

**CREATIVE THINKING AND E-LEARNING: ITS IMPLICATIONS ON
TEACHERS EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
GOALS IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The creative thinking and electronic learning (e-learning) have multi-faceted perspective of implications on teacher education and sustainable development in Nigeria. The application of its goals rest largely on teacher education. The 17 sustainable development goals identified as the panacea for the worrisome economic problems in Nigeria need to be carefully pursued to become gainfully beneficial to Nigerians through multilateral plans, strategies and actions-given basic understanding of the goals and the motives. Education been the fourth on the list of sustainable development goals in the final analysis become the fulcrum around which the rest of the goals revolve in order to find appropriate definition, meaning and direction. Unless one is taught and of course any shade of teaching belongs to education. Through philosophical analytical method, the paper found out that, the need for a quality teacher – a product of quality teacher education is the key to success. The teacher must be knowledgeable, endowed with creativity, able to organize creative thinking teacher, an intelligible, reasonable person having a mastery of proper use of electronic learning. The paper identified creative thinking and e-learning of teachers as a principal tool for sustaining the uneven achievement of (NDGs) between 2000 and 2015 in a comatose economy.

Keywords: Creative Thinking, E-learning, Teacher's Education and Sustainable Development

In the consideration of the fact that, creative thinking and electronic learning have multi-faceted perspectives, its implications on teacher education in turn is primarily central in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals that were reviewed in 2016; tagged Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The United Nations Organization (UNO) in its 2015 report on the performance of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) stated that:

...at the beginning of the new millennium, world leaders gathered at the United Nations to shape a broad vision to fight poverty in its many dimensions. That vision which was translated into eight (8) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have remained the overarching development framework for the past fifteen (15) years, Sam (2014) in Austin, (2011:121).

That report acknowledged that, although significant progress was made, some uneven achievements were recorded in various aspects and areas of the MDGs between year 2000 and 2015. The United Nations therefore resolved to take up a new era of development activities further in one and half decades, 2015-2030, under the reviewed agenda tagged *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs). The millennium new development era (2016-2030) for agenda 2030 with seventeen (17) sustainable development goals was adopted at a meeting of the United Nations held in New York 25th-27th September, 2015.

The full realization of these goals hanged largely on the fourth goal on the list; “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. A reflection on these appealing demands evokes the question about “equitable quality education and promotion of learning opportunities for all irrespective of gender difference and socio-economic status whether it can be achievable. Any attempt to answer this question brings the need for qualitative teacher education which can be enhanced by sound creative thinking and electronic learning. It is at this juncture that, the negative implications of creative thinking and e-learning on teachers’ education and sustainable development in Nigeria ought to be addressed with a high sense of urgency.

The paper also addressed two distinct but related concepts, creative thinking and E-learning. Each of the concepts is to be discussed extensively on its own because of the complexities inherent in it. However, the reason for linking them together is to underscore their importance and inter-relatedness. This is done in the best tradition of analytic philosophy. Akinpelu (2005) argued that, philosophers from Socrates to Moore had been mistaken in thinking that a formula could be found which would encompass the different uses of words. These words are of general nature and do not fall within definitive compartments, rather they form a family united by a complicated network, of similarities, overlapping and crisscrossing; sometimes overall

similarities, sometimes similarities of details. The words we are dealing with here, “creative thinking and E-learning” fall within this category.

Owing to the shortcomings that arise from the implications, the way forward is also the concern of this paper. Thus, for effective understanding of our discussion, it is very important to explain our operational concept.

Clarification of Concepts

There are two key concepts or expressions that need to be clarified in the context of this paper; this is because these words or expressions could be misconstrued if they are not limited or restricted to the scope of this paper. As philosophers who believe in the analytic tradition, the concern will be to look at the principles that govern the use of the concepts, relying on the tools of conceptual analysis. An attempt will be made to analyze the concepts of “Creative Thinking and E-learning” with the hope of eliminating any existing contradiction and ambiguity inherent in their usage.

Creative Thinking

There are many ways to understand this expression, but the way that seemed safer is approaching the words from their roots. “to create means to make a thing which has not been made before, bring into being”. As a result, creative therefore implies having the “power or knowledge” to create, invent or produce”.

In a nutshell, the term “creative” is used to describe three kinds of things; a

person, a process or activity – a product, whether it is an idea in someone’s mind or an observable performance or artifact. This entails that, creativity as a process or a product evokes the exercising of the intellect, (i.e. thinking) as a person (a quality teacher) plan to do something; contemplate.

Creative thinking produces a “product” that must meet two conditions in order to be “new”, but since morality can be worthless (as in a meaningless string of letters), it must also be of “value or useful”, appropriate or effective”. This explanation is anticipated in a way, by Immanuel Kant, who viewed artistic genius as an ability to produce works that are not only original, “since there can be original nonsense” but also “exemplary”.

Electronic Learning (E-learning)

From the expression above, “electronic learning’ two words are used “electronic describes learning as a noun, therefore, we are quick to lay more emphasis on the word “learning”. Learning is a permanent change in behaviour as a result of experiences or training. This change in behaviour is usually in all the three behavioural domains; cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain. This experiences or training can be acquired through electronic devices.

Thus, e-learning as used here entails the acquisition of experience or training through audio-visual materials. The full benefits of these materials are received when the “learner” implores both listening and viewing skills. Some of the

resources that are audiovisual- in nature include television, motion pictures, (sound films), video films and video discs. Advancement in Information Communication Technology (ICT) has provided other audio-visual materials such as computer aided compact discs (CD), video compact discs (VCD), smart phones and so on. Against this notion, in simple terms, it is the non-printed materials.

The Link between Creative Thinking and E-learning: The Educational Perspective

The link between creative thinking and e-learning begins with their nature. To create means to bring something into being that is new, or was not made before. This implies that, to be creative means, having the power or knowledge to create, invent or produce something new while learning; be it electronically or otherwise it implies acquisition of knowledge through experience or training. The professional teacher needs creative thinking and learning as the essentials to invent, produce ideas, skills. This also requires that, by their nature, the two cannot exist outside the mind, though in a loose sense. Another link between creative thinking and e-learning is from their functions. Bringing something into existence that is not made before largely depends on experience or training which are essential elements of "the learning". This evokes a change in behaviour that is permanent. Onwuka (1981) in Kalu (2009) argued that, learning as the permanent acquisition and habitual utilization of the newly

acquired knowledge or experience functions effectively where there is sound thinking which is critical and creative. It is reasonable to state that, learning is the process by which an activity "Originates or an activity is "created", through responding to a situation. Therefore, the later and the former function in a process and the results are measurable.

Another highlight of their link is the area of application. Ada (2000) defined learning as the acquisition of "new" information and skills and the mastery of that intellectual behaviour through which facts, ideas or concepts are manipulated, related and made available for "use". It is reasonable to acknowledge that, creative thinking produces a "product" that must be valuable and useful" or appropriate for development. The teacher uses creative thinking, empowered by what he learnt through electronic learning and other means as a tool to create ideas, facts, and concepts and manipulate them or either of them to be valuable, useful, appropriate and effective in recognition of the circumstances.

In view of the links, the dividing line between the two expressions (i.e. creative thinking and electronic learning) is tiny. Owing to the fact that there is a possibility of overlapping, one is tempted to state that, "it is the hub by which teacher education revolves. For the sustainable development goals to be evenly achievable, any odd associated with creative thinking and e-learning must be discarded with a high sense of urgency to pave way for the realization of the

appealing demand of the agenda 2030 in Nigeria.

Creative Thinking and E-learning: Its Negative Implications on Teacher Education in Nigeria

A major landmark in the history of education in Africa according to Adzongo and Agbe (2009), was the National Curriculum Conference held in Lagos in 1969. The conference was firstly concerned with the review of old and identification of new national goals for Nigeria education. Seven educational aspects were discussed and nine decisions areas were identified as necessary for the attainment of the conference objectives. Out of the nine decisions, “the role of teacher education” was the fifth.

The conference lasted for seven days and made sixty five recommendations on the direction in which education should be focused if Nigeria education was to have purpose. Out of these recommendations, the 27th recommendation centered on “teachers’ education” and reads as follows:

The objectives of Nigerian teacher education should emphasize the training of highly motivated, conscientious and successful classroom teachers for all education levels. Encourage in potential teacher “students’ teacher”, a spirit of inquiry, creativity, nationalism, and belongingness, help the prospective teacher to fit into the social life of home and community; provide teachers... the ability to adopt to the challenging role of education in

society; and produce knowledgeable, progressive and effective teacher who can inspire our children to learn. Adzongo and Agbe Joseph (2009:23-24).

Historical evidence showed that the recommendations (i.e. the 27th recommendation on teachers) remained in abeyance for a long period, perhaps four years probably as a result of the aftermath of the Civil War. In the event of various setbacks, the National Commission on the Review of Higher Education was inaugurated in December, 1990. The commission was empowered to review the development of higher education in Nigeria since Ashby’s report of 1960, conduct investigations, and make projections and recommendations for the development of higher education in Nigeria over the next two decades.

In section 9, (Teacher Education) of the document, sub-section (57) states; teacher education will continue to be given major emphasis in all our educational planning because no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Sub-section (58) of the document contained; the purpose of teacher education as:

- *To produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our education system;*
- *To encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;*
- *To help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and society at large and to enhance their commitment to national objectives;*

- *To provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to any changing situation not only in the life of their country, but in the wider world;*
- *To enhance teachers commitment to the teaching profession.*

In the effective implementation of these key purposes, the untold implications of creative thinking and electronic learning have to be checked properly. The first implication is expressed in the form of confusion of the purpose of teacher education in Nigeria.

From the document cited in the preceding paragraph, in item (I) one of the purposes of teacher education is to produce a teacher who will be highly motivated conscientious and efficient classroom teacher for all levels of our educational system. The question is who produces the teacher? Can the teacher produce himself? Can a teacher be effective without being creative? Can he or she be creative without receiving teacher education training? In fact, before the teacher is said to be efficient and effective, he must create ideas, things that makes him fits in the fast changing social system and his or her innovation must be useful to the society. The fear of the teachers “creation, outliving its usefulness” in the face of the fast changing complex society constitutes an impediment to national development.

Another implication of e-learning and teachers training lays in the scope of what is offered to the learner (i.e. the

teacher) or what the learner learns in relation to what the true purpose of teachers’ education should be. The purpose of the teacher in Nigeria is not the same with the purpose of teacher education in America or Europe. Though the essentials may be the same, their societal needs are not the same – yet the teacher learns things that are at variant with the other societal needs as a result, one is then compelled to examine further what the purpose of teacher education demands as opposed to what teachers actually do.

Item (2) of the items on the purpose of teachers’ education is to “encourage the teacher to further pursue the spirit of enquiry and creativity. The purpose does not specify the kind, type of idea, thing, concepts that should be created thus, leaving the teachers training open to train teachers to create “anything” either evil or good. It is sad to note that sometimes; in the spirit of creativity invention, teachers create new methods of committing, encouraging examination malpractice even during external examinations.

In the strict sense of fitting into the Nigeria social life style today; in recognition of item (3) of the document, the social system is bedeviled with, dishonest gains, corruption, distrust and social injustice. This has negative implications that to fit in means to hearken to the social life style that is vice in all ramifications. These social traits manifest in un-patriotism, thus, the purpose of teachers’ education contradicts itself, having a wrong mental attitude towards

national objective, especially when it comes to creativity.

Learning be it through electronic or otherwise, in this context heavily rely on curriculum – the teacher education curriculum. The etymological meaning of the concept curriculum is from the Latin word “curus”, which means running course or programme. The programmers or course designers do this according to the needs of the society. It is therefore reasonable to note that, no two societies are exactly the same; moreover, change is occasioned by time and space. The electronic learning exposes the teacher to other curriculums meant for other societies, capable of partially dislodging the Nigerian teachers’ education curriculum. It also go a long way of affecting the teachers creativity.

In recognition of the fact that teachers practice in a society that is vigorously pursuing developmental goals, their learning and creative spirit have adverse effect on the national development. However, in this paper, more emphasis is placed on the sustainable development goal. How does the learning and creativity affect the sustainable development goals?

Creative Thinking and E-learning: Its Negative Implications on Sustainable Development Goal

To ensure even and significant development of the world, Banki-moon, Secretary General of the United Nations states that:

On 1st January, 2016, the world officially began implementation of

the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development – the transformative plan of action based on seventeen (17) sustainable development goals to address urgent global challenges over the next fifteen (15) years. (SDGs Report, 2016)

The United Nations Secretary General, stated further that:

The agenda is a road map for people of the planet that will build on the success of the Millennium Development Goals and ensure sustainable social and economic progress worldwide. It seeks to eradicate not only extreme poverty, but also integrate and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development – economics, social and environmental issues comprehensively at global level (SDGs Report, 2016).

Education would generally and necessarily accept that it is on this note that the application of creativity – a product of sound creative thinking for purposeful and productive realization of the targets of the SDGs becomes imperative. We recall that from the list of sustainable development goals, it is vivid that education is number four (4). Other items that specifically emphasize the unmistakable call for education is item (17) where “the means of implementations” need to be strengthened. Having understood this position, it become less arguable that we must consider rephrasing this sub-heading, “how has creative thinking and electronic learning impede the even implementation

of the (17) sustainable development goals in Nigeria? The answer is simply as follows:

- The teacher education curriculum did not take full cognizance of the transformation plan of action based on the (17) sustainable development goals for the next (15) fifteen years.

- The teacher education curriculum is broad enough to accommodate the transformation plan, the poor implementation of the curriculum in our teachers' colleges, institutions affect the learners negatively, thus affecting their creative capabilities. One of the resultant effect of this unsound creation of teachers is low academic performances at all levels of operational system.

The fourth sustainable development goal in the document is education. The goal is, to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all. "This is an expansion on the 2nd Millennium Development Goals, which emphasized and dwelt on the achievement of Universal Basic Education. Sustainability of these development goals can only be achieved through sound creative thinking and good use of e-learning of the teacher who is at the centre of educational programmes. It is obvious that, anything short of this, endangers the successful implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria.

It is obvious that our nation is at risk. The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising culture of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a people. The problems lay with the quality of teachers we have,

thus largely depending on the quality of teachers' education. This culture of mediocrity threatens the full implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria, the teacher is also in a way responsible, "the teacher whose creative thinking poor and abuses the use of e-learning".

However, in the face of this menace, there is a way forward. Until these practical suggestions offered here are taken serious and we dismiss the notion that it is just a mere academic exercise; then the benefits will be concrete and realistic.

Conclusion

Creative thinking and proper use of the electronic learning to a large extent is what differentiate qualitative teachers from non-qualitative teachers. The more teachers who are largely saddled with the responsibility of producing sound, creative citizens and of course a nation, the faster the realization and the sustainability of the development goals will be. This is because creative thinking brings out excellence in those who make such activity their culture or a life-long action.

As a result, teachers will develop their creative thinking abilities and the proper use of electronic learning as a way of realizing and sustaining the (17) sustainable development goals. Having 2030 in view with good, quality education, and people can assimilate more information and employ instruments to create wealth and better manage resources to eradicate or minimize poverty.

The Way Forward

This period of SDGs, 2030 agenda is a period noted for a very great improvement in the methods of teaching. The professional teachers training institutions will provide teachers with the ability to teach and understanding of the children, but also the method to impart the knowledge. Teacher training institutions in Nigeria should place more emphasis on the use of modern electronic teaching aids; as a major course unit for all student teachers. The modern electrical gadgets should include radios, television, video recorders, proper use of computers, projectors and assessments, test be conducted appropriately to ascertain that they are conversant with it.

The government should provide enough funds to run the teacher training institutions and offer supervisory roles to ensure good use of the funds. The teacher education curriculum from time to time should be reviewed to balance with the (SDGs) Sustainable Development Goals in relation to the social changes in the society.

Again, to sustain these development goals, we must invest in qualitative education whatever the cost involved. The goal of education should be the fullest possible development of the individual teacher within the framework of a creativity and critical thinking. To achieve this, the teacher education must be given priority first.

The goals of qualitative education should be to produce intelligent, articulate, creative and critical thinking, caring, committed, involved reflective teacher

who will be willing and able to tackle the myriad of problems that threatens the successful implementation of the successful development goals in Nigeria. The teacher should be exposed to an education that is not limited to the acquisition of knowledge but is balanced by with attention to values, attitudes, feelings, motivation, creativity and problem solving techniques.

It is only when we do all these things that our quest for national development can be realized. Against this notion, we are compelled to draw our conclusion in this paper way we do.

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