

THE RELEVANCE OF CREATIVITY IN CLOTHING AND TEXTILES TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Clothing and textiles is one of the domains of Home Economics through which students acquire knowledge, skills and techniques for meeting personal and societal clothing needs. Some aims of the subject are to provide students with training in the area of creativity to be applied in the project planning and development of clothing, taking into consideration the aesthetic conceptions that reflect the cultural characteristics of the society and to prepare qualified professionals to work in the field of clothing and textile production who will be able to carry out projects with technical and aesthetic competence so as to achieve the national level of efficiency and aptitude. This paper examines the relevance of creativity in Clothing and Textiles to national development. It provides an in-depth knowledge of the possible causes of students inability to be creative in Clothing and Textiles. Recommendations are made touching down on the roles the teachers, government and parents could play in making the students to be creative in the subject.

Clothing refers broadly to any number of fibers and materials worn to cover parts of the human body, including pants, shorts, shirts, dresses, coats and underwear. Clothing is worn by virtually every segment of the human population, although the types of clothing worn by people vary widely around the world. Religious, historical and even geographical influences play a large role in determining the type of

clothing worn by people, as do age and socioeconomic status. In some areas of the world, the amount of clothing worn is minimal while in other areas, particularly northern climates, clothing is worn in abundance. In addition to varying in quantity, the material composition of clothing in different climate zones varies widely. In hot and humid tropical regions, people usually dress in sweat and heat repelling light weight fabrics, such as cotton and linen.

In northern areas, chosen clothing is generally made using heavier materials that provide insulation and warmth, such as animal skins, fur and synthetic materials. Clothes are often used as a means to express individuality and can also help individuals to be identified with certain groups. Clothing can provide insight into individual personalities.

A textile or cloth is a flexible worn material consisting of a network of natural or artificial fibers often referred to as thread or yarn. Yarn is produced by spinning raw fibers of wool, flax, cotton or other materials to produce long strands. (Merriam-Webster, 2015). Textiles are formed by weaving, knitting, crocheting, knotting, or pressing fibers together (felt). The word "textile" is from Latin, it was formed from the adjective, *textilis*, meaning 'woven' from *textus* the past participle of the verb "texere" (Merriam-Webster, 2015). It was originally defined and understood as a fabric made from woven fibers. However, today, the scope is wider as it signifies any of the vast number of fabrics produced by weaving, knitting and other techniques. The Encyclopedia Americana also defines textiles as a fabric made by weaving, knitting and netting or braiding, it also sees it "as a term applied to the component fibers, such as silk wool cotton linen, rayon and nylon of such fabric".

Clothing and textiles is one of the three major areas of Home Economics. It is the aspect that is

concerned with dressing and acquisition of skills to make an individual creative and self-reliant. The clothing and textiles domain was originally intended to provide women with a means to clothe themselves and their families in an efficient and economical manner (Albert, 2015). Another objective was to provide the students with a more formal understanding of the textile industry for future career opportunity within that field. Early Home Economists helped to make positive contributions to this area by studying different fabrics and dyes and the proper ways to care for the materials (Albert, 2015). Modern Home Economics programmes continue to place importance on the clothing domain of the curriculum. Students are given instruction regarding different aspects of clothing and textiles, including the aspects of history of fashion and its social implications, concerns for the consumer as well as actual clothing construction.

Students are given an overview of how trends on the fashion and textiles industries have evolved over time. Students will demonstrate an understanding of how the changing economic and social climates, as well as the advancement of certain technologies, influenced these industries and led them to where they stand today. A majority of the clothing subject matter covers various consumer based information. Students are given instruction on the many different types of fabric, including what they are consisted of, their individual character and how to properly

maintain and care for them. Students are also given suggestions on when it is most appropriate to wear a certain article of clothing based on its material. Instruction is given on how to perform the laundry. Students are also given suggestions on actual purchasing behaviours including managing an apparel, budget and selecting the right clothes for specific occasions. One of the most enjoyable parts of the discipline is the ability for students to create their own clothes or other projects. Students learn how to correctly use the various tools and materials necessary to construct their clothing; students learn how to follow the sewing instructions with limited assistance and are encouraged to use their creative skill. Different tailoring techniques and ways to assess their quality are also demonstrated.

It is characteristically a skill and activity oriented subject which when properly taught will equip the learner with saleable skills needed for self-reliance. Arubayi (2009) observed that the value of the quality of Instruction in the clothing and textiles in schools to national development and the economic empowerment of individuals is not in doubt. Clothing and textiles is a lucrative and an interesting aspect of Home Economics which is of inestimable value to society, Anyakoha (1993) affirmed clothing and textiles and related arts as an area of vocational and technical education which enables individual to acquire the necessary skills, knowledge, abilities and attitudes

required to function effectively for the development: of self and the society, thus contributing to the academic achievement of the nation. Clothing is an important part of a person's image. Wearing appropriate clothing to the workplace is a skill students need to develop. In addition, clothing is a personal and family expense; people who are informed about textiles and construction technique are more effective consumers. The fashion industry is an important component of the economy as well as an area that provides many opportunities for entrepreneurship. Some careers in clothing and textiles are tie and dye production, textile designing, dressmaking, tailoring, bark production, interior decoration, knitting, crocheting and the like. Clothing and textiles help students explore career opportunities in this field and help them develop skills needed for employment. Clothing and textiles, an aspect of Home Economics is usually perceived by students and lecturers as very difficult (Arubayi, 2004). However, the importance of adequately taught clothing and textiles is of inestimable value to skill acquisition, economic enhancement and empowerment, of the individual for self or paid employment. What are the instructional strategies that best support students being creative in clothing and textile? The most effective, clothing and textiles should be taught using hands on, experimental approach in a laboratory setting. Hence, this paper examined the

relevance of creativity in clothing and textiles to national development.

The Concept of Creativity

Creativity is the ability to think about something in novel and unusual ways and come up with unique solutions to problems. Creativity is recognized as a practical skill, one which can be taught and which everyone can achieve. It is a way of thinking in which we look at familiar things with a fresh eye, examine a problem with an opening about how it might be solved and use our imagination rather than our knowledge to explore new possibilities rather than established approaches. John (2008) distinguished between convergent thinking which produces one correct answer and is characteristic of the kind of thinking required on conventional intelligence tests and divergent thinking which produces many answers to the same question and is more characteristic of creativity.

Gulford (1957) also established a distinction between convergent and divergent thinking. He stated that divergent thinking as compared with convergent thinking is more flexible, original and has a greater flow of ideas with more ingenuity. In convergent thinking, thought is channeled or controlled, more in the direction of finding one correct solution to divergent thinking, there is less conformity to a fixed pattern, more freedom to strike off new and different directions, more of a disposition, considering several possible answers and novel solutions. Divergent

thinking draws more on creative abilities than convergent thinking (Gulford, 1957). As a matter of fact those who are critical over emphasis on divergent thinking insist that much of life's activity involves divergent thinking, generating of novel responses to situations, responses that are original, unusual, varied and hopefully effective in handling the largely unsolvable problems that the person is called upon to solve. This view however is not attempting to suggest the superiority of divergent thinking over convergent thinking, for the later is the more appropriate to a particular problem. Divergent thinking therefore should be regarded as complimentary to convergent thinking rather than a competitor (Fontana, 1981)

Although most creative students are quite intelligent (as measured by high scores on conventional Intelligence tests) in other respects, the reverse is not necessarily true. According to Stenberg (2006), many highly intelligent students are not very creative. Students show more creativity in some domains than others. Creative people are not afraid of failing or getting something wrong. They might go down twenty dead end streets before they come up with an innovative idea. They recognize that it is okay to win some and lose some. They are willing to take risks. Creative people's motivation is the satisfaction generated by the work itself. Competition for prizes and formal evaluation often undermine intrinsic motivation and creativity. (Amabile &

Hannese, 1992). Creative thinkers are flexible in the way they approach problems in many different ways rather than getting locked into rigid pattern of thought. A creative person is dominant, he is relatively free from conventional restraints he is motivated to achieve in situations calling for independence in thought and action and lastly, he is flexible, manifesting, feminity of interests (Mukkerjee, 2002).

The Importance of Creativity

Creativity is clearly important on a national and global level for economic growth and development. But there is an increasing recognition that it is a key at an individual level also. Creativity improves the self esteem motivation and achievement of learners, students who are encouraged to think creatively:

- Become more interested in discovering things for themselves
- Are more open to new Ideas and challenges;
- Are more able to solve problems;
- Can work well with others;
- Become more effective learners;
- Have greater ownership over their learning
- Display a great deal of curiosity about many things, are constantly asking questions about anything and everything, may have broad interests in many unrelated areas. May devise collections based on unusual things and interests,
- Generate a large number of Ideas or solutions, to problems and questions, often offer unusual (way out) unique clever responses.
- Are often uninhibited in expressions of opinion, are sometimes radical and spirited in disagreement.
- Are unusually tenacious or persistent fixating on an idea or project.
- Are willing to take risks, are often people who are described as a high risk taking or adventurous or speculative.
- Display a good deal of intellectual playfulness, may frequently be caught fantasizing, day dreaming or imagining. Often wonder out loud and might be heard saying wonder "what would happen if ... or what if idea of others" are often concerned improving the conceptual frameworks of institutions, objects and systems.
- Display keen senses of humour and see humour in situations that may not appear to be humorous to others.
- Are unusually aware of his or her impulses and are often more open to be irrational with him or herself. May freely display opposite gender characteristics- may be androgynous (freer expression of feminine interests in boys or as males they are considered ultra sensitive or

- greater than unusual amount of independence or assertiveness for girls).
- Exhibit heightened emotional sensitivity may be very sensitive to beauty and visibly moved by aesthetic experiences.
- Are frequently perceived as nonconforming accept disordered or chaotic environments or situations, are frequently not interested in details, are described as individualistic do not fear being classified as different.
- Criticize constructively, and are unwilling to accept authoritarian pronouncements without overly critical of self examination

General Characteristics of Creative Individuals

- Genuinely values intellectual and cognitive matters.
- Values own independence and autonomy
- Is verbally fluent, can express ideas well
- Enjoys aesthetic Impressions, Is aesthetically reactive
- Is concerned with philosophical problems, for example, religion, values, the meaning of life
- Has high aspiration level for self.
- Has wide range of interests
- Thinks and associates to ideas in unusual ways, has unconventional thought

- processes
- Is an interesting arresting person
- Appears straight forward, forthright and candid In dealing with others
- Behaves in an ethically consistent manner and has consistent personal standards.

The Concept of National Development

Thomson (2001) viewed national development to be a country's development in terms of economic and social freedom. He further contended that economic freedom and social freedom are interrelated; one cannot succeed without the other. To increase national economic development, a country must have economic freedom and to achieve social development, a country must have economic freedom (Onyenwe, Obi & Ogbonaya, 2015), According to them, national development is the economic and social freedom a nation attains which gives its citizens conducive environment to develop their full potentials have access to basic amenities such as health, education, political franchise and the like, as well as lead productive and creative lives in accordance with their needs and interests.

The nature and concept of national development which Is seen as proofs of social and material advancement entails the widely participatory roles of humans to bring about meaningful change. The change in other words will emanate from man-

power development or the acquisition of relevant skills by the individual in the society. Education is the only factor that can facilitate technical skills for social change, intended to produce evidence of unemployment reduction of inequality at a minimal degree, real federalism, true democracy, Increased rate of productivity low birth and death rates, increased rate of life expectancy, eradication of diseases, adequate and functional social amenities, Inflation free economy and freedom for all and sundry. (Akobi, 2004), Thomas and Potter (2002) asserted that, education provides the requisite manpower which the country needs as an investment and which would yield both public and private rates of return. Hallak (1999) also asserted that education contributes to individual creativity, improved participation in the economic, social and cultural roles in society. Alam (2008) observed that education not only benefits those who gain it through increased income, but also helps in the overall social development.

The Relevance of Creative Clothing and Textiles to National Development

Creative Clothing and Textiles produces the critical human capital that could build and promote knowledge management in a globally competitive world, devise and deploy relevant technologies and skill to address developmental challenges and sustain progress (Akinnuoye, 2014). Creative clothing and textiles guided with a

workable policy framework can perhaps bail Nigeria out of her socio-economic problems and launch the nation into an economic bliss that she desired; as well as give it a place among the comity of nations. Creative clothing and textiles enhance the capacity of the recipients as it equips them with knowledge, right attitude, skills and ability with which to face the challenges of their time, transform their environment for the betterment of the larger society.

A creative person would keep exploring all avenues In order to make life more pleasurable and meaningful. However in the process, he would be buoyant financially. Fashion designers for instance, can work in a number of ways. They can work as in-house designers, which own the designs. They may work alone or as part of a team of freelance designer's work for themselves and sell their designs to Fashion houses, directly to shops or to clothing manufactures. (Aladenika, 2003). Some Fashion designers are self-employed and design for individual clients. Other high-Fashion designers caters for specialty stores or high-fashion department stores. These designers create original garments, as well as those that follow established fashion trends. Most of them however, work for apparel manufactures, creating designs for men's, women's and children's fashions for the mass market. According to Aladenika (2003), creativity helps in the proper utilization of the natural resources within the society. Thus, with various improvements in clothing, the

entire citizenry would enjoy some economic advantages.

In the areas of creative capabilities clothing and Textiles Education helps in the provision of careers for the future. A creative person would keep exploring all avenues in order to make life pleasurable, and meaningful. Tie and dye, batik, clothing construction and beadwork to mention a few are the works of creative Clothing and Textiles. All these creative products will eventually bring money into the pockets of the makers. (Akobi, 2004). Modern clothings have helped individuals to procure clothings that would accentuate the good features of the body and play down on figure defects thereby enhancing beauty. Clothing and Textiles produce dresses for people in different weather and atmospheric conditions. It has help to distinguish various professions, cultures, tribes, clans and religions throughout the world.

Some clothings are used specifically during certain traditional festivals to link us with our past and create awareness for children. The National Economy has received a very big boost as a result of the foreign exchange obtained from the exportation of Nigerian costumes to other countries. Clothings has been used to produce beautiful, pleasant and welcoming home environments, (Akobi, 2004). Fashion and designing industry has been so effective In creating new designs as well as creating garment types for a particular ethnic area across the nation so much so

that innumerable varieties of clothing designs are provided for all. Clothing and Textiles have not yet been given required priority attention to solve not only development problems but also many other problems associated with human living. In the Home Economics world, there is much emphasis on other fields thereby neglecting the aspect of clothing and textiles (Awosika, 2004).

Causes of Lack of Creativity in Clothing and Textiles by Students

- Nonchalant attitude of Clothing and Textiles teachers in schools.
- Acute shortage of Clothing and Textiles teachers
- Poor facilities in the schools
- Poor funding

The Strategies to Improve the Creativity of Clothing and Textiles Students

The challenge for educators is to nourish and develop student's natural creativity and not to stifle it. There are many approaches that can help to promote creativity in learners:

- Encourage creative thinking at the group and individual levels.
- Brainstorming is a technique that could be used. Providing regular opportunities for hands-on experimentation, problem solving, discussion and collaborative work. (Mukherjee, 2002).
- Provide students with environments that stimulate creativity. This need can be met

- if an informal approach is used in place of formal or traditional approaches. Students should be given the liberty to undertake their own learning with as much freedom as they need. Projects could be based on issues of contemporary significance which the information needed may not be from the teachers or library but in the world of reality. (John, 2008).
- Do not over control students. Instead of dictating the activity they should be engaged in, let them select their Interest and you support their inclinations and you will be less likely to destroy their natural curiosity. When students are under constant surveillance their creative risk-taking and adventurous spirit diminish when teachers have grandiose, expectations for their performance (Amabile & Hannessy 1991).
 - Actively encouraging students to question, make corrections, envisaging what might be possible and exploring ideas.
 - Using failure or setbacks as opportunities to learn.
 - Facilitating open discussion of the problems pupils are facing and how they can solve them.
 - Asking open-ended questions such as "what and how might you?"
- Encourage internal motivation by ensuring that assessment procedures reflect and reward creativity, enterprise and innovation, make use of effective encouragement, praise and positive language.
 - Guide students to help them think in flexible ways.
 - Introduce students to creative people In the community and invite them to come and describe what helps them become creative or to demonstrate their creative skills.
 - Encouraging students to Improvise experiment and think outside the box

Conclusion

There is no gain-saying that Creativity in Clothing and Textiles contributed immensely towards National Development in terms of creating job opportunities, linking cultures, boosting the national economy and producing beautiful, pleasant and welcoming home environment. The teachers, parents and the government should assist the student trainees' creativity in the subject, so that after their training, they would not be job seekers but job creators.

Recommendations

This paper recommended the followings:

- Clothing and Textiles teachers should use appropriate method to bring out originality from the

- students they teach. They should always allow the opinion of the students to be important. Students should be given opportunity for judgmental thinking in clothing, Let them solve problems independently.
- Clothing and Textiles teachers should be humane and be open minded to allow the students recombine the already known facts into new combinations and relationships.
 - Clothing and Textiles teachers should also help students reflect on their ideas after periods of intense work.
 - Clothing and Textile teachers should encourage the students to be persistent in the face of failure to solve problems.
 - Students should be allowed to manipulate objects and ideas.
 - Students should be made to develop interest in the field Parents should be re-oriented on the concepts, scope and importance of Clothing and Textiles Education to individuals and to National growth while Government should on the other hand make efforts to ensure the availability of standard laboratories, equipment and tools.
 - Home Economics specialists should make Clothing and Textiles as important as other fields and therefore should not be neglected.

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