

## KNOWLEDGE OF HEALTH BENEFITS OF CREATIVITY AND FOSTERING STRATEGIES AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN NSUKKA URBAN, ENUGU STATE

<sup>1</sup>Happiness Anuli Elufidipe-Olumide, <sup>2</sup>Amelia Ngozi Odo, <sup>3</sup>Charles Chima Igbokwe and <sup>4</sup>Justina Ifeoma Ofuebe

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education  
University of Nigeria, Nsukka

### Abstract

*Recently, from the literature search the present researchers discovered that creativity in schools has grossly been neglected especially at the primary school level. The non-inclusion of creativity driven academic curriculum in primary schools has resulted in misplaced priorities and neglect of promising talents of most pupils. Owing to the fact that preparation from the foundation level of education is crucial, this study examined primary school teachers' knowledge of health benefits of creativity and the fostering strategies. Eighty-four primary school teachers in Nsukka Urban participated in the study. The present study adopted cross sectional survey design and a 28 item multiple response questionnaire titled knowledge of Health Benefits of Creativity and Strategies for Fostering Creativity Questionnaire (KHBSFCQ) was used for data collection and was face validated by 5 experts from Departments of Human Kinetics and Health Education and Science Education. The KHBSFCQ has a Cronbach Alpha of 0.83. Research questions were analysed using frequency and percentages, while Chi-square statistics was used to test the hypotheses. The results revealed; (a) that teachers had very low knowledge of health benefits of creativity, (b) that strategies employed by teachers in fostering creativity were of low proportion irrespective of their work experiences. Null hypotheses were accepted. Therefore, it was recommended that creating a conducive environment for generation of ideas by the pupils among others is an important tool for fostering creativity.*

**Keywords:** Creativity, Knowledge of Health Benefits, Pupils, Teachers, Strategies.

### Introduction

Recently, from the literature search the present researchers discovered that creativity in schools has grossly been neglected especially at the primary school level. The non-inclusion of creativity driven academic curriculum in primary schools has resulted in misplaced priorities and neglect of promising talents of most pupils. Irrespective of the fact that creativity has been acknowledged to be decisive to all human activities coupled with the increasing interest and attention toward investigating creativity globally, the concept has not received the needed attention among scholars and practitioners in Nigeria (Okediji, Fagbounbe and Okediji, 2017).

In line with this, Davis (2018) noted that creativity is often paid lip service, but in reality, most schools are currently experiencing what is called creativity gap with significantly more creative activity occurring outside of school. Notwithstanding, Spencer (2019) demonstrated that standing in a museum, gazing upon a priceless painting and wishing to have been able to do that, reading a masterwork of literature and wondering what it took the author to conjure up such a timeless and impactful story or possibly the mind racing upon hearing a classic and awe-inspiring piece of music with notes from a piano created by a genius in an unfathomable level could inspire a feeling of creative envy emanating from creativity. So, what is it about creativity?

Creativity has been widely defined by several authors from different perspectives. Creativity is defined as the act of turning new and imaginative ideas into reality, characterised by the ability to perceive the world in new ways and generate solutions (Naiman, 2014). Creativity is an ability used to generate and communicate original ideas of value, inspired by the senses of sight, sound, taste, touch and smell (Price-Mitchell, 2017). Furthermore, Clifford (2018) asserted that creativity is an immeasurable, natural ability. However, Burrus (2018) considered creativity as a function of knowledge, curiosity, imagination and evaluation. Moreover, creativity is the generation of a new product (an idea, an artwork, an invention, or an assignment in the classroom) that is both novel and appropriate (Davis, 2018). Therefore, creativity involves the ability to generate imaginative ideas inspired by the senses to bring about a discovery that is novel especially within a creativity fostering learning environment.

Fostering creativity in pupils is crucial because a child today is the scientist and/or great artist tomorrow. Naiman (2014) asserted that creativity requires practice by teachers to develop the right muscles and a supportive environment to flourish especially among pupils. Jones (2018) emphasised that providing pupils the choice to explore their curiosity and gifted potential fosters creativity. Additionally, Price-Mitchell (2017) criticized people who erroneously associate creativity with pupils of extraordinary intellect or talent stressing that *everyone* has creative capacities that evoke originality. Regrettably, it is no longer fashionable in most primary schools for teachers to instruct children to collect mud from their natural environment and do some moulding. Torres (2019) noted that the natural world affords pupils the opportunity to be creative and develop their self-confidence. Torres further stated that pupils can see a stick as a sword or as a spoon for stirring muddy soup; their teacher and parents did not tell them what to do with that stick, what the stick becomes is entirely their own idea. This shows that creativity in pupils can either be process or product based. Bongiorno (2019) reasoned that pupils experience to creativity can be by having many options to explore the materials, think and create (process art) or the pupil following a given directions to make a predetermined end

product (product focused art). For pupils to be creative they should be exposed to creativity from the onset.

It is important to start from the cradle. Just as Anthony (2019) noted that the world of the pre-schooler is one of imagination and that for many children their creativity will reach its peak before the age of six, after which it will begin to decline with the onset of formal schooling and the developmental drive towards conformity. Anthony (2019) further affirmed that supporting the child's creativity in preschool sets the stage to foster its continued development in the years beyond. The decrease in the ability of children to demonstrate their natural, creative brains after the age of six should be a concern to parents and teachers as well. Spencer (2019) confirmed that in a creativity test administered to 1,600 children in 1968, at age five, 98% of the subjects scored at a genius level, at age 10, the number decreases dramatically to 30% and by age 15, only 12% of the children tested scored at a genius level of creativity. Similar test to 280,000 adults with an average age of 31, the results were abysmal, with only 2% hitting the genius level of creativity. Therefore, fostering creativity in younger age is likely more productive than in older age.

Creativity can be demonstrated in all fields of study. Creativity is not just limited to artistic and musical expression, but also essential for science (Hsiang-Yung, 2013; Kohl (2015)). Drapeau (2014) noted that creativity is for pupils in all classrooms and all content areas, not just for high-achieving pupils; it supports struggling ones and those with special needs as well, not just for those who are good at creative thinking but for all pupils. Therefore promoting creativity in the classroom should be adhered to by all teachers. Creativity in pupils can be demonstrated in various means. Brittany (2017) opined that creativity in pupils helps in cognitive skills such as mathematics and scientific thinking. Foster (2017) noted that creative expression may come forth from within the child like a wellspring, in the form of original art, music, movement, words, or other means. From the on-going, Jones (2018) stated that pupils should be made to know how important creativity is by appreciating some art, taking a fun dance class and going to the museums. Cox (2019) added that being creative is about being able to think outside of the box and also an essential skill to have in science and mathematics, as well as other subjects. Therefore, creativity can actually be said to be an all-encompassing phenomena which is of immense benefit to pupils when fostered early by the teachers.

In fostering creativity in pupils, teachers need to understand that pupils' creativity is developed gradually. Clifford (2018) noted that the goal of fostering creativity is like planting seed which takes time, attention, love, and a desire to have something new and unique come into the world. The task of developing pupils' creativity should be incorporated in their everyday learning activities rather than an occasional activity. (Beghetto, 2013; Constantinides, 2015). Soh (2014) opined that teachers play a critical role in the development of pupils' creativity. Additionally, Kohl (2015) stated that teachers who respect pupil's ideas help them learn to think and

solve problems for themselves, makes classrooms teaching more rewarding and fun, gives pupils a zest for imagining and makes learning to last a lifetime. This is why Price-Mitchell (2015) stated that it is not enough to give assignments with teacher-perceived creative outcomes in mind, but most important is to teach the thought processes and attitudes of mind associated with creativity as perceived by pupils. Also, Bharanidhara (2018) pointed that scientific research has often studied the link between creativity and health benefits, with artistic activities enhancing emotional well-being. These suggestions mean that pupils at their tender level can also experience emotional wellbeing when given the room for creativity.

It is generally believed that health is living without being physically sick but it is possible for one to be mentally and emotionally sick. WHO (1996) defined health as a complete state of physical, mental and social wellbeing, not merely the absence of a disease. Creativity therefore can bring about social and mental wellbeing for the pupils. Carter (2008) opined that creativity is a key to all round success, happiness and a core skill to practice with pupils, it also brings satisfaction which **improves mental health by** reducing anxiety, depression and stress due to its calming effects on the brain and body. Malchiodi (2015) noted that creativity may be as important to health as balanced nutrition or regular exercise. Porter (2017) observed that dancing which involves moving every part of the body, improves muscle tone, cardiovascular health, balance and coordination skills (ability to organise and manage skills), also singing boosts the immune system and help performers breathe deeply. When there is a creative success, the brain is flooded with dopamine, the feel-good chemical that actually helps in motivation, happiness and normal heart rate (Stahl, 2018). Grigonis (2018) affirmed that creativity can help boost positive emotions and keep the negative ones at bay, triggers the brain into creating more dopamine, a chemical in the brain that is believed to be responsible for heightened excitement and productivity. Little wonder pupils show intense excitement when creating new things.

It is vital to note that teachers can only have a driving force to foster creativity in children if they have the knowledge of creativity and its health benefits. Rashmi (2012) stated that the lack of clarity in understanding the concept of creativity and its health benefits on the part of teachers result in limited focus on designing learning tasks that foster different aspects of creativity which should be taught in the classroom. Lindsay (2015) pointed out that many early childhood educators lack the self-belief, skills and knowledge. The author also noted that many teachers lack knowledge of creativity and its health benefits. Yet they do not bother to seek for help from other teachers who have better knowledge. Tornio (2017) admitted that seeking out other educators to share with, naturally inspires new ideas and creativity. Teachers with better knowledge of health benefits of creativity seem to be more motivated to employ strategies that will foster creativity.

Teachers can employ some of these strategies in fostering creativity. Elsner and Haines (2013) asserted that good questions are tools used by teachers to assess

pupils' knowledge, promote comprehension and stimulate critical thinking but poorly constructed questions can stifle learning by creating confusion, intimidating children and limiting creative thinking. Other strategies are inviting pupils to choose individual projects of special interest and allowing pupils to think through a task without guide to their answer (Price-Mitchell, 2015; Jones, 2018). Clifford (2018) opined that teachers should embrace creativity as part of learning, maintain a friendly environment, establish expressive freedom and allow room for mistakes. Researchers believed that encouraging pupils to keep on generating new ideas, even when it seems silly and of no use fosters their creative-thinking abilities. (Honig, 2019; Pang, 2015) Furthermore, the use of visual aids, hanging posters on the classroom walls will inspire creativity (Jain and Billaiya, 2017; McGuire, 2018; Ipatenco, 2019). Cox (2019) pointed out that classroom should be designated with a specific spot to explore and be imaginative with drawing, painting, playing, building, creating and making a mess, a place that is unstructured, child-centred and directed, free from any judgment of others. It is generally believed that the more the years of teaching experience, the more the teacher effectiveness.

Work experience of teachers seems to enhance creativity fostering. However, Cachia and Ferrari (2010) found that younger teachers who had been teaching for less than a year fostered creativity more than the older ones. Al-Nouh, Abdl-Kareem and Taqi (2014) agree that less experienced teachers were the most motivated to foster creative thinking. This implies that fostering creativity does not solely depend on the work experience, but does depend on the knowledge of creativity of the teacher. Chung, et.al (2015) noted that work ability in older employees does not increase with the number of years worked but with the enhancement of cognitive ability. Hong, Hartzell and Lindsay (2015) pointed out that many teachers lack the self-belief, skills and knowledge needed to provide creativity. Nevertheless, Kini and Podolsky (2016) averred that more year of experience increases effectiveness, however, the benefits of teaching experience is best realized when teachers are carefully selected and well prepared at the point of entry into the teaching workforce. The researchers therefore desire to ascertain the real situation.

The increase in technological advancement and the various global creative innovations made by researchers required adequate preparations from the foundation level of education, these necessitated researchers to conduct study on knowledge of health benefits of creativity and strategies for fostering creativity among primary school teachers in Nsukka Urban, Nsukka LGA of Enugu State. The question is, do the teachers have the knowledge that fostering creativity has health benefits for the pupils and what strategies are teachers employing in fostering creativity. It is on the basis of this backdrop that the researchers deemed it necessary to conduct a study on knowledge of teachers on the health benefits of creativity and the strategies employed in fostering creativity.

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to find out the knowledge of health benefits of creativity and strategies for fostering creativity among primary school teachers in Nsukka LGA. Specifically the study determined the;

1. Knowledge of the health benefits of creativity possessed by primary school teachers based on year of experience.
2. Strategies that teachers employ in fostering creativity in pupils based on year of experience.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the knowledge of the health benefits of creativity possessed by primary school teachers based on work experience.
2. What are the strategies that teachers employ in fostering creativity in pupils based on work experience.

### **Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant difference in the knowledge of health benefits of creativity possessed by primary school teachers based on work experience.
2. There is no significant difference in the strategies that teachers employ in fostering creativity in pupils based on work experience.

### **Methods**

The study employed cross sectional survey research design. Institute for Work & Health (2015) opined that cross-sectional study compares different population groups at a single point in time. The purpose of the study was to determine the knowledge of the health benefits and strategies used by primary school teachers in Nsukka Urban in fostering creativity. Nsukka Urban is comprised of 22 government primary schools. Population of the study comprised of all the primary school teachers in Nsukka Urban. The study used the entire junior primary (primary 1- 3). No sampling was done because the teachers were manageable. There are eighty four (84) teachers in the junior primary (Enugu State Universal Basic Education Board (ESUPEB) 2019). The choice of this group was made because from literature, children develop creativity from childhood and it peaks around six years of age. Hence, the researchers intended to find out if the creativity is fostered from the foundation level of education considering the teachers knowledge of the health benefits and strategies employed and also determine whether both variables are based on work experience. The instrument for data collection was a 28 item multiple response questionnaire titled: Knowledge of Health Benefit and Strategies for Creativity Fostering Questionnaire (KHBSCFQ). Section A contained the demographic information of the subjects. Section B and C had item questions constructed based on the two study purposes and literature review. The instrument was face validated by experts from the Faculty of

Education (Departments of Human Kinetics and Health Education and Science Education). To establish the reliability of the instrument Cronbach Alpha was used to test the internal consistency and the result of 0.83 was obtained. The researchers and research assistants distributed 84 copies of the instrument and the 84 of them were retrieved. Data obtained were analysed using frequency and percentages to answer the research questions while hypotheses were tested using Chi-square statistics at .05 level of significance.

## Results

**Table 1: Teachers' knowledge of health benefits of creativity in pupils based on work experience.**

	0-10yrs	11-20yrs	Above 21 yrs				
Health Benefits of Creativity	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	$\chi^2$	df	P Val	Decision
Satisfaction	10(12.5)	13(16.3)	15 (18.8)	9.51	1	.999	N/ Significant
Reduction of anxiety	13(16.3)	18(22.5)	20(25.0)				
Reduction of depression	13 (16.3)	13 (16.3)	15(18.7)				
Reduction of stress	11(13.8)	17(21.3)	19(23.7)				
Improves muscle tone	4(5.0)	10(12.5)	8(10.0)				
Positive effect on low self esteem	14(17.5)	13(16.3)	11(13.8)				
Boosts immune system	11(13.8)	7(8.8)	10(12.5)				
Heightens excitement and manages negative emotion	7(8.8)	8(10)	11(13.8)				
Improves cognitive function	13(16.3)	16(20.0)	16(20.0)				
Motivation	20(25.0)	23(28.8)	20(25.0)				
Happiness	19(23.8)	24(30.0)	23(28.7)				
Slow down heart rate	5(6.3)	4(5.0)	7(8.8)				
Co-ordinations skill	11(13.8)	15(18.8)	18(22.5)				
Mind coping and recovery in traumatic experience	5(6.3)	10(12.5)	8(10.0)				
<b>Overall</b>	<b>156(14.1)</b>	<b>191(17.1)</b>	<b>201(18.0)</b>				

**KeyP- value0.05 Not > Significant**

**<20= Very Low**

**20-29=Low Knowledge**

**40-59= Moderate knowledge**

**60-79=High Knowledge**

**80 and Above= Very High Knowledge**

The result in table 3 shows that teachers had very low knowledge of health benefits of creativity in pupils irrespective of their work experience. The table also shows that there was no statistically significant difference in teachers knowledge of health benefits of creativity based on work experience ( $\chi^2=9.51$ ,  $P=.999>.05$ ). This

implies that the teachers' knowledge of health benefits of creativity in pupils did not differ significantly based on work experience.

**Table 2:** Strategies Employed by Teachers in Fostering Creativity in Pupils based on work experience.

Strategies for Fostering Creativity	0-10yrs	11-20yrs	Above 21yrs	$\chi^2$	df	P val.	Decision
	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)				
Building block	5(6.0)	9(10.7)	8(9.5)	11.17	2	.995	N/Significant
Visual aids	16(19.0)	20(23.8)	17(20.2)				
Allowing pretending	0(0)	2(2.4)	3(3.6)				
Freedom in selecting project of choice	9(10.7)	15(17.9)	12(14.3)				
Playing space or corner for painting and drawing	10(11.9)	12(14.3)	18(21.4)				
Incorporating creativity in children everyday learning	6(7.1)	12(14.3)	14(16.7)				
Encouraging generation of new ideas	18(21.4)	17(20.3)	22(26.2)				
Entertaining silly questions	8(9.5)	8(9.5)	7(8.3)				
Wall pictures and posters	20(23.8)	24(28.6)	25(29.7)				
Teaching creative skills	14(16.7)	24(20.2)	23(27.4)				
Freedom to make mistakes	11(8.3)	17(7.4)	11(9.5)				
Encouraging curiosity	19(13.1)	23(27.4)	26(13.1)				
Creating friendly environment	18(22.6)	20(23.8)	19(24.3)				
Effective questioning	5(21.4)	9(10.7)	8(22.6)				
<b>Overall</b>	<b>124(13.7)</b>	<b>220(16.5)</b>	<b>213(14.9)</b>				

**Key**

**P- value> 0.05 Not Significant**

**Low proportion=0-29%**

**Moderate proportion=30-59%**

**High proportion=60-79%**

**Very High proportion=80% and above**

Table 2 shows that the strategies employed by teachers in fostering creativity are of low proportion irrespective of their work experience (21years and above =14.9%< 11-20years=16.5%>0-10years=13.7%). The table also shows that there was no statistically significant difference in strategies employed by teachers in fostering creativity based on work experience ( $\chi^2=11.17$ ,  $P=.995>.05$ ). This implies that the



strategies employed by teachers in fostering creativity in pupils did not differ significantly based on work experience.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings on Table 1 show that teachers had very low knowledge of health benefits of creativity in pupils irrespective of their work experience (21 years and above = 14.9% < 11-20 years = 16.5% > 0-10 years = 13.7%). The findings were not surprising owing to the fact that most teachers from the researchers' observation and interactions with them do not show any sign of interest in creativity and are very reluctant about going extra mile to teach creativity to the pupils. This is evidenced by the way they talk and relate with the pupils in the school. The finding is in line with the report of Lindsay (2015) that many teachers lack knowledge of creativity and its health benefits, art skills and confidence. Also, Pollmuller (2016) reported that teachers lack knowledge of the health benefits of creativity. Moreover, Kini and Podolsky (2016) opined that the benefits of work experience can only be realized when teachers are carefully selected and well prepared at the point of entry into the teaching workforce.

Conversely, Hertzman, Kitterlin, Farrish, and Stefanelli (2013) opined that having three or more years work experience affects knowledge. In their report, Kini and Podolsky (2016) affirmed that more years work experience increases effectiveness only when the condition of careful selection and preparation is done before the start of teaching. From the on-going the researchers' perceive that teachers possibly do not have the knowledge of health benefits of creativity either because they were not exposed to it in the course of their training or due to lack of interest, skill and confidence. However, teachers who are abreast of the current trends in child development and creativity are more likely to have better knowledge of the health benefits of creativity and creativity fostering strategies.

The table also showed that there was no statistically significant difference in teachers knowledge of health benefits of creativity based on work experience ( $\chi^2 = 9.51$ ,  $P = .999 > .05$ ). This implies that the teachers' knowledge of health benefits of creativity in pupils did not differ significantly based on work experience. The finding is in line with Dennis do Souza (2000) who did not find a difference in the work experience and teachers' knowledge of creativity in the classroom. The findings are anticipated because of recent developments in Technology and the advance in creativity and innovations among the younger than the older teachers. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the teachers' knowledge of health benefits of creativity based on work experience was accepted.

The findings on Table 2 showed that the strategies employed by teachers in fostering creativity are of low proportion irrespective of their work experience (21 years and above = 14.9% < 11-20 years = 16.5% > 0-10 years = 13.7%). The finding is expected because from observation during the study, the environment was not even

conducive at all for learning and again many teachers seem not to know much about creativity as they were not able to respond to very simple questions on creativity in the course of informal interactions with them. This finding is in line with the report of Beghetto (2007) who argued that creative thinking was neglected by teachers, supposedly, the older ones. Studies have shown that teachers could not employ practices which foster creativity and were pressured by the priority to help pupils succeed in exams (Longo, 2010). The finding seems to give a clear view of the assertion that teachers' conceptions of creativity can influence the ways they attempt to encourage creativity in the classroom (Bryant, 2014). It is therefore important that our teachers are trained and retrained on creativity fostering for the present and future benefits of the pupils. This is because Gautam and Singh (2015) asserted that teachers on their part feel that educational and school cultures do not fully support them in fostering creative and innovative approaches to learning.

The table also showed that there was no statistically significant difference in strategies employed by teachers in fostering creativity based on work experience ( $\chi^2 = 11.17, P = .995 > .05$ ). This implies that the strategies employed by teachers in fostering creativity in pupils did not differ significantly based on work experience. This is quite revealing because the younger teachers are more exposed to the current trends on creativity and innovation, while most of the older teachers are interested in the grades of their pupils than giving time for creativity that will leave a lasting legacy. Sockingly, Cachia and Ferrari (2010) noted that teachers who had been teaching for less than a year fostered creativity more than the older teachers. Al- Nouh, Abdl-Kareem and Taqi (2014) agreed that less experienced teachers were the most motivated to foster creative thinking in pupils. The researchers are of the opinion that there is no significant difference in the strategies employed by teachers in fostering creativity based on work experience because older teachers who are expected to do better because of more work experience were really not exposed to the privileges the younger teachers are exposed to either in the course of training or by their personal effort motivated by the drive for creativity and innovation. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the strategies that teachers employ in fostering creativity in pupils based on work experience was accepted.

### Conclusion

The study showed that teachers had very low knowledge of health benefits of creativity in pupils irrespective of their work experience. Again, it showed that there was no statistically significant difference in teachers' knowledge of health benefits of creativity based on work experience. Furthermore, the findings showed that the strategies employed by teachers in fostering creativity are of low proportion irrespective of their work experience. The table also showed that there was no statistically significant difference in strategies employed by teachers in fostering creativity based on work experience. From the findings, the primary school teachers

in Nsukka Urban do not have a firm grip of the knowledge of the health benefits of creativity and the strategies for fostering creativity is of a very low proportion. Hence, the two null hypotheses postulated were accepted.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- The government should conduct in-service training of teachers on creativity and its importance as well as incorporate creativity fostering as a core course for teachers while in training.
- Curriculum planners should incorporate creativity in the schools syllabus, taking into consideration pupils' individual differences and potentials.
- Workshops and seminars should be conducted for teachers by Non-governmental organisations and health educators that have the future of our pupils at heart.
- More studies should be carried out on the different aspects of creativity.

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