

**Psychology of Leisure and Creative Learning for
The Nigerian child**

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Abstract

The nations' economic, social and political wellbeing can never be better than the quality of education that they give to their children as the future leaders. This paper is addressing psychology of leisure and creative learning for the Nigeria child. The greatness of any nation is dependent on the caliber of men and women who will run their affairs in future. This paper extensively highlight the nature and characteristics of leisure and creativity, psychological theory of leisure and creative application, participation in leisure and creativity, how to promote leisure in children, how to promote creativity in children. The paper also highlights the importance of leisure and creativity in education, disadvantages of non-participation in leisure and creativity. In conclusion, the paper beams it light in the present status quo with a view of recommending resuscitation of this all important psychological attribute for sustainable development of the Nigerian child.

Key words: Psychology, Leisure, creativity, learning

Introduction

Participating in leisure and creativity is an effective tool for positive psychological development and economic emancipation of any nation. From early childhood, play is important for a child's development and learning. It is not only physical but it involves, cognitive, creative, imaginative, emotional and social aspect of functioning, it is the main avenue, where most children express their talent, explore, experiment, investigate and understand the world around them. Therefore, children of all ages play, and their overall psychological well-being is associated with leisure.

According to Butcher (2015), leisure like work and education has been a form of human activity. Festivals, dance, games and music have always been part of the lives of

many people of every race, nation and creed. In many cases, people have spent their leisure-hours in constructive and worthwhile manners by participating in such activities as music, dance, game, sport, painting, just to mention but a few of the leisure time activities one could engage himself in (Isenberg and Jalongo, 2012). Since the turn of the century, leisure has been considered more and more to be a fundamental and psychological human need. Each individual is endowed with certain potentials, and rights among these are life liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Leisure contributes to the attainment of such vital concepts and is a very important part of every person's psychological make-up. Pleasure comes in engaging in activities no matter the age of the individual, status, physique and sex. Even when one is bed-ridden leisure can contribute to better living (Brooker, 2017).

Psychological well-being is an individual's overall feelings based on his or her own life satisfaction, happiness, fulfillment, contentment, achievement, stress, and coping mechanisms (Creek, 2008). It is important to understand that mental leisure means different things to different people but regardless of the definition, leisure activities impact positively in an individuals' overall well-being (Carr, 2002). It is on the bases of this that leisure and creativity is said to go hand in hand.

Creativity on the other hand, is the source, the process and the method of all human progress, therefore, it has rightly been said that the cultural, scientific and social progress of any country depends on the extent of the development of creativity of its citizens, the foundation of which lies in education.

According to Drevdahl (2006), creativity is the capacity of a person to produce composition, products or ideas which are essentially new or novel and previously unknown to the producer. Torrence (2016) opines that it is the power of the human mind to create new contents by transforming relations and thereby generating new ideas. Lervin (2015) agrees that creativity is the ability to discover new solutions to problems or to produce new ideas, innovations or works of art. It is a special form of thinking, a way of viewing the world and interacting with it in a manner different from that of the general population.

Good education, proper care and provision of opportunities for creative expression inspire, stimulate and sharpen the creative mind, and it is in this sphere, that parents, society and teachers make a significant contribution. They are required to help the children in nourishing and utilizing their creative abilities to the utmost. The educational process, therefore, can be achieved by acquainting the teachers and parents with the real meaning of the creative process and the ways and means of developing and nurturing creativity. Furthermore, in order to do anything effectively, the individuals should be capable of doing some original work with determination. Thus, the capacity to be distinct from the general is a necessary condition of creativity. This helps the individual to do a self search within. (Bartlett, 2015). The methodology used in this paper is basically explorative discourse, with sources of details drafted secondarily from text books, journals and surfing the nets.

Nature and Characteristics of Leisure and Creativity

Leisure contributes to human happiness and happiness is viewed as a by-product of a balance life. Leisure and creativity has to do with passion and decorum. The creative person has the desire and ability to express emotion and tendencies through work. It is hence said that, an artist has a passion towards arts, it is due to passion that he can put in so much efforts in creative direction.

The function of leisure is to balance life in relation to work, because “all work and no play make jack a dull boy. Leisure and Creative person has an autonomy of object, he has the autonomous freedom to follow their mind in developing object. Leisure is the pathway to healthy living, this means that to have leisure is to revitalize the body and be reborn with good health, vigor and vitality. Leisure and creativity requires abilities such as intelligence, attention and organization to mention but a few. Therefore, everybody needs aspiration in life through leisure activities be it physical, mental, emotional and social development especially in these time of economic crises to enhance productivity.

Leisure and creative activities are programmes revalues human needs such as; Need to achieve, need for economic security, need to belong, need for love and affection, need for self-respect through participation in leisure, need for variety and release from boredom and ignorance, need to feel free from intense feeling and need to be free from fear, anxiety and stress. Leisure, creativity and family conditions go hand in hand. Some particular family conditions are more favourable for the development of creativity. As a general rule if the parent posses mental and personality traits of creativity they are likely to be inherited by the children (Carr, 2002). In families with favourable leisure and creative creativity trait, children are given freedom of self-determination. They do not emphasize much on security and social control but giving them sufficient opportunity to choose according to their intellect.

Psychological Theory of Leisure and Creativity

Psychology is the study of the way the human mind works and how it influences behavior. Man uses the principles of psychology on daily basis without realizing that. Take for instance, when one takes a bottle of coke for a job well done, that person is using the learning principle of positive reinforcement. If something gets wrong suddenly and somebody get nervous, the person is activating the nervous system. Also, when something is wrong and the emotion is brought under control or when somebody is determine to work harder to achieve a goal, cognitive approaches to psychology is at work. Therefore, these examples illustrate psychology as the study of human’s thoughts, emotions, and behavior. Going by these, if one examines the definition of psychology, closely, it will be understood that it is heavily entrenched in leisure and creative behaviours.

A practical example is given in the illustration below using Anthropological theory of the didactics. With regard to the anthropological theory of the Didactics of Mathematics developed by Chevallard (1992) and Godino (2010) states that the starting point is to consider the mathematical activity and the activity involved in the study of

mathematics within the set of human activities and those of the social institutions. At the start of anthropological theory, the technical notions of objects, subjects, institutions and personal and institutional relations with the objects are introduced. It is believed that these objects exist because there is “activity,” in other words, human work, from which all objects emerge (Godino, 2010).

ATD proposes moments of study that are considered essential in the process of studying a mathematical organization, which are the moment of first contact, the exploratory moment, the technical work moment, the technological-theoretical moment, the institutionalization moment and the evaluation moment.

Our research is based on the first two moments of study developed by Chevallard. The first moment is the start at which the student makes contact with the subject of study in question, seeing the need to tackle a mathematical organization; it can also be a moment of revisiting objects that he/she has previously dealt with and that reappear in a different task. The second moment is that of exploration, where a technique is sought to solve a mathematical task that is presented for the first time; it is necessary to find a way to do it, i.e., explore the technique.

Creative intelligence

On the other hand, creativity is subjective, given that in one way or another it has an influence on the values and virtues of each person, as long as it is guided in a positive manner at the time when it is taught. This is confirmed in a certain manner when Gastelú (2011) states that Alan J. Rowe (2004), in his book *Creative Intelligence*, proposes that: Creative Intelligence is a combination of subjective elements that range from a combination of character, a way of perceiving reality, a manner of processing information, the personal values of the individual, reaction in different situations, what we do and how we achieve it, etc. (Gastelú, 2011).

Leisure activities

Thus, considering our independent variable, Gómez, Molano and Rodríguez (2015) state that “leisure activities promote psycho-social development and formation of the personality, evidence values, can be oriented towards the acquisition of learning, encompassing a wide range of activities in which pleasure, enjoyment, creativity and knowledge interact” (Gómez et al., 2015).

The above shows the influence of leisure activities on the development of student creativity in education at all levels, including the university level. The approach to and solving of problems are crucial points in mathematics education, and they are also important parts of the comprehensive education of students, since they encourage the development of structures of creative, flexible and developmental intelligence (Castro, 2018).

Imagination is part of creative intelligence and allows students to imagine possible and problematic scenarios that could be solved mathematically. Problems must be used to verify the curricular progress made by means of evaluation, since exercises

only measure mechanized skills. Individuals motivated by leisure activities presented better imaginary delineation of the proposed mathematical problem.

How to Promote Leisure in Children

Play is a range of voluntary, intrinsically motivated activities done for recreational pleasure and enjoyment. Play is commonly associated with children and juvenile level activities, but play occurs at any life stage, and among other higher functioning animals as well, most notably mammals.

Many prominent research in the field of psychology, including Melanie Klein, Jean Piaget, William James, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung and Lev Vygotsky have viewed play as confined to the human species, believing, play was important for human development and using different research methods to prove their theories.

Play is often interpreted as frivolous, yet the play can be intently focused on their objective, particularly when play is structured and goal oriented, as in a game.

Accordingly, play can range from relaxed, free – spirited and spontaneous through frivolous to planned or even compulsive. Play is not just a pastime activity. It has the potential to serve as an important tool in numerous aspects of daily life to children, adolescents, adults, and cognitively advanced non-human species (such as primate). Not only does play promote and aid in physical development (such as hand-eye coordination), but it also aids in cognitive development and social skills, and can even act as stepping stone into the world of integration, which can be a very stressful process. Play is something that most children partake in, but the way play is executed is different between cultures and the way that children engage with play varies university.

Play is very vital to children socio-psychological development. It enables children to practice both verbal and nonverbal communication skills by negotiating roles, trying to gain access to ongoing play, and appreciating the feelings of others. It enables children respond to their peers' feeling while waiting for their turn and sharing materials and experiences. It helps the children experiment roles of the people in their home, school, and communication by coming into contact with the needs and wishes of others. Also it enables children experience others points of view by working through conflicts about space, materials or rules positively through taking children out on field trips or excursions, Carr (2002).

It enables children participate in physical activities such as;

- Walking to school, jogging, dancing, and running,
- Reading,
- Playing with pets,
- Playing with Electronic computer games,
- Participate in organized sport,
- Involve in story telling,
- Participate in music,
- Participate in bird watching to mention but a few (Morris et-al 2001).

How to Promote Creativity in Children

In order to promote creativity in children, they should be given opportunities to proffer solution of some problems. This will enable them to understand and analyse their own problems. The following methods could be used in promoting creativity in children;

Collective information: To be able to promote creativity in children, they should be given topic in any subjects and ask to collect information concerning that topic. To aid the children, certain laid down procedure, to be followed should be outlined.

Making investigation: Children may be encouraged to make certain investigations on how they can improve their own work better than the one they know using various methods.

Finding out solution of some problems of the day: Children may be required to find out some present day problems, like, strike, indiscipline among their school mates. They should equally suggest solutions for them. This will enhance the creative thinking of these children. If the pros and cons of the solutions given by them are analysed, their creativity is likely to be further promoted.

Analysing future consequences of some problems: By this method, the power of imaginative thinking and taking judgment are developed in children. Example, children could be asked to contribute to what could make their school environment a better place for learning. The problem solving technique will help them express their ideas which will certainly enhance and promote creativity in them.

Importance of Leisure and Creativity in Education

Participation in leisure activities provides children with development opportunities for socialization and learning. Participation in leisure and creative activities has been linked in several studies with well-being and good mental health and is associated with satisfaction of competence, relatedness, and autonomy, Clark (2014). The satisfaction of the above mentioned psychological needs through leisure activities potentially depends on the extent of children's involvement in the activities. Children should be given an opportunity to develop various constructive traits. This is because children are likely to forget many of their hurts, frustrations and failures. The importance of leisure and creativity in education includes the following:

- Help children become more sensible to environmental stimuli.
- Encourage and evaluate self-initiated learning.
- Encourage the habit of working out full implications of ideas.
- Encourage acquisition of knowledge in a variety of fields.
- Encourage pupil to over-learn.
- Encourage creative taught processes,
- Develop a creative and psychological classroom atmosphere.
- Enables the children to be psychologically and physically comfortable.

- Provide opportunities for children to manipulate materials, ideas, concepts, tools and structures.
- Encourage pupils to consider problems as a whole, to emphasize total structures rather than the piece meal additive elements.
- Assist pupils in coping with frustration and failures.
- Promote intellectual flexibility.

Disadvantages of Non-Participation in Leisure and Creativity

Participating in leisure and creativity is an effective tool for enduring mental health and general psychological development of an individual, but where it is non existing, the following problems arises.

- Causes many psychological problems like, stress, depression, anxiety, frustration, exhaustion, and other physical and emotional dysfunction in the system.
- Discourages originality and flexibility
- Intensify hesitation and fear.
- It denies appropriate opportunities and atmosphere for creative expression.
- Discourages healthy habits among children.

Recommendation

In view of the above discussion, it is recommended that, children should be encouraged by parents, teachers and the society to:

- Develop tolerance of new ideas.
- Become more sensitive to the life of leisure and creativity
- Brings out new materials and experiences.
- Provision children with opportunities for leisure and creative expression.
- Inspire, stimulate and sharpen the children's mind because it is in this perspective that, parents, society and teachers make a significant contribution.
- There is need for future empirical study on leisure and creative learning for the Nigerian child.

Conclusion

The psychology of leisure and creative learning for the Nigeria child depicts that leisure and creativity is a way of building purpose in lives, which is individually determined and should have positive rewards. Some of the psychological benefits of leisure and creativity might include, increase in self-actualization, self-identity, self-esteem, self-concepts, personal enjoyment and growth, reduction of anxiety and depression and improvement in overall psychological well-being. Furthermore it is observed that as a result of leisure and creative engagement, individuals make significant gains in information, knowledge, visual learning, problem solving, memory encoding and retrieval. After performing the leisure activities, the students were motivated, in anticipation of what would be considered in class. They were also observed to be more participative and alert.

Leisure activities were seen to stimulate the development of creative intelligence, and it has been observed that this is better developed when the leisure activities are closely related to the curriculum block being studied. Following all these reviews, we conclude by stating that this research hopes to promote leisure activities so that students develop creative intelligence, in the interests of facilitating mathematical problem solving, as the result of the development of part of creative intelligence that is imagination. It is also hoped to motivate learning starting with experimentation in the first encounter with the subject of study. All of this should lead to the acquisition of significant learning, since the students will have the opportunity to reveal their thoughts, ideas and concerns, producing in them the capacity to reflect, think and solve the problems of the society in which they are immersed.

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