an original and adaptive insight, idea or solution. Thus, creativity is the most essential of all human resources and skills. Akinboye (2004) sees creativity as a tool that propels organizations, catapults careers, and generate potent growth and viable outcomes. For a sustainable development in any field of human endeavour, creativity, generative thinking, perception dynamics, constructive and design thinking should be the key words. This is because creativity is an amazingly complex behaviour that is multifactorally determined.

Nigerian Educational Policy

The Nigerian blueprint/policy on education is a statement of nationally-derived aims and ideals that are expected to give direction to the educational development of the country. Policy statements can be distinguished by at least two important features. Firstly, they tend to point to the future: for example, an educational policy tries to establish a kind of conceptual blueprint showing the probable course of events in the years that lie ahead. Secondly, policy statements give direction to the fact that, there may be many options for the future actions. Aleyideino (1989) said that a good policy would try to guard against uncertain developments in education, not only because it is waste of energy to change constantly from one policy to other but also because it is very costly in terms of financial expenditure. He therefore advised that educational policy must, be handled with a great deal of care. The implication of the above statement is that failures and wastages occur when there is incessant change in policies.

The question is has Nigeria educational policy been capable of providing the needed manpower development to stir the nation's socio-economic exigencies left by the colonial masters? The non-directional policy issue has been the main bane of the educational system particular with reference to the curriculum structure. So far, we have had three different systems borne out of incessant changes in policies: 9-5-4(nine years of elementary education, five years of secondary and four years of tertiary education); 6-3-3-4(six years of elementary education, three years of junior secondary, three years of senior secondary and four years of tertiary education); now 9-3-4(nine years of basic education, three years of secondary and four years of tertiary education). It has become a tradition to abandon policy in mid-stream. The effect of this policy somersault cannot be over-stressed. Lack of initiative, innovation, skills, independent/constructive mind and creative ideals characterize today's system of Nigeria education. This is a system that encourages memorization in learning processes and theoretical explanation to areas that need practical illustration. The system favours cognitive development above other domains of education. It is pathetic that Nigeria's school system is geared toward building pupils with cultural orientation with deficiency in problem-solving approach that requires more than simply recall or performance of rudimentary skills. Philosophers in the field of education have not come to terms with a national ideology with the cardinal objective to build a self-reliant nation contrary to what is apparent in the present system of education.

Oduolowu (2001) observed that there are strands of evidence of lack of creativity in Nigerian child. The issue is, will the Nigerian children be able to cope with the work-force of the twenty-first century which require manipulative skills and a much great ability to solve problems on their own than it has been in the past. No positive impact of whatsoever will be made with system that promotes theoretical knowledge, places emphasis on paper certification rather than stressing the development of innate abilities in a learner evolving through training or practice. In a nutshell, there exists an aberration in policy formulation and implementation. That is to say, that the need to revisit the policy becomes necessary, hence the urgent need to save our educational system from the gully of irrelevances and hopelessness. This demands a new surgical operation under this democratic dispensation. Thus, the need for curriculum transformation becomes imperative. How do we achieve it?

Curriculum Transformation and Creativity: A Paradigm

The concept of biological evolution of Charles Darwin fits in perfectly into our discussion. Creative originality does not mean creating or originating a system of ideas out of nothing but artful and careful combination, coupled with well established pattern of thought by a process of cross-fertilization is needed to save the system from the state of mythology. Thus, education should develop in the learner the reasoning ability to think aright and to be able to discover and combine meaningfully, as many ideas and experiences as possible so as to create new form of knowledge. Analysis of the Nigerian education sector reveals the challenges of incoherence in policy formulation and implementation. Therefore, the need for transformation

in curriculum for all the educational levels becomes necessary. Curriculum transformation that is pragmatic and child-centered, that is apt in rejuvenating and rekindling hope and passion for acquisition of broad-based knowledge that is worthwhile in a learner should be the focus of the structure. Methodology that will aid self-discovery and problem-solving ability which allows learners the opportunity for creativity should be entrenched in the curriculum. All that a child needs is appropriate stimulus carefully prepared by the teacher as the initiator. As the creative opportunity is created, the child often sinks into self-reliance and more often than not reliance on the human elements to emerge with a surprising result often leading pupils to unleash hidden potential. The work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), in EMILE cited by Robertson (1978) should be revisited for a meaningful and more purposeful educational structure for Nigeria.

The need for a paradigm shift from theoretical and paper certification to a practical application of knowledge necessary for future employment and skills development for self-employment should be the cardinal objectives of Nigerian education. This writer is of a strong opinion that schooling is not meant for everybody, rather what we need is the sharpening of innate abilities, skills acquisition through training or practice. This is because creativity is a skill that can be developed and a process that can be managed.

Learning to be creative is akin to learning a sport. It requires practices to develop the right muscles, and a supportive environment in which to flourish. In today's world, business leaders are increasingly adopting the principles and practices of art and design to help build creative muscle in their organizations. Design thinking can help organizations manage the innovation process and overcome some of the barriers that prevent leaders from being effective creators/innovators. The beauty of creativity is that it enhances organizational cultures that value independent thinking, risk taking, and learning.

Conclusion

There are gains associated with this dispensation that are rooted deeply in innovation. Thus, there are far-reaching benefits for any developing nation that makes creativity the centre of its philosophical ideology. De-emphasizing schooling system by embracing Illich's (1971) philosophy that is centered on deschooling society – the principle of complementarity between traditional education and western education system. Careful selection of learning tasks, emphasis, and replication of such tasks should be the elements needed in developing creativity in a learner. Methodologies that aid discovery of potentials, a problem-solving ability which allows the learner the opportunity for creativity should be focus of any curriculum transformation. Creativity is not only about the development of innate ability, but also about development of skills borne out of constant practice or training. Therefore, teaching and learning processes that encourage memorization should be demystified or jettisoned. Skill acquisition through technical/vocational training should be giving a priority.

It is a known fact that creativity leads to productivity and development in all tiers of national endeavour, so formal school systems should also be given due consideration, because expertise are needed for ideal governance and administration of a nation's resources.

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