

CREATIVE WRITING FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NASARAWA STATE: A STUDY OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL ONE (I)

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Abstract

Creative writing is an interesting field of study and quite an important one too in the acquisition of language learning abilities. It stems purely out of enthusiasm from within and develops as time grows to evolve into something much desirable, knowledgeable and immensely necessary for the individual and societal development. This paper examined creative writing for sustainable economic development in Nasarawa State, the study of senior secondary school one (I). The research employed the quasi-experimental design using random selection of the students. Pre-test and post-test group was used for the study. The study divided the population into two groups; one experimental and the other control. Two public senior secondary schools were selected purposively from Nassarawa Eggon Local Government Area, 120 (70 male and 50 female) students in two intact classes per school were selected for the study. The instrument used was the Guided Essay Achievement Test (GEAT). The study revealed a significant difference in the mean achievement score in favour of the experimental group who had a higher score. The paper recommend that teachers should encourage students to share ideas so as to enable them develop their storylines, plot out their storylines, and guide their sentence development, vocabularies and the use of punctuations.

Keywords: Creative writing, sustainable development

Introduction

Our world is today on an unsustainable track, the global population is currently consuming over 2.5 times the amount of resources required for just one single planet Earth. This puts in question the sustainability of our living conditions and livelihoods under stress from climate change, water scarcity, pollution, poverty, and waste accumulation. To ensure the survival of the present and future generations, everyone must act now to eliminate poverty and bring about more social inclusion, to enhance educational and health levels, to mitigate the pace and effects of climate change and environmental as well as ecological degradation, and to prevent the loss of biodiversity (Hans d'Orville, 2019). All pose threats for every country and every person in developed and developing countries alike. To achieve long-term sustainability, we must strive for a creative economy, and come up with solutions.

Economic development is considered by the Nigerian government to be its central task and has led to vested interest and unparallel enthusiasm for growing the Nigerian economy. The pattern of development pursued so far has created a series of social and environmental problems. Severe damage is done to the Nigerian environment as well as natural resources as a result of the efforts to transform the natural environment to achieve rapid economic development (Anjana, Anuradha & Swati, 2009). Resource depletion and environmental pollution have become serious problems requiring a rethinking of governmental policies.

Robertson in Jeremiah (2016) argues that modern society is going through a fundamental transformation, reflected in many signs of institutional and cultural breakdown and in myriad constructive social innovations and experiments and this is a symptom of an underlying disorder. In the words of Bartle and Peter in Hans d'Orville(2019), the need for modern industrial society to be made sustainable is recognized worldwide. There is a growing

demand worldwide for a new policy shift in the direction of economic development and progress that will be people centered. This paper is concerned with enhancing creative writing skill among senior secondary school students (SSS) for sustainable economic development in Nasarawa State with particular reference to SS 1 students. Encouraging creativity and innovation, particularly among youths in the country can salvage Nigeria's failing economic and reduce the growing rate of youth unemployment (Jeremiah, 2016).

Conceptualization

Creativity

Creativity in a wider context is nothing but the capability of the brain to think more eventually that what the human mind can perceive, it is travelling through the myth of traditional writing and making it more enjoyable to read and interpret (Harshini, 2020). Other phrases to suggest creativity as thinking out of the box, lateral thinking and fluid intelligence (Anjana, Anuradha & Swati, 2009). Thinking out of the box is most crucial aspect for a creative writer as well as the reader who identifies the real meaning and enjoys the language for its flawlessness and originality. A simple matter can be given a deep thinking, a divergent kind of understanding and the right mix of fluid intelligence.

For a creative writer to be successful, he has to understand the taste of readers and accordingly model his writing. Creative writing is any writing that goes outside the bounds of normal professional, journalistic, academic, or technical forms of literature, typically identified by an emphasis on narrative craft, character development, and the use of literary tropes or with various traditions of poetry and poetics (Lee, cited in Harshini, 2020).

Sustainable Development

Development is associated with progress, advancement, and the ability to provide for the material well-being of all citizens. It is the advancement in the social, economic, political, and spiritual well-being of all citizens. It involves social harmony and economic growth. Sustainable development is the development that leads to the fulfillment of societal ideals. United Nations General Assembly in 1987 defined sustainable development as the development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs. It is development that is regenerating and self-sustaining. It is a development that is needed to maximize the output of citizens. The satisfaction of physical, mental, spiritual needs and the mastery of environment are the parameters of development when applied to human society (Nbuezor & Ozioka in Bashar, 2017). Sustainable development is only possible when the capacity of human beings is built through the process of human resource development which education is the regulator.

Sustainable development in the words of Omolayo & Kolawole in Omotayo & Usman, (2017) which could be regarded as a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance with current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations. In this respect of satisfying human aspirations and needs is the major objective of development while sustainable development is development which meets the needs of the present generation without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable human development, which forms an integral part of sustainable national

development as a process of change, stresses the importance of participation as a means to sustain the development process and to ensure a more equitable distribution of beneficiaries created by development initiatives.

Language Learning and Creativity

Language learning can be made enjoyable with little enthusiasm on the part of the learner. This enthusiasm would deepen once the learner shifts his focus to creative articles that are seen in plenty in books, articles, magazines, newspapers etc. The source of a creative article would have anyway originated from a convergent thinking and the creative writer would have adopted divergent means to make his writing more enjoyable adding more of puns and creative intelligence (Harshini, 2020). Through creative elements fused into a work, vocabulary learning becomes much easier. Instead of learning any particular word in vacuum, it would be enjoyable if it is fused in an article or a poem such that the meaning becomes clearer and can help the learner to acclimatize it in regular usage. From Fashion to architecture, from hand-held devices to gardening, from management to education, from computer games to interior design, everyone seems to believe that creativity is ‘a good thing’. It also comes top of Maslow’s pyramid and Bloom’s Taxonomy (Maley & Kiss, 2018).

In concrete materials, creativity is easily found whereas in abstract terms, creativity struggles to find a proper foothold. Unlike olden days where reading was restricted to only books in hand, the present generation has ample things in front of them to explore their creativity and language learning abilities. For writers in the 21st century the ground has shifted-or, to put it less disturbingly-the horizon has broadened. The processes of writing and publishing have changed fundamentally since 1990. Touch pads and screens replaced pens and paper. Apples replaced Olivetti’s. Cut and paste barely recalls the use of scissors and glue. Writer and Editor are programs as well as people. Authors now contribute significantly to their own publicity and marketing. Self-publishing-once derided (at least in the academy) as vanity-has become respectable....The list of differences goes on (Krauth, 2016). The use of modern technology has had an impact on the writers so seriously that they were forced to adapt to not only the differences in the surroundings and working patterns but also in the kind of results they bring in for new avenues and subsequently the system of writing they need to do.

Creativity holds firm its roots in almost all areas. The world supports creative ideas a lot nowadays and it has almost become a professional norm. There was a time when people would stick to age old ideas and traditional dosages but the door is now more open to modern and creative thinking ideas and embraces them to the extent that it spreads everywhere no matter the time and place. To overcome this and help language learners much focused on creative writing, schools must make it a point to see that children practiced writing creatively from childhood. It should not always be constructed text and one way interaction on the part of the teacher but the other way around where children will be active learners. English language classroom is the best place to bring out creativity in children. They can be given a topic of their choice and the type of writing can also be their own choice. The teacher can act as a moderator and encourage the children as they come out with interesting topics. Encouragement is the first step in creative writing process. It stimulates the brain to work hard and eventually come out with interesting concepts.

Creative writing is splashed in story books which become wonderful sources for language learning. Chimamanda's 'Half of a Yellow Sun, The Things Around Your Neck', Okparanta's 'The New Yorker, Tin House', and Okereke's 'Bitter leaf' to mention a few, were such beautiful tales of creativity that anyone reading it will have unforgettable memories with characters etched in mind forever. Each story deals with different kinds of characters and the story lines are completely different from one another. The tales can be narrated to children either in the classroom or at home and a number of questions regarding the tales can be posed to the children who can answer them only eagerly. Though there is no logic in the tales, it can be read for its high imaginative thinking and wonderful etching of characters. Values can be taught through reading the tales such as respect for fellow beings, controlling anger, showering love and affection etc.

Creative Writing and its uses

By the use of creative writing, the following things are accomplished:

- Creative writing helps in various levels of language learning like grammar, vocabulary, phonetics and discourse.
- It promotes "Language Play" i.e. it motivates learners to play with language in their own creative style.
- Through language play, learners can be unmindful of the risks and just explore experiment and manipulate language.
- Creative writing stimulates the right and left brain to think beyond what is merely possible and can promote a balanced thinking.
- By experimenting with texts of various kinds and the creative style used in it, they come closer to imaginative skills and can also intuitively learn how to adopt it in their language usage.
- Expository writing can be improved on a large scale through creative writing; to make self-choice and creating expressive pieces at free will.

Allowing students to risk expression of their thoughts and feelings in an imaginative way is one of the best things that the school can do for them. When expressed via the written word, you have creative writing. Be it fiction or nonfiction, poetry or prose, well-developed or hardly so, creative writing is a fundamental tool of self-empowerment. Through creative writing as observed by Trelani in Harshini (2020) students will learn how to, or gain more practice in:

1. Brainstorming
2. Creating something from nothing
3. Revising
4. Publishing (should that be your choice)

In turn, with consistent writing, all age ranges improved their overall communication skills and comprehension levels. Others have also experienced an upturn in their:

- i. Love of reading
- ii. Curiosity of other arts
- iii. Elected solitude

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- iv. Empathy
- v. Self-awareness
- vi. Self-esteem

vii. Self-confidence

Erhun cited by Zygmunt (2016) in work titled a sustainable approach to development in Nigeria opined that the required elements to achieve high rates of sustainable economic development includes

- i. sound environmental management
- ii. capable and well-equipped human capital
- iii. a government that is accountable
- iv. engaging the private sectors
- v. building economic foundations
- vi. building strong financial base
- vii. effective policies and institutions
- viii. sustainable economy initiatives and
- ix. increasing agricultural productivity

But consider capable and well-equipped human capital as the most essential of all the elements. This is to say that all the other elements are dependent on man and his manipulative skills. Further she observed that, one of the barriers to the strengthening of economic development is lack of entrepreneurial, marketing and management skills to take advantage of growth opportunities. People are at the centre of sustainable economic development.

A skilled workforce is an important foundation for sustainable economic development. A workforce that has acquired new knowledge and skills to increase their productivity and revenue generating potential is essential. Nigeria needs to build capable and well equipped human capital and effective demand driven skill training programme are critical if the Nigerian workforce is to acquire the required skills to meet changing labour market opportunities.

Nigerians must be motivated to develop new skills that will expand knowledge and meet every challenge that limit their opportunities. It takes a diversely skilled and qualified workforce that is well equipped to meet the demands of the economy if sustainable economic development is to be attained. Employment potentials of Nigerians need to be improved upon for increased access to and benefits from opportunities in the informal and formal business sector. Nigeria needs to create economic opportunities that will enable those living in poverty to reach their potentials with jobs, business ownership and investment opportunities. This can only be achieved when the nation is made of up creative writers who would use their skills to turn around their fortune and others through their writings.

Statement of the Problem

It is believed that writing is important and frequently used in people's daily lives either as individual for such as writing application letter, messages and dissemination of thoughts and research results or members of society for such as in workplace issues. Writing is also taught in formal education considering the importance of having the ability and good skills of writing. Creative Writing helps the individual to be focused, improve his/her dedication and commitment which all the skills employers are looking for in a candidate. Writing creatively also develop creative thoughts, the use of imagination, suggest alternatives, broaden thoughts process and problem-solving abilities. By developing this fundamental skill, it can bring about sustainable economic development in any society especially in Nigeria.

Research Questions

This study sought to provide answers to the following research question:
What is the difference between the mean score achievement of students taught creative writing and those were not taught?

Research Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was tested at 0.05 significant levels in this study

- There is no significant difference in the pre-test mean score of students in the experimental and control group in creative writing achievement test.
- There is no significant difference in the post-test mean score of students in the experimental and control group in creative writing achievement test.

Method of Data Analysis

The research design adopted for this study is the quasi-experimental design of pre-test, post-test, non-randomized groups which comprised two-groups, one experimental and the other control. Both groups were pre-tested each on written English achievement before the administration of treatment.

The treatment was then administered to the students in the experimental group only; while students in the control group were taught conventional composition writing which implies no treatment. A Post-test was administered after treatment to both groups of students to determine their creativity achievement in writing poetry, short stories, plays, songs, speeches etc.

The target population of the study comprised all Senior Secondary School year one (SS I) students of the public secondary schools in Nassarawa Eggon Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. The total population of SS I students in the L.G.A is 6,988 and a total of 56 secondary schools. Two schools were selected purposively for the study namely: Government Secondary School (GSS) (ISLAMIC), and Government Secondary School (GSS) (RCM), Nassarawa Eggon. RCM was taken as the experimental school while GSS ISLAMIC as control group. In each of the selected school, two intact classes from the SS I arm were selected by the simple random method for the study. 120 students were sampled from the two schools (70 males and 50 females).

One validated instrument was used to collect data for the study: the Guided Essay Achievement Test (GEAT). The instrument comprised six essay questions (expository and narrative essay type) from which students answered any two. Each essay type-question was judged by the use of the Guided Writing Scale adopted from Bayern (2010) which covers task achievement (content), cohesion and coherence (organization, linking), grammar (range, accuracy) and vocabulary (range, accuracy). These four were scored 25 marks each (100 marks in all). The research took six weeks to be completed. The reliability of Guided Essay Achievement Test (GEAT) was determined by test-retest reliability method. It gave a coefficient $r = 0.83$ when subjected to the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics; hence, adjudged internally consistent and suitable for the study.

Results and Findings

The research questions were answered by statistical mean and standard deviation while the hypothesis was analyzed by the t-test at $P \leq 0.05$. The analysis was done by the aid of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS version 26).

Table 1 shows the comparison of the mean score achievement gained by the experimental and the control groups. It revealed that the experimental group had a higher mean score achievement gain of 33.5 while the control group had 8.6. This indicates that the experimental group achieved more than the control group in writing creatively.

Table 1. Comparison of mean score gains of groups (Pre-test).

Status	N	Pretest	Posttest	Gains
Experimental	70	28.6	62.1	33.5
Control	50	27.4	36.0	8.6
Total	120			

Source: Field, 2021

Table 2 revealed the value $t = -6.622$ at 76 degree of freedom has a corresponding $P = 0.002$ which is $P \leq 0.05$. Therefore $P = 0.0001$ is significant; hence, the null hypothesis is hereby rejected. This implies that a significant difference exists between the mean achievement score of students in the experimental and control groups.

Table 2. Paired t-test Analysis on the mean achievement of Groups (Post-test).

GROUP	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	P-value	Remark
Experimental	70	62.1	11.52	76	-6.622	0.0001*	Reject
HO1							
Control	50	36.0					
Total	120						

Source: Field, 2021

Discussions

From Table 1 the experimental group had a higher mean score gain. Also, Table 2 on the t-test analysis revealed the existence of a significant difference ($P = 0.0001$) in the mean score of students. Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected which implies that the students taught creative writing achieved better than students taught using the conventional composition method of writing and hence, had better innovative and creative competence in writing.

Anderson (2020) opined that creative writing will help to improve students' intellectual skills. Their sentence structure, vocabulary and use of punctuation will be notably more advanced than others of the same age who do not practice creative writing. Further, he observed that, inspiring your child to be creative develops a wide range of skills while building confidence. This helps them to develop into powerful adults, who can communicate their points of view, thoughts and feelings very clearly.

Shaw & Jess (2012) observed that students' creativity is supported by a process through which they can follow their ideas and motivations as they develop their creative approaches. Central to this is the ability to reflect on, to discuss and debate the processes at work in creative writing.

Conclusion

The best form of education is the one that opens our minds to think critically, our hearts to embrace all even when we disagree and our hands to be practical in all endeavors. Nigerian problems can only be solved through a purpose laden education in English language that is desired by all and sundry Obuasi (2006). If the idea of sustainable development is to create a system that is sustainable, which means that one can keep going indefinitely into the future, then the English language becomes a key factor to unending development in Nigeria in the areas of education, economic empowerment and national unity which can be initiated with a simple poem or a short piece of writing. Thus, creative writing is a blessing to mankind and there are innumerable examples to show how language abilities have developed/empower people just through their imaginative skill and curiosity for writing.

Recommendations

The paper recommends that teachers should;

Encourage students to share ideas, for such can help in developing their storylines

Help students by plotting out a story line, a child can help to develop organization and create drama or surprises in their story.

Inspire students to be creative and develop a wide range activity that will improve their skills and develop their confidence in writing

Encourage students to write their ideas down, while guiding them to complete the story will develop a range of important lifelong skills

Develop their problem solving skills using their imaginations and logical skills

Guide students' sentence, vocabularies and use of punctuations while practicing creative writing, to enable them improve their intellectual ability to achieve.

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