Creative and Innovative Practices in the Management of Secondary Schools in Nigeria; the Benue State Experience

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Abstract
The paper addressed issues of creative and innovative practices in the management of secondary school education in Nigeria. Creativity underscores production of response or idea or product which is novel, original and uncommon. In some cases, local materials are transformed into something national or international. The National Policy on Education has stressed the creative and innovative practices in enhancing teaching and learning based on proper management of secondary schools as a key to the 21st century transformation of education. It sees creative and innovative persons to be energetic, flexible, fluent, are risk takers and are often motivated by challenges. This paper therefore has taken a look at creative and innovative practices in the management of secondary education in Nigeria. The concepts of creativity and innovation as applied in management principles are explored. Implications of the creative and innovative management practices of secondary education with reference to Benue State are drawn. Based on this conceptual discourse, the paper has made some recommendations.

Keywords: Creativity, Innovation, Practices, Management, Secondary Schools, Experience, National Policy on Education.

Introduction
Education goes beyond mere literacy because it provides opportunity for the beneficiary to realize his/her potentials, goals and ambitions in life. Educational to Udokang (2006) therefore includes the acquisition of functional skills, moral identity and ambition to succeed in life. However, education is seen as having two ideas leading into new knowledge and experience and the other that of feeding to grow and develop. The implication is that, educational ventures must be nursed, full of creativity and innovation to create and discover new things, what Agogo (2009) said is like a living organism that grows.

The structural framework of education is hierarchical in nature, and these different strata are comprised of individuals with differing goals, interests and perspectives. Each segment and sector of education possesses different cultures, practices, policies and goals. What this means is that, there is need to constantly review educational programmes and also update practices in line with research findings and policy matters.
Research findings encourage changes in school programmes across the globe. Effective change to any organizational structure in any school setting is not an easily obtainable goal as there are dynamics which Swenson (1997) orally may resist the proposed change. Some of the barriers to effective creative and innovative changes include the perception of stakeholders, lack of holistic approach as well as absence of follow-up or support programmes. When creative and innovative practices are introduced into school management, noticeable educational developments are expected to be evident. This is because schools are unique organizations, and stakeholders are not only those within the physical boundaries of a school, but parents, caregivers, passers-by, social welfare groups, information seekers and others, with different cultural backgrounds. Any creative and innovative practice introduced into such a school is intellectually analyzed before the school Head systematically enforces such changes. Such changes are expected to enhance academic performance of the learners.

The new era of creative and innovative practices in the secondary school management is expected to help in sustaining the future of education in Nigeria. New ideas would be generated to advance the course of school development in the 21st century Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification
There are some concepts that are better understood when they are operationally defined. Creativity is the use of imagination and skills to develop a new or unique product, object process or thought. According to Ortese (2009: 2), creativity viewed as the Gestalt Psychologists “is the mind’s power of imagination and sight that creates something new, original and valuable”. Creativity is a tool used in problem analysis, research, innovation, development, management, arts, communication and so on”. A creative idea or product is novel and is of value either for the thinker or for the beneficiary. A creative idea can also be a production of response or an idea or product which is novel, special, original and uncommon. Characteristics of creative persons include being intellectually curious with high perceptual ability. A creative person is energetic, flexible and is motivated by challenges to test his creativity.

Innovation is adoption of old ideas or materials for new uses, which may invariably lead to positive changes. Denga (1993) saw innovations as new ideas, new methods or interventions aimed at improvement of a programme or venture. This is to avoid state of obsolescence, especially in educational establishments. That is, innovation is the transformation of ideas into marketable products and process. This means that innovation comes with new changes that enhance the state and standard of the products or processes. This is in agreement with Amidon (2001) in Agogo (2009), described innovation as the creation, evolution, exchange and application of new ideas into marketable decision making, providing feedback, negotiation, self-esteem and risk management. Innovative practices therefore involve bringing changes in the practical management of an establishment or organization. Innovation implies the process of translating an idea or invention into goods and services that create value for people concerned. Management entails the way, means and direction a line of communication is handled and translated to useful purposes. Management is making sure the job gets done, whether you do it or you delegate and tell people what needs to be done (Wikipedia n.d). It implies that person or persons controlling and directing the affairs of a business, establishment or institution. In this case, it is the management of secondary school education in Nigeria. The synonyms of
management and administration, authourity, directorates, bureaucracy, care, stewardship or watchfulness, all pointing to the fact that, the element of direction and leadership is implied here, meaning handling of something with a degree of skill (Wikipedia, n.d).

Management of secondary school education means the general administration and control of secondary school education in Nigeria. Management in this sense therefore means the process of designing and maintaining of an environment in which people work together, so as to accomplish the institution’s goals and aspirations.

Secondary education is the education children receive after primary and before the tertiary stage (FRN, 2004). The National policy on Education gave the broad goals of secondary education to be to prepare the individual for useful living within the society and to gain admission to higher education. In specific terms, secondary education is expected to raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour, appreciate those values specified under the broad national goals and to live as good citizens (FRN, 2004). These specific goals of secondary education are in agreement with Akpakwu (2008) that the main role of education is to transform human beings in a society to be responsible and functional members of their society. It also implies that school administrators who are not guided by efficient planning usually fail in their responsibilities and may never achieve the set goals of the school.

The National Policy on Education and Secondary School Education in Nigeria
The philosophy of Nigeria education among others are that, education is an instrument for national development; education fosters the worth and development of the individual and for the general development of the society. The Nigerian philosophy of education is therefore based on the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen. The national educational goals are therefore the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity and the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies (FRN, 2004).

Secondary education is divided into three years of junior secondary school and three years of senior secondary school. In analyzing the National Policy on Education, Udida (2010; 134), informed that “education is rated very high in the national development plans due to the role it plays in character training, moral values, social, economic and political transformation”. Education brings about changes from the traditional to global ways of rethinking in terms of information technology and technological transformation. This is why Denga (2005), sees education as a precursor and harbinger of socio-economic, political, industrial aesthetic and cultural development. Education is therefore a tool for all-round development, which the learner initiates as he/she is stimulated through teaching.

From the analysis of the National Policy on Education, it shows that education is universally acclaimed as the most effective tool for change, having capacity of changing the behavior patterns of people, societal values and outcome. National policy encourages creativity and innovation and it is entrepreneurial too, coupled with creative thinking. National Policy sees education as the most potent tool for change, for human capacity building and national transformation. Moving towards quality education for all can only be achieved through concrete
educational innovation. Functional education as enshrined in the national policy shows that the Nigerian educational sector, especially secondary school system, has witnessed a lot of reforms and innovations to match the changing society and there is still room for further improvement.

Concept of creativity and school Management
Creativity as a concept has acquired varied connotations, depending on the context in which it is used. The result of this is that, many people define it as it suits their intentions. For instance, Hurlock (1981) defined creativity as a conscious process, not a one short affair, but is cyclical, sequential and goal-oriented. Creativity usually leads to creation of new ideas, new objects, products that are statistically infrequent, original and valuable. It is a process by which known elements are arranged to produce more useful ideas that were previously unconcealed. It means that, creativity is a tool of bringing in new changes, reforms or innovations in organization in which school management is a part.

All the definitions point to the fact that creativity and innovations mean new ideas, new concepts, new and better alternative ways of doing things. It should be stressed that secondary school management is placed in the hands of teachers and the school administration who direct the affairs of the school. Today a lot depends on both the teachers and the administrator who are faced with modern challenges that need creative and innovative practices. The teacher and the school administrator should devise ways to detect contrary behaviours from students that tend to undermine their administrative authority.

Fencer (2004) observed that facility management is a process that ensures that buildings and other technical systems support the operations of an organization such as the school. School facilities are the material resources that are provided for staff and students to optimize their productivity in the teaching and learning processes. Facility management is a collective responsibility of both the principal and the staff in a school system. It is only a creative school administrator that is able to harness the various organs of the school for effective management. The characteristics of a creative person show that he/she is,

i, intellectually curious
ii, of high perceptual ability, alert and enhances high thinking ability
iii, determined as he keeps trying inspite of failure
iv, morally disciplined, he maintains ethical standard, being well behaved
v, intrinsically motivated by personal goals
vi, imaginative and possess a great deal of energy, among others.

Creativity according to Guilford and Tenopyr (1968), means any mental process or interrelated set of processes in which an individual generates information he did not have before. The implication is that if a student's or teacher's end product is something he never thought of before, that person has exhibited creative behaviour. The school management should encourage creative behaviours by providing appropriate institutional materials that the students would interact with. This would make the students to be fully involved in teaching-learning interactions. This act would help to eradicate vices such as examination malpractice and cultism, among others.

Concept of Innovative Practices and School Management
Innovation connotes new ideas, methods or devices in education. It is a decisive operation carried out with a view to installing a given change to be accepted and used. It is a situation where new idea is introduced into a system. This means that, innovation is a process of transferring an idea or invention into goods and services. It is a deliberate application of information, imagination and initiatives involved in deriving greater and different values from resources. This includes all processes by which new ideas are generated and converted into useful products.

In a social context such as the school, innovation helps to create new methods for administrative alliance, creating joint venturing and acceptable flexible work hours, where every member of the school system has a say in the administrative set up too. This means that the management of secondary education for the new millennium in Nigeria in this modern and dynamic society, the management of the educational system requires an equally dynamic and enterprising leadership, who is creative and innovative. It is at the secondary school level that children always want to find expressions for themselves, so they create many administrative challenges. It is also at this level that the children’s learning is critical and needs special handling (Agogo, Ogbeba & Damkor-Ikpa, 2013).

An innovative administrator is always able to blend issues between the school and the community. Such a leader knows that facilities used for academic work may be available for the community’s use after the school hours. It takes the careful handling and managerial skills of the school head to cope with this kind of school-community relationship (Asiabaka, n.d). However, Akomolafe (2011) opined that lack of policy guidelines for implementation of management decision by school principals hampers innovative practices.

Concept of quality assurance of National Policy on Education gave guidelines for reforms and innovation of school programmes in Nigeria to include:

i. Starting the implementation of the administrative programme with only few schools, with properly defined objectives and techniques.

ii. The essential support series from funding agencies, stakeholders and parents

iii. Implementers of the new management programmes should be committed leaders and administrators.

Generally, Honeywell Australia (1999) posited that the identification of areas to be improved upon in the school management principles, is the first step in the change process or innovation, which they liken to “Business process reengineering”. Similarly Smith and Scott (1990) posited that in the classroom, individual teachers are in a position to instigate innovative practices and processes, especially with respect to class size and teaching periods per day.


Education is an important instrument of change and national transformation in Nigeria and indeed, elsewhere. This is why education system is emphasized in the national development plan as contained in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004). When this is translated into practical terms, it means that headship of school systems should be creative and innovative so as to cope with the changes in the school system. When the school system is not able to match
leadership qualities with such changes, the school sinks and drowns in the ocean of hopelessness, indecision and confusion, lacking direction and initiatives.

Udokang (2006) thought that innovation in education refers to new positive trends and new ideas that are introduced into school system to improve educational theory and practice. Some of these innovations in education may include distance learning, continuous assessment movement, science and technology movement, extra moral and remedial programmes as well as partnership in education, because education is a monumental enterprise that needs support from stakeholders. A creative and innovative administrator is able to harness these different educational innovations, which may be indigenous or transformed and adapted from other more advanced countries. It should be stressed that the managerial practices of the secondary school administrators is focused on enhancing all round development, aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the organizations. This means that, management process involves proper decision making at all levels. In this era of creative and innovative practices in the administration of secondary education in Nigeria, educators must emphasize practice instruction as against theory; this is because old solutions for new emerging problem will not suffice in today’s educational enterprise.

Torrance (1968) had earlier given a checklist that may be useful in assessing the creative involvement of students in a school system;

i, Bodily involvement in writing, reading
ii, Tendency to challenge ideas of authorities
iii, Habits of checking many sources
iv, Tendency to take a close look at things
v, Tendency to show relationships among apparently unrelated ideas
vi, Manifestations of curiosity
vii, Imaginative distractibility, and
viii, Self-initiated learning projects among others. It is difficult to see many school teachers encourage students to be creative with what creative abilities are as outlined above. This is an evident need to encourage Nigerian school authourities to practice students’ involvement in creative and innovative activities.

It is only when the school head is properly motivated that he/she becomes creative and innovative, which is lacking in most schools in Nigeria

The Benue Experience

Benue State is a home of functional education as it is the biggest industry in the state. The government of Benue state has grant-aided many secondary schools so as to maintain standard and uniformity in the management of secondary education, the expectations of the state government is for all secondary school communities who can lend their helping hands in the development of the creative abilities of both the staff and students in these schools. This is similar to Michael (1968) who posited that in schools, greater emphasis should be placed on the means for the development and manifestation of creative behaviour in the learners rather than on only teaching activity itself as a creative process.
The secondary schools are on special list and staffs are paid regularly, which is an added incentive to the teachers. It spurs the teachers to bring life into their teaching, being creative and innovative. In the same way, secondary school administrators are creative and resourceful in their governance of the schools in the state. The school foundation should be properly laid, to enhance the super structure in the year’s ahead (secondary and tertiary institutions). Creativity therefore, needs to be nurtured in students in all schools in Benue state and indeed Nigeria for greater development.

Conclusion
Education at whatever level, involves knowing and understanding some identified things that helps to transmit knowledge in a morally acceptable manner. The implication is that, the learners should not be forced to learn or even be deceived by what is taught to them. There must be a relatively permanent in the behaviour of the learners in terms of being innovative and creative practices. This behaviour change will positively affect the learner to be part of the development processes of life, especially in the management of activities and resources. This is the basis for the introduction of the National policy on Education in Nigeria.

Recommendations
Based on these analyses, it is recommended that,
1. Nigerian school system should be provided with facilities that would stimulate creative and innovative instincts in both the teachers and learners.
2. Teachers and school administrators should be motivates to make them creative and instill the same spirits in the learners. Such people are dedicated and innovative.
3. Sustainability in education especially the secondary school level can only be achieved if greater emphasis is placed in the learners rather than the creative process which is the demand of the present era.

References


