
Fostering Creativity In Childhood Education And National Development: A Nosology Of Erikson'S Theory

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Abstract

The importance of nurturing creativity in childhood education has grown in significance within the context of national development recently. Erikson's theory provides a framework for understanding the stages of psychosocial development in children, ranging from the infancy stage of trust versus mistrust to the adolescence stage of identity versus role confusion. Nevertheless, the relationship between creativity and psychosocial development in childhood is not always straightforward, as individual differences and environmental factors can also significantly shape a child's development. This paper investigated how fostering creativity in childhood education can contribute to a nation's overall development, through a review of the literature on this subject matter. The findings revealed that fostering creativity in childhood education not only enhances cognitive abilities and problem-solving skills but also promotes social and emotional development. These results suggest that integrating creative activities into educational curricula can have lasting positive effects on a nation's future generations, fostering a sense of innovation and adaptability essential in today's rapidly changing world. The paper suggested that by prioritizing creativity in childhood education, Nigeria can ensure that her youth are well-prepared to face the challenges of the future and drive progress and growth.

Keywords: Creativity, Childhood Education, National Development, Nosology, Erikson's Theory.

Introduction

Creativity is an unseen process that is typically defined in terms of outcome, process, or personality (Sharp, 2014). Creativity is like height, weight, and strength. Children's dimensions vary greatly, but everyone has some height, weight, and strength. There is a certain amount of creativity in all children but some are more creative than the others.

These children have something special which is not found in everybody. They have divergent ways of thinking and they can come out with ideas, which are not commonly seen or heard. They are thus creative and can be called creative children (Honig, 2014). These children often exhibit characteristics such as curiosity, originality, and persistence in their creative endeavors. As a result, childhood education in relation to Erikson's stages of psychosocial development is essential in nurturing and fostering creativity in children, because it outlines the stages of development that individuals go through from infancy to adulthood, highlighting the importance of addressing different needs at each stage, building on the foundation of previous stages.

Schwartz et al. (2009) observed that Erikson theory of psychosocial development is based on the belief that individuals must successfully navigate each stage in order to develop a healthy sense of self and interpersonal relationships. The theory, which was propounded by Erik Erikson, in the year 1950, emphasizes the importance of social interactions and experiences in shaping one's identity and overall well-being. It suggests that failure to resolve conflicts at each stage can lead to difficulties in later stages of development. Psikolojisi (2007) described Erikson's theory as a lifelong process of growth and development, with each stage building upon the importance of achieving a balance between personal needs and societal expectations to successfully progress through each stage. The theory holds that childhood begins and ends from ages 0 to 8, with each stage presenting unique challenges and opportunities for growth (Onchwari et al., 2008). Overall, Erikson's theory highlights the significance of social relationships and experiences in shaping individual identity and psychological well-being throughout the lifespan.

Childhood is viewed as a critical period for establishing trust, autonomy, initiative, and industry. These stages set the foundation for future stages of development in adulthood, emphasizing the importance of successfully navigating through each stage to achieve overall psychosocial health. Chan and Yau (2009) explained that individuals who successfully navigate through Erikson's stages of development are more likely to have positive relationships, a strong sense of self, and a greater ability to cope with life's challenges. On the other hand, individuals who struggle to navigate through these stages may experience difficulties in forming relationships, developing a sense of self, and coping with stressors in adulthood (Montgomery, 2019). This highlights the significance of addressing developmental challenges early on to promote healthy psychosocial development throughout the lifespan. Thus, the development of a child is crucial in shaping their future well-being and overall success in adulthood. This also extends to society as a whole, as individuals who have experienced positive psychosocial development are more likely to contribute positively to their communities and society at large, bring about national development, and foster a more cohesive and supportive social environment.

National development as defined by Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2017) is the process of improving the economic, political, and social well-being of a nation. It is influenced by the collective contributions of individuals who have undergone positive psychosocial development, ultimately leading to a more prosperous and harmonious society. This highlights the importance of investing in programs and initiatives that promote positive psychosocial development in individuals, as it has far-reaching implications for the overall well-being and progress of a nation. This implies that applying Erikson's stages of psychosocial development theory can be beneficial in understanding how creativity can be fostered in individuals at different stages of life, leading to a more innovative

and productive society. It is on this basis that this study investigates the potential of Erikson's theory in childhood education to enhance creativity and contribute to national development.

Conceptual Clarification

Childhood Education

Every modern society believes that education is the key to national development and that every level of education, particularly the early stage, must be maintained because it serves as the foundation for all subsequent educational levels, if a child misses that early stage, it is typically difficult for the learner to return to the basics (Obiweluozor, 2015). The author further stated that early education is a common practice in most societies; they provide early childhood education programmes of various types for children below the official school age (usually 6 years), primarily to prepare them for the rigours of primary education and beyond. The benefits of early education extend beyond academic readiness, as it also plays a crucial role in social and emotional development.

Childhood education is a period of early learning and development that occurs from birth to around age eight. During this time, children begin to develop their cognitive, social, emotional, and physical skills through play-based activities and structured learning experiences. The FRN (2012) puts forward that childhood education is a starting point for a child's development and the key foundation of the Nigerian Educational System. The Nigeria National Policy on Education recognizes this type of education as crucial for laying the groundwork for future academic success and overall well-being. It is essential to provide children with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in school and beyond. At this stage, children are like sponges, absorbing information and forming the building blocks for future learning.

The operational objectives of early education as stated in the National Policy of Education (FRN, 2012) include:

1. Effecting a smooth transmission from the home to the school;
2. Preparing the child for the primary level of education;
3. Providing adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work;
4. Inculcating in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature and environment, art, music and playing with toys, etc;
5. Develop a sense of co-operation and team spirit;
6. Inculcating social norms;
7. Learn good habits, especially good health habits; and
8. Teaching rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms etc. through play.
9. Policy Guidelines for Implementation

As stated in the NPE (2012) the implementation guidelines state by the government in order to achieve these objectives are as follows:

- a. To establish pre-primary sections in existing public schools and encourage both community and private efforts in the provision of pre-primary education.
- b. To make provision in teacher education programmes for specialization in early childhood pre-primary education.
- c. To ensure that the medium of instruction is principally the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community; and to this end will:
 - i. develop the orthography of many more Nigerian languages and
 - ii. produce textbooks in Nigerian languages.
- d. To ensure that the main method of teaching at this level shall be through play and that the curriculum of teacher education is oriented to achieve this, regulate and control the operation of pre-primary education. To this end the teacher, pupil ratio shall be 1:25.
- e. Set and monitor minimum standard for early childhood centres in the country; and
- f. Ensure full participation of government communities and teacher associations in the running and maintenance of early childhood education facilities (FRN, 2012).

Fostering Creativity in Children

Creativity is an unseen process, that is usually defined in terms of its results, process, or personality. Newtimes (2019) holds that creativity is like height, weight, and strength. Children vary considerably in these dimensions, but everybody has some height, some weight, and some strength. There is a certain amount of creativity in all children, but some are more creative than others. These children have something special that is not found in everybody (Newtimes, 2019). They have divergent ways of thinking, and they can come up with ideas, that are not commonly seen or heard. They are thus creative and can be called creative children, which is evident of the special traits that set them apart from their peers. It is important to nurture and encourage this creativity in children, as it can lead to innovative thinking and problem-solving skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

Creativity is a word which has been loosely used. More often than not, the word creativity has been associated with intelligence. A child who is creative i.e. who shows or has some of the above-mentioned traits is normally termed genius (Mckinney, 2016). There is however a positive co-relation between the two. New concepts, ideas or solutions can be acquired with sound knowledge base only. It is not necessary for a creative person to be a genius. A creative person need not be very intelligent and a very intelligent person on the other hand need not be very creative. However, the fact remains that creativity does come after a knowledge base and acquiring knowledge has relation with intelligence.

Creativity in children is a skill that can be nurtured and developed over time through encouragement, exploration, and exposure to new experiences. By providing opportunities for children to think outside the box and express themselves freely, one can help them unlock their full creative potential. Dandapani (2010) explained that in reality, the processing of the situation is going on in his/her mind for a long period and what appears to be a sudden solution is actually the culmination of ideas over a period. This highlights the importance of allowing children the time and space to let their ideas simmer and develop before expecting immediate results. Encouraging patience and persistence in the creative process can lead to more innovative and original outcomes. Also, this process of creativity is always goal-directed and it is either for personal benefit or for the benefit of society; meaning that children should be encouraged to consider the impact of their creative ideas on themselves and others, fostering a sense of responsibility and purpose in their work. Ultimately, this approach can help children develop not only as creative thinkers but also as empathetic and socially conscious individuals (Dandapani, 2010).

These children show some special traits which can be identified in a class by the teacher. Some of these traits, as enunciated by Ancu and Unluer (2010) are:

- i. Sensing a problem, which exists in a situation or is likely to occur?
- ii. Producing ideas fluently.
- iii. Generating original ideas.
- iv. Acting spontaneously.
- v. Showing capability of elaborating on ideas.
- vi. Finding associations among remote ideas.
- vii. Visualizing ideas and situations with amazing capacity.
- viii. Making quick hypothesis and guesses.
- ix. Working with concentration if the work is of their choice.
- x. Maintaining autonomy of ideas.
- xi. Being very assertive.
- xii. Being very curious.
- xiii. Preferring isolation to crowd.
- xiv. Imaging a lot.

These traits can be summed up as flexibility, non-conformity, need for autonomy, need for independence, high aspirations, self-discipline, playfulness, liking for manipulation of ideas (toying with ideas), assertiveness, reserve nature, self-assurance, open-mindedness, sense of humour, self-confidence, timidity in social situations, preference for fantasy to real adventure etc. Embracing and fostering these traits in children can help them develop into well-rounded individuals who can think critically and creatively.

How to Foster Creativity in Children

Since creativity is termed as a process, the process can be learned. The brain has wonderful system of storing information. Yet it has to be taught to develop and to think both creatively and constructively. Intelligence is a human potential whereas thinking is the skill. This implies that even though the potential is there in a child, he has to be

taught the thinking skill in a constructive manner. This means, actually training the mind of the child, opening it to innovative ideas and doing away with the rigidity of conventional thoughts. If the child is inhibitive, he cannot be creative. In other words, restricted thinking curbs creative thinking. It is therefore essential to note that the training in the thinking skills need not be, necessarily done in isolation or separation. A combination of skills can be used in fostering creativity in children.

Gupta (2014) noted that for developing creative thinking skills in children, four major areas need to be looked into. They are:

Fluency - where the child, without any inhibition learns to generate a large number of ideas or alternate solutions to a problem, which implies understanding and not just remembering information that is learnt. The key words to use in encouraging fluency are – name, match, count and convert. Examples: trace the picture and label the parts; or list 15 things that squeak.

Flexibility – where the child is trained to see things from different point of view, to use many approaches or strategies. It is breaking the mind-set. Key words – predict, interpret, change, employ, distinguish etc. Examples: what would happen if the plane in which you were travelling was hijacked; or how would you feel if you were a hundred rupee note.

Originality – where the child picks up the ability to generate a unique or new idea. It involves synthesis or putting information about a topic back together in a new and creative way. Key words to use in directing originality are – design, transplant, reconstruct, integrate, modify etc. Examples: create an original plan to stop the usage of polythene bags or find original use for an empty can of Pepsi.

Elaboration – where the child learns the ability to make an idea better or clearer by building upon it. This involves developing clear criteria and judging the knowledge gained for the purpose of gaining more knowledge. Key words are – direct, elaborate, judge, evaluate, critique, select, measure, appraise etc. Examples: How can you improve the reading habits of your classmates or name the qualities that go with strong communication skills.

The Role of a Teacher in the Furtherance of Creativity among Children

There was a time when it was believed that creativity was an inherited trait possessed by only a few children. It was believed that creativity would develop automatically and that there was no need for environmental stimulation or conditions favourable for its development. By contrast, it is now known that all children have the potential for creativity though they differ in the degree of creativity they possess. Consequently, it is now an accepted fact that like any other potential, the environment must provide opportunities for creativity to develop in children.

The prevailing unfavourable social attitude towards creativity must be overcome. The reason for this is that children are greatly influenced by parents and teachers for their treatment of potential creativity. If conditions are favourable, development of creativity is established and enhanced. Negative factors like discouragement, criticism etc. must be eliminated. Robert (2019) opined that creativity depends not only on special inborn potential but also on differences in the mental mechanism by which the inborn qualities are expressed. Teacher needless to say plays a pivotal role in enhancing creativity in

children. A number of things can be done by the teachers which would foster creativity. Some of them are stated below:

- i. Regimentation to be avoided by the teacher. Creative children must have some free time to toy with the ideas and concepts and try them out in new and original forms. Time bound work has its advantages but creativity is curbed as a result.
- ii. Creative children are very imaginative. For the imagination to culminate and take some form, solitude is required. A teacher can provide this solitude for the fructification of creative ideas.
- iii. Encouragement by the teacher helps a creative mind to work in the right direction. Unnecessary nagging or criticism can discourage a creative child.
- iv. For toying with ideas, creative children need lot of material and experimentation, which can be provided by a teacher.
- v. Motivation works wonders if given by a teacher. It stimulates creativity in a child. Proper guidance can enhance creativity in children.
- vi. Supportive teacher giving timely direction can help a creative mind to develop.
- vii. Promoting learning, which means helping the child 'learning to learn' can enhance creativity. The role of the teacher thus becomes that of a facilitator.

In addition, the teacher can read stories to them, laugh together with them, use voices of different characters in the stories being read to them, invite puppets to talk to them etc. Lehman (2018) stated that fostering creativity in children has double advantage. The advantage to the child is that he gets tremendous satisfaction and pleasure as well as reward for coming out with something unique. It adds spice to his play as well as develops leadership qualities in him. It promotes vertical thinking as the child learns to solve a problem by going from one logical step to the next in achieving a solution. It also promotes lateral thinking as the child learns to seek solutions to a problem through unorthodox methods.

The Implication of Erikson's theory of development to the fostering of creativity

This study investigated the stages that covered ages 0 to 8 years, which falls with the first four stages of Erikson's theory of development.

1. Birth to age 12 months: Trust vs. Mistrust
2. 1-3 years: Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt
3. 3-6 years: Initiative vs. Guilt
4. 6-11 years: Industry vs. Inferiority.

Stage 1

Erikson's first stage is trust vs. mistrust, which occurs during infancy (birth to 18 months). The psychosocial task for the infant is to seek and develop a sense of trust in their caregivers, which is crucial for fostering creativity in childhood education. Trusting relationships with caregivers can provide a secure foundation for children to

explore their environment and express themselves creatively (Psikolojisi, 2007). Suedfeld et al. (2005) suggested that a favorable outcome is for the infant to establish a sense of trust in their caregivers, leading to a positive view of the world and healthy relationships later in life. This stage lays the groundwork for future stages of development, emphasizing the importance of secure attachments during infancy. This initial stage appears likely to transcend a majority of developmental milestones and significantly impact a child's overall well-being and social development.

Stage 2

Erikson's second stage is autonomy vs. shame and doubt, which occurs during toddlerhood (18 months to three years). Successful completion of this stage leads the toddler to feel a sense of independence and confidence in their abilities. This can have implications for fostering creativity in early childhood education by encouraging children to explore and express themselves without fear of judgment or failure. In addition, toddlers have a more independent stance and attempt to control the environment and their bodily responses, such as toilet training (Feldman & Masalha, 2010). This stage allows the child to develop a sense of autonomy and self-control, which are important for their overall emotional and social development. By allowing toddlers to make choices and take on responsibilities appropriate for their age, educators can support their growing sense of independence and self-esteem.

Psikolojisi (2007) explained that this stage is crucial for establishing a strong foundation for healthy emotional development in later years. Encouraging toddlers to explore and express themselves in a safe and supportive environment can help foster their confidence and resilience as they navigate the challenges of growing up. Failure of this stage produces an outcome of fragile self-worth, dependence, and lack of confidence. Educators and caregivers need to provide opportunities for toddlers to practice decision-making and problem-solving skills in order to promote their autonomy and self-reliance. By offering choices and responsibilities within appropriate limits, toddlers can develop a sense of competence and agency that will serve them well as they continue to grow and learn (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2011).

Stage 3

The third stage is initiative vs. guilt, which occurs during early childhood (3–5 years). Suedfeld et al. (2015) posited that to be successful during this stage, the child initiates goals and expresses their needs to others. This may lead to feelings of competitiveness and produce leadership qualities. Psikolojisi (2007) stated that this is a time when the toddler seeks out individuals who represent various professions (e.g., police officer, fire-fighter, president) to be able to identify and imitate without feeling rejected. This stage nurtures a sense of independence and self-confidence in the child as they explore their environment and interact with others. This stage is crucial for developing a sense of purpose and direction in life.

At this stage children build stronger bonds between the child and the same-sex parent; which helps shape their gender identity and understanding of societal roles. This stage also lays the foundation for future relationships and social interactions as the child learns to navigate their place in the world. Furthermore, this bond creates an established lasting relationship with the family, which in turn develops an individual who has connections to others. According to Gardiner and Kosmitzki (2011), to foster creativity

and healthy development in children, parents need to provide a supportive and nurturing environment during this crucial stage of development. However, unsuccessful accomplishment of this stage can lead to feelings of confusion and insecurity in the child, impacting their ability to form healthy relationships later in life. Parents need to be attuned to their child's needs and provide guidance and support during this critical period of identity formation.

Stage 4

Personal power leads to Erickson's fourth stage, which is industry vs. inferiority, occurring during middle childhood (six–12 years). Suedfeld et al. (2005) noted that fostering a sense of industry in children during this stage can contribute to the development of creativity and a positive self-concept, highlighting the importance of incorporating Erikson's theory into childhood education practices. During this period, school plays a crucial role in shaping children's sense of competence and self-worth. By providing opportunities for success and encouragement, educators can help children navigate through the industry vs. inferiority stage successfully. An unfavorable outcome results in feelings of incompetency and lack of confidence.

Erikson suggested that children are constantly seeking approval and recognition from teachers and peers during this stage, making it essential for educators to provide a supportive and nurturing environment. This can help children build a strong foundation of self-esteem and resilience that will benefit them throughout their lives. Further, children are able to display their personal talents to separate themselves from their peer group. An individualistic approach can help children develop a sense of autonomy and independence, allowing them to explore their unique strengths and abilities. By encouraging children to express themselves creatively and pursue their interests, educators can help them develop a strong sense of identity and self-worth (Weisner & Gallimore, 2018).

Contribution of Creativity Development in Children to National Development

Creativity development in children aged 0-8 is integral to national development. During these formative years, children's brains are rapidly developing and their capacity for creativity is at its peak. Nurturing and encouraging creativity at this stage can have a profound impact on their future contributions to society (Lehman, 2018). In the educational realm, the promotion of creativity enables individuals to think critically, adapt to change, and solve complex problems. A curriculum that emphasizes creativity development equips students with the skills necessary to excel in a rapidly evolving global landscape. Moreover, creativity cultivates a sense of resourcefulness and resilience, which are vital for navigating challenges and seizing opportunities in various spheres of life.

Creative development plays a crucial role in shaping the future workforce of a country. By fostering creativity in young children, one is preparing them to think critically, solve problems, and adapt to an ever-changing global economy. Moreover, creativity fosters innovation, which is the cornerstone of economic growth and sustainability. Children who are encouraged to think creatively are more likely to become entrepreneurs, inventors, and leaders who drive progress and development in various sectors of the economy.

In addition to the economic benefits, fostering creativity in young children contributes to social and cultural development. Creative thinking promotes empathy, collaboration, and open-mindedness, which are essential for building inclusive and harmonious communities. Furthermore, nurturing creativity in early childhood can lead to advancements in various fields, including arts, sciences, technology, and environmental sustainability. Children who are encouraged to explore their creative potential may become the next generation of artists, scientists, engineers, and environmentalists, driving progress and innovation in these areas.

Creative development also enhances cognitive abilities and academic performance, laying the foundation for a skilled and knowledgeable workforce. Children who are exposed to creative activities at a young age often demonstrate improved problem-solving skills, higher academic achievement, and a greater capacity for self-expression. Investing in creativity development in early childhood can also lead to long-term benefits for public health and well-being. Creative activities have been linked to improved mental health, emotional well-being, and overall quality of life, laying the groundwork for a healthier and happier population.

Creativity development in children aged 0-8 nurtures a sense of curiosity, exploration, and imagination, which are essential qualities for lifelong learning and personal growth. These qualities contribute to a more informed and adaptable citizenry, capable of addressing the complex challenges of the 21st century. Additionally, nurturing creativity in young children fosters environmental awareness and sustainable practices, laying the groundwork for a more environmentally conscious and responsible society. Creative thinking can inspire innovative solutions to environmental challenges, contributing to a more sustainable and ecologically responsible future.

Conclusion

Children's creativity in the early years is enhanced through experiences and materials they are exposed to through play and in their everyday lives. When this mindset is developed in them from the cradle, it will go a long way in moulding children into phenomenal, highly motivated and innovative individuals. Therefore, creativity development in children aged 0-8 is a fundamental building block for national development. By investing in and prioritizing creativity through childhood education, one can cultivate a future generation that is equipped to drive economic growth, social progress, cultural richness, and environmental sustainability, thereby laying the foundation for a flourishing and resilient society.

Therefore, the promotion of creativity development is essential for national development across multiple domains. Its influence extends to economic prosperity, educational excellence, cultural enrichment, technological innovation, and overall societal advancement. As nations invest in fostering creativity, they are investing in a brighter and more prosperous future for their citizens and the global community.

Suggestions

Based on the findings, the following suggestions were made:

1. Educational stakeholders should revise school curricula to prioritize creative problem-solving, arts, and innovation. This aligns with Erikson's stages of

psychosocial development, especially during the "initiative vs. guilt" stage, where children learn to assert themselves and explore.

2. Teachers should receive specialized training in fostering creativity and understanding child development through Erikson's psychosocial framework. This will equip them with the skills to guide children in developing self-confidence and innovative thinking.
3. Schools should establish environments that encourage experimentation, free expression, and critical thinking. This includes providing resources such as art supplies, STEM labs, and creative spaces that promote a balance of autonomy and collaboration.
4. Parents should be educated on their role in supporting their child's creative abilities. Erikson's "trust vs. mistrust" and "autonomy vs. shame and doubt" stages highlight the importance of parental support in building a secure foundation for exploration and innovation.
5. Governments should embed creativity into national education strategies to ensure consistency across all levels of learning. Policies should promote creative initiatives such as talent competitions, innovation grants, and recognition programs to motivate students.
6. Policies that connect creative education to national development goals should be implemented. For example, fostering entrepreneurial creativity among students can contribute to solving societal problems, creating jobs, and boosting economic growth..

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