

CHAPTER

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IMBIBING CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION: A WAY OF ENHANCING SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF SOME NIGERIAN SECTORS

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Abstract

Creativity is associated with the generation of ideas, innovations and solving of many human problems. It is chiefly associated with the arts and human society. It is believed to have aided in revolutionizing many modern cities we have today. In Nigeria, creativity is viewed by many as a thing for artists, thereby ignoring its vast potential that could be deployed to solve problems in other human fields such as medicine, food and nutrition, education, law, etc. This study focused on assessing the possibilities of creativity and innovation as vehicles for solving myriad problems in Nigeria such as corruption, ethnicity, underdevelopment, etc, using a creativity quadrat diagram developed by Getlein (2008), as a paradigm. The research methods applied were descriptive research design and literature review. The findings of this study revealed that creativity can be applied by artists, doctors, politicians, teachers, and in their various endeavours, to fast-track the socio-political, and economic development of Nigeria.

Keywords: Creativity, Innovation, Development, Nigeria, Political, Social

Introduction

Creativity is a deliberate human endeavour to bring about new phenomena and improvement in already existing ones. Scholars have asked questions as to whether creativity is limited only to the arts, or extended to other fields of human endeavor. However, It is “the production of a novel, appropriate ideas in any realm of human activity, from science to the arts to education, to business, to everyday life” (Amabile, 1997:40). Since creativity chiefly deals with the production of novel ideas, innovation is as subject matter, is therefore, a product of creativity. Because by implication, innovation entails the actualization of creativity. On one hand, creativity can be an individual affair, while on the other, it can be a collective idea, especially in an institution, such as a school or government. Moreso, Creativity means a belief in

new ideas and making them into reality in the forms of new products or services provided by organizations in the marketplace (Kilroy, 1999).

Creativity is usually associated with the arts whenever the subject matters are mentioned. However, we must aver that it spans to other aspects of human activities. Anyone can learn and practice the thinking skill of creativity. Some people might be better than others, with any skill, such as driving, cooking, tennis or soccer, art and design and others (Uka, 2018:143). As long as one possesses, and is capable of applying certain characteristics in doing things, such is creativity.

Progressive countries such as America, Europe, China, Japan, and Singapore, have long imbibed creativity and innovation, and consequently, such moves resulted in drastic, simultaneous, and continuous development of their various sectors. Thus, there is always a need to progress and change in developed and developing nations, which could be a result of new technology and possibilities or because of changes in the world (Uka, 2018:144)

In Africa, most countries have failed to imbibe creativity, to fast-track their development and progress. Rather, many African leaders, particularly in Nigeria had tolerated corruption over the years, and that had eaten deep into the fabric of the nation. Even all the efforts made by substantive leaders have proved abortive. It is either they were not sincere with such moves, or they are literally 'blocked' from attaining such progressive moves because their lieutenants were practically immersed in corrupt practices. During the 2015 general election campaign in Nigeria, the All Progressives Congress (APC) promised that fighting corruption was one of their fundamental goals. But, fast forward five years later, Muhammadu Buhari-led administration has not nipped it in the bud, but rather reports of embezzlement, mismanagement, and diversion of funds still fly over the news. Again they are unwilling to nip it in the Board. But why? Why has it lingered over the years since the independence of Nigeria from Britain? Thus, this has been the bane of the Country's development for over sixty years of her independence.

This paper discusses the idea of imbibing creativity and innovation towards developmental endeavour in Nigeria. Nigeria needs to make innovation and creativity the centre of its political and economic ideologies. The social and political development of any nation can be achieved through meaningful and constructive avenues. Herein, we shall attempt to use a quadrat designed by Getlein (2008) on creativity to proffer solutions to identified problems in some Nigerian Sectors. This research also discusses how creativity can be applied by artists, doctors, politicians, teachers, and in their various endeavours, to improve the state of the nation.

Purpose of the Study

Given the problem of this study, we ascertained the following:

- To design a Creativity quadrat diagram that will be used to ascertain the importance of creativity in some Nigerian sectors.
- To ascertain the importance of Creativity and innovation, and how they could be applied towards Nigeria's social and political development
- To prove that Creativity and innovation, if applied properly, can reposition and fast-track Nigeria's economic development
- To prove that a country cannot progress effectively without applying creativity and innovations to her sectors.

Concept of Creativity

Getlein (2008:12) asked salient questions concerning the nature and origin of creativity when he articulates thus - Creativity is a word that comes up often when talking about art, but what is creativity exactly? Are we born with it? Can it be learned? Can it be lost? Are artists more creative than other people? If so, how did they get that way? It refers to the generation of ideas and Innovation refers to the implementation of that ideas. Creativity is the mental and social process, fuelled by the conscious or unconscious insight of generating ideas, concepts, and associations Dimnwobi, Ekesiobi and Mgbemena (2016:30).

Creativity is of three types; individual creativity, group creativity and organisational creativity (Mehtaa, Chandanib and Neerajac, 2014: 804). While individual creativity entails ideas by a single person, organisational creativity implies the collective creation and implementation of innovative ideas. Activities such as writing a novel by a single author, making art, thinking of a new process, etc, are individual creativity.

Again, Getlein (2008: 12-13) agrees that creative people possess certain traits, including:

- Sensitivity
- Flexibility
- Originality
- Playfulness
- Productivity
- Fluency
- Analytical skill
- Organisational skill

While sensitivity concerns heightened awareness of what one sees, hears and touches, as well as responses to other people and their feeling, productivity means the ability to generate ideas easily and frequently. Organisational skills are one's ability to put things back together (Getlein, 2008:12-13).

Akinboye (2004) sees creativity as a tool that propels organizations, catapults careers, and generate potent growth and viable outcomes. Runco (1994) opines that creativity, in terms of cognitive processes can lead to an original and adaptive insight, idea or solution. Thus, creativity is the most essential of all human resources and skills (Bolaji 2007).

Creativity is more closely related to thinking abilities and attitudinal development. It is a continual process for which the best preparation involves creativity itself. The act of creativity can be seen as that which provides the urge for continuing exploration and discovery. Every child is born creative. The urge to explore, investigate, and discover, what is on the other side of the screen is not limited to human behaviour, but is experienced by the whole animal kingdom, (Lowerfield and Brittian 1975).

Creativity can be given credit for being the catalyst in the process of growth from the very first moment. Indeed, a key driver of this growth has been innovation. In economics, creativity is the expression of mind power: It is the capacity to produce new ideas, thus liberating the stringent boundaries of the rationalist (Shawney, 2018).

Concept of Innovation

Unsworth (2003) describes innovation as the process of engaging in behaviours designed to implement new ideas, processes, products, and services. Innovation is the successful exploitation of new ideas: it is a profitable outcome of the creative process, which involves generating and applying in a specific context products, services, procedures and processes that are desirable and viable Dimnwobi, Ekesiobi and Mgbemena (2016:30). It is, therefore, imperative to develop a new reasoning ability to think aright, explore possibilities and to be able to discover and combine meaningfully, as many ideas and experiences as possible to create a new form of knowledge. Similarly, Adewusi and Aluko (2019) add that innovation is the embodiment, combination or synthesis of knowledge in original, relevant, valued new products, processes or services, or a process of turning new ideas into practical reality. Consider that ‘idea’ in their submission entails creativity. Halila and Rundquist (2011), categorized innovation into three: Product, process and organizational innovations. Product innovation deals with the design, research and promotion of a novel good. Products such as consumables thrive where there is market competition, and what sustains it is innovations, in terms of promotion and product design. Process innovation is explained as new or enhanced tools, equipment, materials, and other technologies that directly affect the firms that are practising innovations; those firms produce the goods that are further sold in the market Shuag, et al (2017: 297).

Concept of Development

Development is a process that ensures continuous growth, and progress in any system, such as state, school, and even the human or animal body. In this context we are concerned with the Political and Economic development of some sectors of Nigeria as a nation. The purpose of development is a rise in the level and quality of life of the population, and the creation or expansion of local regional income and employment opportunities, without damaging the resources of the environment. Development is visible and useful, not necessarily immediately, and includes an aspect of quality change and the creation of conditions for a continuation of that change (Society for International Development-Isreal, 2021). Once the tempo of development is constant, it becomes sustainable. It takes the commitment of actors of the state and the economy to attain sustainable development. Nations and institutions alike are established with hopes of attaining revolutionary changes, and continuous growth in their systems, through the setting up of structures, strictly following laid down rules, and maintaining transitional consistency through change of administration.

The Bane of Nigeria’s Socio-political and Economic Development

Nigeria gained her independence in 1960 and adopted parliamentary democracy as her. That period experienced sectionalism, corruption and bad governance. That was what gave rise to the first coup and eventual military takeover of the polity. According to Ani (2017)

Plotters used corruption as a reason to justify military coups in 1966 and 1967, whose aftermath threw the country into a civil war. Both the coups and the war paved way for almost three decades of military rule, interrupted only briefly from 1979 to 1983 when General Olusegun Obasanjo returned the country to civilian rule. Shortly after, the 1983 coup of General Muhammadu Buhari ensured that the military stayed

in control of political power until 1999, when democracy returned to Nigeria.

Decades of military rule which were hoped to be used to sanitise the polity, plunged the country into a speedy decay. Unfortunately, it lingered into civilian rule and never ended till today, despite the promises of past politicians to nip corruption in the bud. Similarly, Ani (2017) add thus;

The years of military rule were politically and economically disastrous for Nigeria. Corruption, already burgeoning under the early politicians, became entrenched under military rule, and a class of anti-intellectual politicians came into being. The impression is that the military era squandered every amount of fiscal responsibility left by the British colonialists in the wake of independence in 1960.

Bazza (2019:63) opines that corruption is one of the disturbing trends in Nigeria's developmental process, despite its endowments. Aside from her immense mineral wealth with which crude oil resources are currently the most prominent, Nigeria is also endowed with rich agricultural lands, with a population of over 180 million, by far the largest in Africa (World Bank, 2016). Regrettably, Nigeria is yet to provide for her people, a quality of life that is commensurate with the numerous resources at her disposal (Kalejaiye, et. al., 2015) as 67.1% of the Nigerian population is still poor (NBS, 2016). A new report by the World Poverty Clock shows Nigeria as the capital of extreme poverty in the world. The failure to lift citizens out of poverty is an indictment on successive Nigerian governments which have mismanaged the country's vast oil riches through incompetence and corruption (Ani, 2017).

The worst of it all is police corruption which had been another impediment to Nigeria's development. The police is an arm of prosecution of justice. However, in the case of Nigeria, corruption has saturated the rank and files of the force. Some factors contribute to the corruption in the police force. Some of the factors responsible for police corruption include inadequate salaries, inadequate manpower, improper training, lack of adequate professionalism; lack of necessary equipment, lack of adequate welfare package and functional law. Onyeozili (2005) contends that corruption gave the Nigerian Police Force a poor image in Nigerian society. Ikezue and Oli (2020:49) are of the view that Police corruption has impacted negatively on Nigerian society, and has frustrated efforts geared towards the realization of several policies, and programmes which would have led to making the country a preferred destination for both citizens and foreigners alike.

Although the Nigerian government under Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, founded The Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) in 2000, to prosecute reports of corrupt practices, and prosecution. Likewise, EFCC was established in 2003 to rid Nigeria of Advanced Free Fraud, scams, corruption and money laundering. However, despite all these efforts, Transparency International (2020) still ranks Nigeria 149 on the corruptions perception index list.

Corruption has not only soiled the Government Agencies and the Police, it has also extended to the Paratats, education sector, and so on. Moreso, corruption had gradually

saturated the Judiciary, which is meant to be a watchdog to the executive arm. The worst of it all is the eventual gagging of the Judiciary in Nigeria by their paymasters – the Presidency.

The Creativity Quadrat

We developed what we named the creativity Quadrat diagram, using Getlein’s explanation of the qualities of a creative person. He specifically mentioned traits such as sensitivity, flexibility, originality, playfulness, productivity, fluency, and analytical and organisational skills. From there, we lifted the following; originality, sensitivity, flexibility and productivity and used the phrases to formulate the creativity quadrat, which is the basis of this research. On the chart (see Fig. 1), “creativity” sits at the top, and originality at the bottom. The quadrat is the link between creativity and innovation. Essentially, innovation means the actualization of creativity which must undergo these processes in the quadrat, namely; Originality, sensitivity, flexibility, and productivity, before it materializes creativity.

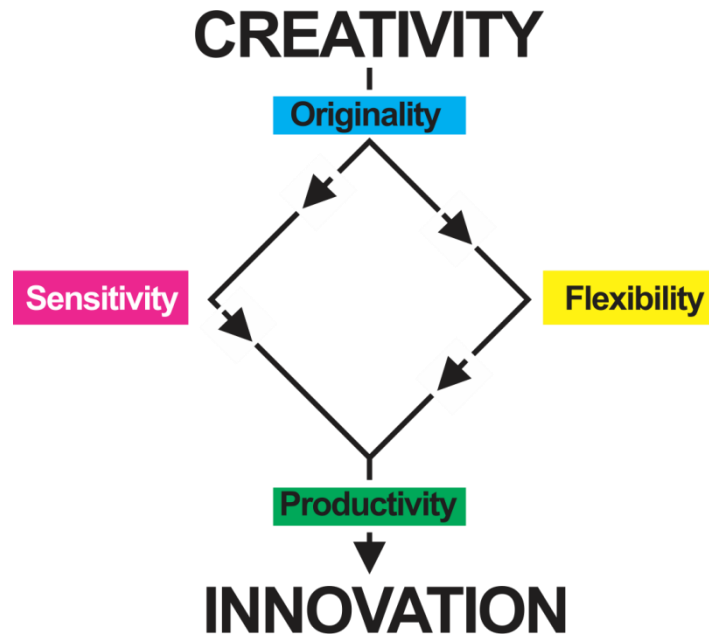


Fig 1: The Creativity Quadrat. Source: The authors, 2021

In the quadrat, originality entails novelty, ingenuity, resourcefulness, or inventiveness. Ideas come to play here, and it is the starting point of creativity. Sensitivity entails response to influences, changes in other people’s feelings, the environment, or events. This quality is the equivalent of being down-to-earth, perceptive, simple or humble. A flexible person adapts to changes, and makes modifications to suit certain circumstances. Productivity deals with industry, achievement of favourable and useful results, continuous activity and abundance.

Productivity sets innovation in motion, amounting to physical results, products, etc. Innovation, which is the end-product of the quadrat, is the actual implementation of ideas that

result in the introduction of new goods or services or improvement in offering goods or services, as a consequence of applying the activities in the chart.

Applying the Quadrant in some Sectors of Nigeria for Development

We agreed that creativity gives birth to innovation. To achieve sustainable development in some sectors of Nigeria such as politics, economy, and health, the creativity quadrant must be applied in incremental order. That is to say that policies must be made differently, bearing in mind that the developmental process would be achieved by such moves.

In politics, government and leadership, policymakers must deem it pertinent to enact policies that will affect the people positively, starting from agenda setting and policy formation, and actual policy implementation. A sensitive government must as a matter of urgency, rid itself of corruption to enable it to bring sanity. Aside from corruption, other banes of political development are sectionalism, nepotism, or ethnicity. In the United States of America, the “America First” policy stance is non-sectionalist and has been driving the country forward long after the American Civil War, which is based on meritocracy and not ethnicity. “Nigeria First” can kill sectionalism and hoist meritocracy in policy-making, and decision-making. Such policies have been attempted in the past, such as the late Prof Dora Akunyili’s “Good People, great Nation”. Unfortunately, it only succeeded in the media, not indeed.

For the Police, considering the risky nature of their job, the government should apply flexibility in making policies that affect policing, such as adequate remuneration and constant reward and promotions for good jobs. On this, Ikezue and Oli (2020: 61) aver that The values of honesty and hard work should be encouraged and rewarded. It will motivate the officers to heighten their zeal for good work. The police personnel and other members of the sister agencies like the Army, Civil Defense, and Customs, among others, must, as a matter of urgency, be indoctrinated to see themselves as ‘guardian angels’ who must protect the interest of the Law and order in Nigeria. Again, corrupt officers must be sincerely made to face the wrath of the law, and to set a good example for others. Questionable sources of income, and propensity for the crude acquisition of wealth should be frowned upon and condemned. Finally, erring police personnel should be punished swiftly, severely and publicly. This is because justice delayed is justice denied.

In the Economy, the government and private sectors need to be flexible in supporting both corporate organisations, Small and Medium scale Enterprises, such as local manufacturing. These SMEs have the potential of driving the economy. It is rigid for a nation to have a single-product economy in terms of exports. The case goes to Nigeria because oil accounts for up to 90 per cent of her export earnings, and even new investments related to oil. Worse of it all is that Nigeria is an import-oriented economy, thus, virtually every commodity is imported, including agro products such as rice, fruits, and even toothpick! Consequently, this brings about high import duty fees, an increased unemployment rate in the system, and again, Nigeria will be at risk of a trade deficit.

As a matter of urgency, the Nigerian Government must bring an end to Monopoly capitalism in the country. Such a market does not encourage competition between companies and markets. Dangote Industries has enjoyed the monopoly of manufacturing commodities such as

sugar, spaghetti, salt, and cement in Nigeria. In December 2021, Cement spiked to a whooping sum of N4,500, and even the quality of the products were not certainly the best. This is because the Nigerian Government gave certificates to Dangote and very few others to manufacture and import cement. Before the discovery of oil, Nigeria as a decentralized state depended on Agriculture for the sustenance of the economy. Groundnut Pyramids were monumental structures made from sacks of groundnuts, stacked in cities such as Kano. It became one of the prominent exports in Nigeria, alongside cocoa from the west, palm oil from the east, and others. Such efforts died down with the discovery of oil between the 1960s and 1970s. Such efforts should be revamped and sustained because it will increase productivity.

Conclusions

This research focused on the application of creativity for the development of some sectors of Nigeria such as the government, the economy, the police and the parastatals. We identified corruption as the major problem of the Nigerian state because it brought in its train, another myriad of problems such as sectionalism, ethnicity, gagging of the judiciary, and poor police service. We fashioned the creativity quadrat that comprises creativity, originality, sensitivity, flexibility, productivity, and innovation. Looking at the chart, if individuals and groups concerned are decisive to adopt the features of the quadrat in policy making, and implementation, it will bring about development over time. There are benefits associated with this dispensation that are rooted in creativity, and innovation. Therefore, there are far-reaching benefits for any developing nation that makes creativity and innovation the centre of its philosophical ideology. Methodologies that aid exploration and discovery of potentials, a problem-solving ability which allows the learner the opportunity for creativity should be the focus of any developing nation such as Nigeria. There is an ardent need for a paradigm shift from theoretical, and paper certification, to a more practical application of knowledge necessary for future employment, and skill development in the art and design for self-employment is very necessary for African development.

Finally, a sincere application of the creativity quadrat by the Nigerian State, which boils down to innovation, will help to fast-track development in sectors such as policy-making, police, health and education sector.

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