

Psychological and Creative Teaching Techniques for Effective Teaching and Learning in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper focused on the critical roles played by Educational Psychology and creative teaching in promoting teaching and learning. The theoretical framework centred on Sternberg's theory of intelligence (creative intelligence). Impacts of Educational Psychology and Creativity on teaching/learning were examined. Creative teaching techniques proposed included creative mindset, creative lesson planning and delivery, creative learning activities and creative use of online teaching resources such as Skype, Zoom and YouTube. Practical activities to assist in teaching creatively were also highlighted. Some of the recommendations made were acquisition of a creative mindset, use of hobbies to teach creatively; periodic organization of seminars/workshops for teachers on creative teaching, provision of internet connectivity and establishment of creative resource centres in schools.

Keywords: Education, Psychology, Creativity, Teaching, Learning.

Introduction

Education focuses on moulding and shaping learner's behaviour to produce desirable changes and all-round development of the learner. Educational Psychology plays significant roles in achieving the goals of education. Educational Psychology applies psychological theories and principles to teaching and learning (Akintunde, 2017). Precisely, Educational Psychology provides the teacher with knowledge and skills about development of the learner, learning processes and general understanding of students' behaviours in educational settings. Parankimalil (2012) submitted that Educational Psychology is the scientific study of human behaviour in an educational environment.

The critical roles played by Educational Psychology in teacher education programmes cannot be down-played. Educational psychology serves as the foundation to education

(Nezhard & Vahedi, 2011). Knowledge of Educational Psychology is key to effective teaching and learning. The importance of Educational Psychology in teacher preparation and professionalization has been stressed by various scholars (Berliner, 1993; Hoy-Woolfolk, 2000; Infol, 2018). Educational Psychology helps the teacher to understand him/herself, the learner and the learning processes, human developmental stages, individual differences among learners and how these concepts influence learning. According to Psychology (2019), Educational Psychology provides information on successful teaching and learning methods, in line with global best practices. In the same vein, Shakir and Sharma (2017) posited that Educational Psychology helps to create positive learning environment and makes learning easy, joyful, and interesting. Consequently, a thorough understanding of, or training in, Educational Psychology paves way for effective teaching and learning.

The foregoing pinpoints educators' general agreement that Educational Psychology plays crucial roles in teacher education (Chizhik & Chizhik, 2003). However, technological advancement and developments in the 21st Century have left teachers and learners with diverse challenges affecting teaching and learning. The modern-day teacher needs to upgrade and sharpen his/her professional and pedagogical skills (Akintunde & Eseyin, 2019) to meet the challenges of teaching and learning. Eisner (2002) submitted that what is missing in teacher education now is artistry, otherwise known as creativity (Sternberg, 1999b, 2000). The teacher's creative competence needs to be brought to the fore to assist in imparting knowledge effectively.

Creativity is concerned with generation of new ideas to solve problems (Chavez-Eakle, 2010). Creativity is adventurous thinking (Bartlett, 1958). Creativity entails the use of imagination, critical thinking and original ideas. The 21st century teacher needs to imbibe these creative traits to provide quality teaching that will foster learning. Having knowledge of Educational Psychology places the teacher in a vantage position for effective lesson delivery but when such knowledge is garnished with creative ideas that make lesson delivery easy, fun, interesting and impactful, learning is further enhanced. Educational Psychology should assist teachers to be creative decision makers (Chizhik & Chizhik, 2003). Creative teaching entails using imaginative approaches to make learning effective (Akintunde & Selzing-Musa, 2016). In this technology era, failure of a teacher to employ creativity in teaching may impair learning. It is against this backdrop that this paper focuses on the use of Educational Psychology principles and creative teaching techniques in enhancing teaching and learning in schools.

Theoretical framework

This paper is hinged on Robert Sternberg's triarchic theory of intelligence (1999a, 1999b, 2000). Sternberg's researches proposed three (3) kinds of intelligence, namely: Analytical intelligence, Practical intelligence and Creative intelligence.

Analytical intelligence (also known as Academic intelligence) enables an individual to acquire, store, retrieve and transfer information to solve problems. The individual critically examines information and uses such to solve problems.

Practical intelligence connotes an individual's ability to interact with the world/environment easily and successfully, to get along with people and get out of trouble. The individual can translate (or apply) knowledge acquired to real-life situation.

Creative intelligence entails generating new ideas, using existing knowledge to produce new ways of solving problems. It connotes an individual's ability to use insight and creativity to solve problems. Sternberg asserted that all 3 types of intelligence are important for success in life.

In relation to Educational Psychology, Analytical intelligence matches the teaching of traditional educational psychology principles to pre-service teachers, based on existing research. Practical intelligence also relates to traditional educational psychology trainings given to pre-service teachers, emphasizing practical innovations, techniques and strategies to improve teaching and learning. These two approaches are incredibly significant in teacher education. However, Creative intelligence is associated with a modern approach to Educational psychology, whereby creative aspect of teaching is emphasized (Chizhik & Chizhik, 2003). It is pertinent for teachers to adopt creative teaching to meet the prevailing learning challenges of modern times. This is the focus of this paper.

Educational psychology and effective teaching/learning

Educational Psychology combines two concepts: "Education" and "Psychology". Educational Psychology uses psychological theories and principles to study the behaviour of teacher and learner in an educational setting. Educational Psychology provides knowledge and skills to help the teacher to understand the learner's development, learning processes, learning environment, learner's social relationships as well as evaluating various learning methods on student outcomes (Psychology, 2019).

The underlisted describe areas covered by Educational Psychology and examples of impacts of each on teaching/learning in the classrooms (Parankimalil, 2012; Annandale, 2011; NGCareers, 2020):

(i) Learner

Education Psychology supplies information about the learner, treating concepts like behaviour of the learner in school, personality and adjustment (including mental health) of the learner and individual differences. For instance, the teacher understands that an individual is unique and differs from the other individual and so adopts techniques that help cater for individual differences among learners.

(ii) Learning process

Educational Psychology provides information about the learning processes treating topics like principles and theories of learning (i.e. how learning takes place), concept formation, perception, memory/information process, remembering and forgetting, motivation, maturation and readiness, transfer of learning, attitude to learning and self-regulation. For instance, a teacher equipped with the knowledge of information processing will train the learners in memory strategies like encoding, note-taking and rehearsal that will aid retrieval of information.

(iii) Learning environment

Educational psychology supplies information about environment of the learner via concepts like classroom climate, stimulating environment for learning, classroom management, factors affecting learning, heredity and environment and learning. For instance, knowledge of environmental factors affecting teaching/learning will empower the teacher with skills to improve learner environment and to reduce/eliminate distractions for successful learning.

(iv) Learner experiences

Educational Psychology studies experiences of the learner in terms of appropriate teaching methods (to match the stage of development of the learner), appropriate teaching/learning resources, and desirable learning experiences at different levels of development of the learner. For instance, a teacher with the knowledge of educational psychology will be able to break down the curriculum to match students' level of development and comprehension and use appropriate teaching methods and aids for effective learning.

(v) Evaluation/assessment of learning

Educational psychology is concerned with and conducts assessment of learning experiences such as evaluation and analysis of teaching methods, evaluation and analysis of learning methods, design of new educational resources (such as textbooks, worksheets, instructional videos), use of tests (statistics) and assessment to interpret educational outcomes, among others. For instance, the knowledge of educational psychology helps a teacher to assess various teaching methods and develop improved teaching techniques for successful learning.

(vi) **The teacher**

Educational psychology trains the teacher to understand him/herself by assisting the teacher to understand his/her interests, likes, dislikes, aptitudes, personality traits, anxieties, conflicts and temperament. It also assists the teacher to understand his/her responsibilities. For instance, knowledge of educational psychology helps a teacher to understand himself, his personality traits. A hot-tempered teacher will learn to control his anger in relating to his students for successful teaching.

The foregoing demonstrates the significant contributions made by educational psychology to teacher education. However, in today's changing world, giving prominence to the critical skill of creativity in teacher education will produce more effective classroom practices.

Creativity and learning

Creativity is important in education. Bharti (2014) opined that creativity is a vital part of any personality and helps an individual in analyzing things in various and uncommon ways. Creative teachers are better equipped to handle new challenges in teaching. They can easily adapt their teaching methodologies and techniques to manage diverse classroom conditions that may pose threat to learning (Pugliese, 2020). The importance of creative teaching in the classroom are highlighted as follows:

- (i) Creative teaching makes learning fun.
- (ii) Creative teaching enhances students' motivation to learn.
- (iii) Creative teaching helps teachers and students to freely express ideas in unique ways.
- (iv) Creative teaching encourages active learner participation in the classroom.
- (v) Creative teaching enhances learners' thinking ability.
- (vi) Creative teaching enhances learners' problem-solving skills.
- (vii) Creative teaching enhances emotional and social development of learners.

From the foregoing, the significance of creative teaching has been brought to the fore. Creativity in the classroom is a significant skill for success in the 21st Century (Henriksen & Mishra, 2013). There are two (2) aspects of creativity in the classroom namely: the teacher can foster creativity in the learners and the teacher can teach creatively in class (creative teaching). The focus here is on creative teaching. However, the teacher needs to acquire and master the skills and techniques needed for creative teaching.

Creative teaching techniques for effective learning

Teachers should engage in creative teaching to enhance learning. NACCCE (1999) in Pugliese (2020) proposed that creative teaching connotes the use of imaginative approaches in producing an interesting, exciting, and effective learning. To teach creatively, a teacher needs to be creative; should possess creative traits like flexibility in thought, perception and action; should be imaginative and exhibit critical thinking skills; and should be open to new ideas (Akintunde, 2017). The level of creativity in an individual teacher can be increased via nurturing and practice.

The teacher can adopt the underlisted creative techniques for effectiveness in the classroom:

a) **Creative mindset**

Teaching creatively requires that the teacher perceives him/herself as creative and capable of teaching creatively. Negative thoughts and expressions like “I am not creative”, “I cannot do it”, “I am not talented” should be discarded (Akintunde, 2017; Constantinides, 2015). A teacher with a negative creative mindset is defeated even before starting and also incapacitated. Creativity is not only genetic, it can also be taught and learnt (Wabisabi, 2020). Teachers should be open-minded to acquire creative, innovative ideas that will promote teaching in the classroom.

Activities:

- Observe the world around you; look out for new ideas that will help boost your teaching when applied.
- Turn ideas acquired into reality; ideas are not effective until they are implemented. Put into practice the creative ideas and not be discouraged by mistakes. Evaluation and constant practice will help to improve your creative skills.
- Work on your self esteem; constantly interact with people of same interests that will appreciate and encourage your creativity efforts and make you feel good about yourself.

b) **Creative lesson/lecture planning**

Creative teaching is aided by creative design of instruction. Lesson/lecture prepared should match pupils/students’ developmental stage for effective learning. Well-structured instruction aids assimilation.

Activities:

- Draw your lesson plans with clear indications of creative ideas to aid your teaching.
- Design your lesson from simple to complex.
- Try out new ideas/approaches; do not be stuck with the old ways of teaching all the time.
- Inject elements of surprise and fun into your teaching plans.

- In planning your lesson, incorporate stimulating and creative activities for students, to ward off boredom.

c) Creative lesson/lecture delivery

A creatively designed lesson plan should be transformed into creative teaching. In creative teaching, presentation steps, mode of presentation, teaching methods and techniques are significant.

Activities:

- In teaching, mode of presentation should be moderate; do not talk too fast or too slow. However, for emphasis, some phrases, sentences can be repeated slowly.
- Use PowerPoint presentations, especially for large classes.
- Use clear expressions, audible voice and appropriate voice pitch (sometimes high, sometimes low, as necessary).
- Demonstrate liveliness, enthusiasm and excitement in your teaching.
- Use more than one teaching method and technique for your lesson/lecture. You can add other teaching methods that foster creative teaching such as demonstration, discussion, project and storytelling.
- Use your hobbies (e.g. songs, drama, poems) to teach. You can connect your hobbies to ideas that you teach, For example, if your hobby is music/songs, you can incorporate songs into your teaching. Certain concepts can be dramatized too.
- Evaluate your creative teaching activities; assess the strengths and weaknesses and make modifications for improvement.

d) Creative instructional aids (improvisation)

Instructional aids should be creatively selected or produced and utilized in fostering learner's comprehension. For instance, creatively designed posters attract learners' attention and aids comprehension.

Activities:

- Select or produce relevant instructional aids.
- In designing charts and posters, adhere to the principles guiding such: moderate drawings (not complicated); bold title, clear drawings, legible and styled labellings.
- Use coloured and creatively designed instructional aids.
- Use instructional aids at the appropriate time during lesson and explain relevance to lesson.

e) Creative learning activities for students

Creative teaching also entails giving students creative activities to do. Creativity helps students to think out of the box and stimulates students' problem-solving skills and interest in learning (Edsys, n.d.).

Activities:

- Ask students open-ended questions.
- Use hands-on learning materials for students.

- Make classroom layout flexible; Desks and chairs can be rearranged periodically to suit the creative activities to be done.
- Give students projects to do and puzzles to solve
- Engage them in memory games, debates, discussion and brainstorming activities.
- Give them case-studies to analyze or critique.

f) Creative use of online (technology) teaching resources

Teaching creatively entails the use of technology to teach and to access online resources for effective teaching/learning. A creative teacher in the 21st Century needs to be computer literate to access vast information and teaching materials on the internet.

Activities:

- Use search engines like Google, Bing, Yahoo, Ask.com to search on the internet. Type the concept, phrase or sentence on “Google” and you can get thousands of useful search results. You can use any technological devices such as desktop, mobile phone and tablet.
 - Search for teaching resources online and adapt such to your lessons.
 - As occasion demands (especially during crisis or pandemic situations), use Skype, Zoom, WhatsApp video calls, etc to present lectures/lessons to students.
 - Create a blog to post or showcase your students’ project works and creative designs.
 - You can mount video presentations on YouTube and later engage the students to discuss the presentation in class.
 - Give students assignments that will make them use the internet to get answers.

Conclusion

Educational Psychological principles and creative teaching techniques exert significant influences on teaching and learning in schools. This paper proposed how teachers in the field and pre-service teachers can use the techniques to promote teaching and learning. Imbibing these principles and techniques will enhance teaching and learning in the classroom.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

- 1) Pre-service teachers (Arts, Social Science and Science Education) should undergo training in educational psychological principles before graduation. These principles should be applied (in practical terms) to classroom activities by practicing teachers, for effectiveness.
- 2) Teachers should have creative mindset and practise teaching creatively.

- 3) Schools curricula should give prominence to nurturing and supporting creativity.
- 4) Teacher educators should encourage pre-service teachers to key into their passions and interest in teaching creatively.
- 5) Periodic seminars/workshops on creative teaching techniques should be organized for teachers and pre-service teachers.
- 6) Teachers should use internet teaching resources to augment their teaching skills.
- 7) School administrators should provide internet connectivity in schools to supplement the teachers' and students' personal data usage.
- 8) Creativity resource centres should be established in schools and furnished with creative materials for teachers' use. It should also be a place where teachers and students can produce creative materials to enhance learning.
- 9) The teacher should be creative in arranging the classroom, asking students questions, using instructional materials and in lesson presentations.

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