

## ***Teacher Characteristics, Creative Teaching Techniques and Effective Learning of the Nigerian Child***

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### **Abstract**

*Teacher characteristics and creative teaching techniques employed by the teacher play significant roles in effective teaching and learning. This paper examined the concepts of teacher characteristics and creative teaching techniques and how these influence the learning of the Nigerian child. Three (3) domains of teacher characteristics examined were personal, professional and pedagogical characteristics. Creative teaching techniques proposed for teachers' use included creative instructional design, creative learning environment, creative lesson delivery and creative learning resources. The paper outlined some recommendations such as provision of enabling environment by school administrators and government to foster creative thinking in the teacher, organization of periodic workshops, seminar, conferences and intensive in-service training on creative teaching in the twenty first century for teachers, and acquisition of computer knowledge/skills by the teachers to access online information that can foster creativity.*

**Keywords:** Teacher, characteristics, creative, teaching, learning, environment

### **Introduction**

The teacher is a key facilitator of learning. Teachers have long-lasting impacts on students' behaviour, academic performance and life achievements. The teacher holds the key to sound education (Akintunde, 2011). However, teaching is a complex activity (Eya, 2007) that requires careful preparation and planning of lesson objectives and activities on a daily basis (Strong, 2007). Consequently, the teacher needs to imbibe and display appropriate characteristics that will enhance his/her effectiveness and achievement of the lesson objectives. Orlando (2013) noted that teaching skills come naturally for some teachers but others have to work hard to display effective instructional characteristics.

Teacher characteristics are features that portray individual teacher's personality, responsibilities and behaviours. These teacher characteristics determine, to a large extent, the effectiveness of the teacher in the classroom as well as students'

achievement. For instance, students easily lose interest in what is taught by an uncaring, unfriendly and impatient teacher, no matter how competent (professionally) the teacher is. Furthermore, the present day teacher needs to possess creative teaching skills and techniques to foster students' learning. Creativity involves newness, originality, imaginative/critical thinking and combination of ideas in novel ways for quality products (Chavez-Falke, 2010; Akintunde, 2017; Torrance, 1995). The present day student functions in a computer age, characterized by technological and creative innovations. The teacher needs to be creative and also engage in creative teaching to be effective. An intellectually sound teacher that lacks creative teaching techniques of lesson delivery or dissemination of facts may find it difficult to achieve the lesson objectives or meet the learning challenges of students. Therefore, this article focuses on teacher characteristics, creative teaching techniques and effective learning of the Nigerian child.

### **Teacher Characteristics**

Teacher characteristics refer to capabilities and qualities of a teacher that promote effective teaching and learning. According to Hill, Charalambous and Chin (2018), teacher characteristics are concerned with how teacher preparation and experience, knowledge, mindset and habits relate to students' outcomes. Beyond providing the context of knowledge, the teacher should create conducive learning environment that promotes critical thinking and expression of thoughts on the part of students (University of Technology, (UTS), 2018). Teacher characteristics play significant roles in giving the learner a conducive environment to learn.

### **Creative Teaching**

Creativity entails problem-solving, imaginative skills, new ways of doing things and combining ideas in novel ways for quality products (Akintunde & Eseyin, 2017). Creative teaching connotes the use of imaginative, critical thinking and innovative skills in making teaching and learning effective. A creative teacher is one who has initiative and rubs this trait on his teaching. Belkaddas (2010) posited that creative teachers use their own initiative in adopting appropriate teaching techniques and methods for effective teaching. Copley (2001) submitted that it is pertinent for teachers to adjust their knowledge and attitudes towards teaching in order to accommodate creative teaching. Effective teacher characteristics should reflect creative teaching.

### **Teacher Characteristics and Learning**

There are many characteristics and skills that make up an effective teacher. Many scholars proposed various attributes of an effective teacher (Palmer, 2015; University of East England, (UEA), n.d; Orlando, 2013). Generally, teacher characteristics are classified into three (3), namely, personal, professional and pedagogical characteristics.

(i) Personal characteristics

An effective teacher possesses the following personal characteristics: He/she is

(a) Patient – in dealing with students, teaching below-average students, evaluating and scoring students. An effective teacher is willing to listen to students' problems (Peterson-Deluca, 2016).

(b) Enthusiastic – about teaching; demonstrates passion for teaching and so makes lessons interesting. Students look forward to his coming to class

(c) Creative – employs new approaches to impart knowledge and make teaching interesting; he is open to new ideas.

(d) Caring – nurtures the students, builds students' self-esteem and encourages students to achieve their goals in life. Cheerfulness and friendliness exhibited by the teacher prepare the ground for caring for students. An effective teacher is caring (Orlando, 2016).

(e) Disciplined – exercises self-control over anger and use of the tongue in relating with students.

(f) Energetic – in moving about and carrying out instructional activities; should be strong and healthy to impart knowledge.

(g) Humorous – injects humour into learning situation to reduce tension, to introduce a learning activity and to prepare the ground for cordial teacher-student relationship. A positive atmosphere enhances students' learning (Oda, 2017).

(h) Morally upright – is honest and does not take undue advantage of the opposite sex (student) in terms of sexual immorality; he is not given to alcoholism and hard drugs which may have negative influence on students' learning.

(ii) Professional Characteristics

a) Knowledge of Subject Matter: A good teacher should be intellectually sound and should have incredible knowledge of the subject matter he/she teaches. He should acquire the necessary qualifications for teaching. According to Oda (2017), teachers must be knowledgeable about the subject taught.

b) Knowledge of students' capabilities: He/she knows the stage of development and capability of each student.

c) Updated Knowledge: He/she regularly updates his/her knowledge as a professional in order to give out quality instruction to students, by attending conferences, refresher courses and workshops from time to time.

d) Maintenance of Professionalism: He/she maintains professionalism in all endeavours, including appearance, preparations for the day's work, organizational and communication skills exhibited in effective lesson delivery (Orlando, 2013). He/she adheres to ethics of the teaching profession.

(iii) Pedagogical Characteristics

a) Well-planned instruction: The teacher determines how the curriculum content is delivered in the classroom (Stronge, 2007). Effective teachers have lesson plans for

specific lessons, identify clear lesson objectives, select appropriate teaching methods and materials and create quality assignments for evaluation.

b) Clarity in explanations, speech and writing: An effective teacher explains concepts clearly. He makes abstract concepts easy to understand by giving detailed explanations and using examples, illustration, and analogies. Clarity in speech is also important with good pronunciations and correct grammatical expressions. Also, there should be legibility in writing especially on the chalkboard or white board. Clarity and stimulation of students' interest promote effective teaching (Feldman, 1976).

c) Organized instruction: An effective teacher properly organizes his/her instruction. He teaches from "simple" to "complex" or from "Introduction" to "Conclusion". An effective teacher makes use of well-prepared lessons (UTS, 2018).

d) Classroom Management: The teacher manages students' adherence to classroom/school rules and ensures that students are actively engaged in the lesson. He manages students' behaviour during lessons, ensures good class arrangement and appropriate teacher movement. An excellent lesson plan may be rendered useless if there is no effective classroom management.

e) Evaluation of Students: Effective teachers are concerned with students' progress in learning. Formative and summative evaluation procedures are used in assessing students. Effective teachers make adept use of questioning to generate appropriate responses from students. The teacher also gives feedback to students.

These teacher characteristics influence lesson planning and delivery and subsequent learning by students. For instance, an enthusiastic teacher uses an excited voice to teach and students are well motivated to learn the subject. Likewise, a creative teacher uses his/her initiative to provide or improvise relevant instructional materials for students. The materials are creatively designed thereby enhancing students' learning. Demonstration of professional and pedagogical characteristics by the teacher also aid students' comprehension and performance in a learning situation.

### **Creative Teaching Techniques and Learning**

Creative teaching techniques should be employed for effectiveness in teaching/learning. Creativity is about newness or new ideas and products (Chavez-Fakle, 2010; Levin, 1978). Creative teaching entails creating a learning atmosphere that invites learners to make use of their imaginative, generative and evaluative skills (Cremin & Barnes, 2018). For a teacher to use creative teaching techniques, he/she must be creative. It is difficult to give what you do not have. A creative teacher should exude flexibility in thought, perception and action (Akintunde, 2017); he should be imaginative, open to new ideas, engage in critical thinking and be broad-minded. These creative teacher traits are manifested in the utilization of creative teaching techniques in the classroom.

The underlisted creative teaching techniques are proposed for the teacher's use:

(i) Creative Design of Instruction

Instruction should be creatively designed and in line with developmentally appropriate practices. Instruction should be from simple to complex and should match the level of development of the students. The attention span and rate of assimilation should be considered. The design should indicate creative activities to engage the students in order to avoid boredom. Creativity erodes boredom and promotes enthusiasm in the classroom (Oda, 2017).

(ii) Creative Lesson Delivery

There should be clarity in teacher's expressions; no slangs should be used. Concepts should be clearly explained; voice should be audible, rate of presentation should match the student's level (e.g. not too fast or too slow); pitch can be high and low on different occasions during lesson delivery. Creative lesson delivery is boosted by teacher's liveliness, enthusiasm or excitement and teacher's movement in class. Examples, illustrations and diagrams can be creatively used by the teacher. Pre-determined examples can be used. On the spot (impromptu) examples seen in the environment can also be used as the occasion demands. These make comprehension easier for the students.

(iii) Creative Class Activities

Students should be actively engaged in a lesson. The teacher should not do all the talking. He should ask students questions and give them practical classroom activities. Take students on field trips, provide hands-on experiences for students. He should give projects that will help students to explore. Teachers that possess creative skills are more effective than others (Stronge, 2002).

(iv) Creative improvisation and use of instructional materials

To teach creatively, the teacher needs to improvise instructional materials as necessary and use the instructional materials appropriately. For instance, in designing a chart, the rules guiding design of a chart should be adhered to e.g. clear drawings, bold title, no complicated write ups or labeling, wide cardboard/paper used and colourful chart. Aesthetic satisfaction is a criterion for judging creativity. Also, the chart should be used at the appropriate time (e.g. to explain or introduce the lesson) and not after conclusion.

(v) Creative learning environment

The teacher should provide a stimulating learning environment for the learner. Environmental factors play significant roles in fostering creativity (Richardson, 1988). In Nigeria, students' desks and chairs are often arranged in rows. A teacher can re-design the arrangement to suit the lesson. For instance, students' chairs can be arranged in groups or semi-circle to suit the lesson (e.g. for demonstration in class, Art drawings etc). Colourful decorations and posters on the wall also contribute to stimulating learning environment. A creative school environment motivates learners to engage in self-discovery (Alfuhaigi, (2015).

(vi) Creative Methods of teaching

Various teaching methods are available but these should be used creatively and appropriately. Two or three methods can be used in a lesson depending on the topic. Using songs to teach and acting drama can easily motivate learners (Constantinides, 2015).

(vii) Creative Learning Resources: ICT

The teacher should make use of technology to impart knowledge to encourage student's acquisition of further information. The teacher should be ICT compliant (or computer literate) to be able to use online resources (e.g. Google). Technology keeps developing from time to time (Palmer, 2015), and so the teacher should regularly update his ICT skills. New information can be acquired online. Many students have Smart phones today. The teacher can encourage students to use the phones not only for selfie pictures but to browse or access the internet for information. Assignments can be done online and students' Art works can also be shared online. Where the facilities are available, the teacher can also use powerpoint presentations to teach. All these will aid student's comprehension and learning.

### **Conclusion**

Teacher characteristics and creative teaching techniques are factors that influence teaching and learning in schools. How the teacher can utilize these techniques to promote learning has been highlighted. The submission is that imbibing these traits and techniques will help improve the quality of teaching and learning in Nigerian schools.

### **Recommendations**

In order to enhance creative teaching in Nigerian schools, the following recommendations are made:

- i. School administrators and Counsellors should organize seminars and workshops for teachers, periodically, to sensitize them on creative teaching techniques.
- ii. The classroom teacher should show initiative by establishing creative learning environment, class activities and lesson delivery to foster students' understanding and recall.
- iii. Schools should establish Creativity/Resource Centres, equipped with appropriate materials for teachers to readily access or design appropriate creative materials for teaching.
- iv. Award should be given to the most resourceful teacher that demonstrates appropriate teacher characteristics and creative teaching in the school.
- v. Emphasis should be placed on character and qualification in recruitment of teachers.
- vi. Nigerian teachers should be ICT compliant to access unlimited resources online to foster creativity.

vii. Government should motivate teachers through prompt payment of salaries and allowances, and so empower teachers to think creatively and employ creative techniques in teaching.

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