



Teacher Creativity and Commitment as Correlates of Junior School Students' Achievement in English Language in Owerri, Imo State of Nigeria

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Published Online: 28 June 2018	Teacher creativity and commitment is the pivot that could sustain quality African education for growth and development. Until the need to develop in teachers a sense of creativity and commitment, realization of quality education stands a mirage, most especially in a dwindling economy of many African States. This study is a correlation study. Three research questions guided the study. Cluster and sampling to proportional size techniques were used to select 200 Junior School 2 students and 72 English language teachers from 15 public schools in Owerri Education Zone 1 for the study. Four 4-point rating scales: Teacher Creative Thinking ($r = .67$), Teacher Creative Learning ($r = .53$), Teacher Creative Teaching ($r = .80$), and Teacher Commitment ($r = .76$) were administered on the English Language teachers while English Language Comprehension Test with $r = .79$ on students. Pearson Moment Product Correlation (r) was used to analyze data.
Corresponding Author: Oyekanmi, Johnson O. (PhD) Ph.-08136196731, 08051303915	Teachers' creative thinking, creative teaching, and creative learning significantly predicted students' achievement with minor errors while teachers' commitment had no significant relationship with students' academic achievement. However, when combined and tested with t-test statistics, the prediction was significant at 0.05, hence, showing their interrelatedness. It is therefore recommended that English language teachers should be creative and committed.
KEYWORDS:	Teachers' creative thinking, creative teaching, creative learning, commitment, English Language reading comprehension.

Introduction

Occupations that rely on people's skills and emotional intelligence like teaching gain tremendously from the creativity of employees. Creativity is vital, especially in the present day when the world rapidly embraces the advancement of information technology that complements globalization. Teaching creatively is therefore needed to cause the break away from old styles, and bring something new and valuable to the students to do new things. The demand for new skills increases with globalization, especially now that many countries in the world, among which Nigeria is one, have to know the skills their workers require in proportion to the income of the nation. In this sense, creativity is, and would be demanded in schools to develop the students' 3Hs: the head (cognitive), the heart (affective), and the hands (psychomotor) despite the dwindling economy, therefore, creative thinking is currently expected of teachers as creative teaching will increase teachers' capability to learn to teach in a way that ignites interest in the classroom (Day, 2000). Teachers' creativity can help students to increase their level of thinking while

teachers' commitment to work is very important to encourage the students to learn.

Teachers' commitment towards work becomes visible in promoting and maintaining the teachers' positive behaviours. Teachers who teach creatively, teach effectively, and can give students fitting and helpful feedbacks. According to Krietner and Kinicki (2007), commitment is important because it drives the individuals who are expected to be willing to work harder to achieve their goals and remain employed. Reading comprehension, in broad terms, is the ability of readers to get meaning from the text by thinking aloud as they read, coordinate a number of conscious processes before, during and after reading a comprehension passage (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). Thus, reading a comprehension passage requires a highly strategic process during which readers are constantly constructing meaning, using a variety of strategies such as activating background knowledge, monitoring and clarifying, making predictions, drawing inferences, asking questions and summarizing. All these, according to Luke (2006), can only be imparted to the students through

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committed teachers who themselves are creative in their thinking and teaching.

An alarming high percentage of junior secondary school students cannot creatively read any comprehension passage given to them. In fact, most of them cannot read (Yusuf, 2014). According to Oyetunde (2009), students are failing to learn to read creatively their comprehension passages because they are not being taught reading comprehension in a creative way and their teachers are neither creative nor committed to teaching creatively. Researchers like Jensen (1998); Miller (2002); Oyetunde, (2009); and Yusuf (2014) hold the opinion that poor language teachers’ uncreative methodology is one of the main causes of students’ reading failure. Sad to say, according to Harvey, Stephanie and Anne (2000), that students’ poor achievement in English language is not unconnected with students’ inability to read. Ability to read creatively to bring out some sensory images from what is being read shows the in-depth understanding of what the creative writer has presented in graphic symbols, and any student who cannot read a comprehension passage to infer into the mind of the writer has not re-creatively read the passage and such a student may not be able to answer questions on the passage creatively. This problem is much noticed among the Junior Secondary School Students in Owerri Education Zone One of Imo State. This is why English language teachers must be creative and committed in their teaching.

Creative teaching is defined in two ways: teaching creatively and teaching for the creativity. Teaching creatively can be described as a situation where teachers use the imaginative approaches to make the learning process more interesting, motivating, attractive, thrilling and effective. Teaching for creativity is described as using the forms of teaching, which are intended to develop and improve the students’ creative thinking and behaviour, but it also involves creative teaching. Teachers cannot develop the creative abilities of their students, if the students’ creative abilities are undiscovered or suppressed. Teaching with and for creativity are included in all the characteristics of effective teaching such as high motivation, high expectations, the ability to communicate and listen as well as the ability to notice, engage and motivate (Morris, 2006).

Creative teachers need capability in particular fields because it can show whether the teacher is familiar with that particular subject and is able to teach well. They need to use some techniques that inspire their interest and raise their self-esteem and confidence. In other words, teaching for creativity is not an easy option, but, it can be enjoyable and deeply fulfilling. It can involve more time and planning to generate and develop ideas and to evaluate whether they have worked. It involves confidence to improvise and take detours, to pick up unexpected opportunities for learning; to live with uncertainty and to

risk admitting that an idea leads nowhere. Creative teachers are always willing to experiment, but they recognize the need to learn from experience. All of these require more, not less expertise of teachers (Morris, 2006, p. 27).

Some researchers are of the view that the teachers’ creativity is not generally successful in a variety of fields that are related to creativity because of the lack of proper understanding towards it. Teachers are unaware of creativity and they are unable to classify the creative students (Torrance, 1968; Renzulli, 1993). They pay lesser attention; give lesser encouragement and approval to creative students (Gatzeles & Jackson, 1962). All these discourage creativity (Hosseinee, 1997) and go against creative teaching method (Cropley, 2001; Mellow, 1996). These points make it essential for governments at local, state and federal levels to see the need of conducting the educational programs for all teachers at all levels of education to be creative. Teachers’ commitment would work in creating the proper awareness and skill for teachers to teach and learn something beneficially.

The degree of teachers’ commitment is one of the important aspects of increasing performance and quality of school staff (Runco, 2007). Commitment is defined as a degree of positivity, affective bond between the teacher and the school. Teacher’s commitment reflects the degree of internal motivation, enthusiasm, job satisfaction, efficacy and effectiveness. The improvements in the commitment of teachers are one of the outcomes that are likely to be positively affected by the new teacher reform efforts. It is an important step in the process of school reform. Moreover, professionalization of teachers will result in higher commitment which will positively affect teachers’ performance and students’ achievement that will ultimately lead to improvements in student learning.

Creative teachers need capability in particular fields because it can show whether the teacher is familiar with that particular subject and is able to teach well. They need to use some techniques that inspire their interest and raise their self-esteem and confidence. Creative teachers are always willing to experiment, but they recognize the need to learn from experience. All of these require more, not less expertise of teachers (Morris, 2006). These, upon the whole, will help teachers raise a new breed of students that are holistically taught to stand upright to earn their living, using their creative senses in the face of a dwindling economy.

Statement of the Problem

The heart-cry of an average African child, most especially a Nigerian, is the need to sustain quality African education for sustainable growth and development, the kind of education that will break him loose from the yoke of unemployment, hunger, starvation, and abject poverty, and allure him into the realm of self –employment, self –

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independence, and self-reliance. Such needed education cannot be all-fulfilling if teachers who are the agents of knowledge and skills transfer do not develop in themselves high level of creative thinking, creative teaching, creative learning, and commitment so as to develop in their students the art of creativity that will enhance him the sustainable growth and development he desires. This is impossible if language teachers are not committed to teaching creatively to develop a creative learning spirit in himself as well as in his learners as it reflects in his creative way of approaching any reading comprehension passage he teaches in the process of bringing out some sensory images from what the creative writer has presented in graphic symbols.

In the context of the aforesaid, there is a growing complaints by a cross section of education stakeholders in Nigeria, and most importantly in Imo State, on the inability of Junior School students to read creatively because it is believed that most of their English Language teachers do not express in themselves the attributes of creative thinking, creative teaching, and creative learning due to lack of commitment. The question that worries the researchers’ mind, therefore, is to find out if language teachers in our public schools are creative and committed to their primary assignment of teaching creatively, and if the attributes of creativity have any significance on Junior School students’ achievement in English Language reading Comprehension in Owerri Education zone 1 of Imo State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives are raised for this study: To

1. correlate teachers’ commitment to using creativity approach with students’ achievement in English language reading comprehension;
2. determine the composite (ii) relative contribution of teachers’ creative thinking, teachers’ creative learning, teachers’ creative teaching, and teachers’ commitment to using creativity approach on students’ achievement in English language reading comprehension;
3. determine the relative contribution of teachers’ creative thinking, teachers’ creative learning, teachers’ creative teaching, and teachers’

commitment to using creativity approach on students’ achievement in English language reading comprehension.

Research Questions

The researcher posed the following questions to guide the study:

1. How does teachers’ commitment to teaching relate to students’ academic achievement in English Language reading comprehension in terms of students’ gender?
2. What is the composite contribution of teacher creative thinking, creative learning, creative teaching and teachers’ commitment on students’ achievement in English language reading comprehension?
3. What is the relative contribution of teacher creative thinking, creative learning, creative teaching and teachers’ commitment on students’ achievement in English language reading comprehension?

Methodology

The research design used for this study was correlation, carried out on 200 Junior Secondary school 2 students and 70 of their English Language teachers in fifteen (15) public Junior Secondary schools in Owerri Education Zone 1 of Imo State for the study. Three research questions were posed and four 4-point Likert rating scales on Teachers’ Creative Thinking; Teachers’ Creative Learning; Teachers’ Creative Teaching, and Teachers’ Commitment with Cronbach Reliability Coefficient $r = 0.670$; 0.532 , $r = 0.795$; $r = 0.76$ and Students’ Achievement in English Language Reading Comprehension Test administered on the students with Pearson Product Moment Co-relational Co-efficient $r = 0.79$ respectively were used to generate data analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Co-relation to determine the strength and nature of relationship between the variables.

Results

Research Question 1: How does teachers’ commitment to teaching relate to students’ proficiency in English language reading comprehension?

Table 1: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing Relationship between Teachers’ Commitment to Teaching and Students’ Proficiency in English language Reading Comprehension

V a r i a b l e s	N	R	P	S i g
Teachers’ commitment to teaching	2	0	0 . 1 1 6	. 1 0 3 Not Significant
Students’ proficiency in English language reading comprehension	2	0	0	

Table 1 shows the relationship that exists between teachers’ commitment to teaching and students’ proficiency in English language reading comprehension. The results from the table indicate that there is positive relationship between

English Language teachers’ commitment and achievement in English language reading comprehension ($r = 0.495$) but the relationship is not significant at $p < .05$, $P.0.05$. The implication of this is that there is no significant relationship

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between teachers’ commitment to teaching by students’ proficiency in English language reading comprehension.

It was surprising to note that there was no significant relationship between teachers’ commitment to teaching and students’ achievement in English language reading comprehension. This finding disagrees with Miskel and Ogawa, (1988); Reyes, (1990); Rowan, (1990), and Rosenholtz, (1989) who all said that the degree of teachers’ commitment is one of the important aspects of increasing performance and quality of school staff. They said further that teachers’ commitment reflects the degree of internal motivation, enthusiasm, job satisfaction, efficacy and effectiveness. They went further to say that the improvements in the commitment of teachers are one of the outcomes that are likely to be positively affected by the new teacher reform efforts. A teacher who is not being rewarded

regularly and promptly at the end of each working month with his meager salary is less expected to show commitment to using creativity approach in his teaching. No wonder then that most English language teacher in the study area of this research showed little or no commitment. Lahar (2006) in Awuru (2013) summarizes the function of the teacher, thus: teachers are the main determinants of the quality education, nonetheless, when teachers are unmotivated, frustrated, and unhappy because of poor conditions of service, and as well, pushed to the wall to become anti-social, the nation will be doomed. Therefore, the nation and indeed the world without a teacher is a world without progress.

Research Question 2: What are the composite contributions of teachers’ creative thinking, creative learning, creative teaching and teachers’ commitment to teaching on students’ proficiency in English language in reading comprehension?

Table 4.5a. Model Summary of Composite contribution of all the predictor variables (Teachers’ Creative Thinking, Creative Learning, Creative Teaching and Teachers’ Commitment to Teaching) on Students’ Proficiency in English language Reading Comprehension

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.311 ^a	.097	.078	4.81

a. Predictors: (Constant), teacher commitment, creative thinking, creative teaching, creative learning

Table 2a shows the Model Summary of the regression analysis. The "R" column represents the value of R, the Multiple Correlation Coefficient. R is considered to be one measure of the quality of the prediction of the dependent variable; in this case, students’ proficiency in English Language reading comprehension. A value of 0.311, from this research study indicates a good level of prediction.

The "R Square" R^2 value (also called the Coefficient of Determination), which is the proportion of variance in the

dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variables (technically, it is the proportion of variation accounted for by the regression model above and beyond the mean model). The value of 0.078; shows that all the independent variables in this study explained 7.8% of the variability of the dependent variable. This means that 7.8% of the total variance in students’ proficiency in English Language reading comprehension is accounted for by Teachers’ Creative thinking, creative learning, creative teaching and Teachers’ commitment to teaching.

Table 2b: Regression ANOVA in Relation To Students’ Proficiency In English language Reading Comprehension

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1170.993	4	292.748	5.230	.001 ^b
Residual	10914.507	195	55.972		
Total	12085.500	199			

a. Dependent Variable: Students’ Proficiency Test Scores

b. Predictors: (Constant), teacher commitment, creative thinking, creative teaching, creative learning

In relation to students’ proficiency in English Language reading comprehension as the dependent variable; table 2b shows that the independent variables (i.e. Teachers’ Creative thinking, creative learning, creative teaching and Teachers’ commitment to teaching) statistically and significantly predict the dependent variable (i.e. students’ proficiency in English Language reading comprehension); for the Model [$F_{(4, 195)} = 5.230, p < .05$]. This shows that the regression models are good fits of the data; this means that the relationship is linear and therefore all the four specified models significantly predict the Dependent Variable (i.e. students’ proficiency in English Language reading comprehension).

Findings revealed that the multiple correlation coefficients (R) of all the combined independent variables with students’ achievement in English language reading comprehension is 0.332. The adjusted R^2 , which estimates the variance accounted for in the combined independent variables to the dependent variable measure is 0.083 which translates to 8.3% variance in students’ achievement in English language reading comprehension, was accounted for by the four predictor variables.

The table also shows the regression equation ($F_{(6, 199)} = 3.990, p = 0.001$), this implies that the combination of the independent variables (teachers’ creative thinking, teachers’ creative learning, teachers’ creative teaching, and teachers’

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commitment to teaching) is effective in predicting students’ achievement in English language reading comprehension since it is significant at $p < 0.05$ which indicates that the obtained regression resulting from a set of four predictors (teachers’ creative thinking, teachers’ creative learning, teachers’ creative teaching, and teachers’ commitment to teaching) allow reliable prediction of students’ achievement in English language reading comprehension.

This finding agrees with Hemaloshinee, (2013) whose study suggested that creative thinking, creative teaching, creative learning, and teachers’ commitment influenced students’ achievement in English language when the predictor variables are put together. His study shed positive light on increasing students’ performance in language learning as English language teachers express their

commitment to teaching by using creative approach in their classroom interactions. What is however painful about the schools visited is that, most English language teachers did not express commitment in their attitude to teaching English language creatively. Williamson and Payton (2009) explained that the current educational discourses attempted to view the learners at the centre of teaching and learning processes, with an active role in the production of knowledge and meaning, democratically bringing their expertise, experiences and ideas into the classroom.

Research Question 3: What are the relative contributions of teachers’ creative thinking, creative learning, creative teaching and teachers’ commitment to teaching on students’ proficiency in English language in reading comprehension?

Table 3: Coefficient in Relation to Students’ Proficiency in English language in Reading Comprehension

M o d e l	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		T	S i g .
	B	Std. Error	B e t a			
(C o n s t a n t)	9 . 5 7 9	5 . 9 0 6			1 . 6 2 2	. 1 0 6
Creative thinking	. 0 3 4	. 1 8 5	. 2 1 5		1 . 1 8 2	. 0 0 3
Creative learning	- . 0 7 2	. 2 0 4	- . 0 3 2		- . 3 5 3	. 7 2 5
Creative teaching	. 6 2 7	. 1 5 4	. 3 2 9		4 . 0 7 3	. 0 0 0
Teacher commitment	- . 0 6 2	. 1 5 3	- . 0 3 3		- . 4 0 4	. 6 8 7

a . D e p e n d e n t V a r i a b l e : S t u d e n t s ' P r o f i c i e n c y T e s t S c o r e s

The result of Table 3 above shows the relative contributions of all the independent variables to students’ achievement proficiency in English Language in reading comprehension. The beta weights in table revealed the magnitude of contribution of each of the variables. It was revealed from the table that only two out of four predictor variables significantly contribute to students’ proficiency in English language, they are, Teachers’ creative teaching ($\beta = .329$ $t(195) = 4.073$, $p < 0.05$) and teacher creative thinking ($\beta = .215$, $t(195) = 1.182$, $p < 0.05$) significantly contribute to the model. While Teachers’ Creative Learning ($\beta = -0.032$, $t(195) = -0.353$, $p = 0.725$), and teachers’ commitment to teaching ($\beta = -0.033$, $t(195) = -0.404$, $p = 0.687$) do not significantly contribute to students’ proficiency in English Language. The result presented above shows that teachers’ creative teaching and teacher creative thinking are the two potent factors that made significant relative contribution to students’ proficiency in English Language reading comprehension while the contributions of other factors are not significant.

From the results, it was revealed that two out of four predictor variables significantly contributed to students’ achievement in English language, they are teacher creative teaching and teacher creative thinking. These two predictor variables significantly contributed to the model while creative learning and teachers’ commitment to teaching did not significantly contribute to students’ achievement in English Language.

This finding disagrees with Hemaloshinee, (2013) whose study suggested that creative thinking, creative teaching, creative learning, and teachers’ commitment, when relatively examined; each has positive influence on students’ achievement in the English language. However, this finding agrees with Morris, (2006) who discovered that creative teachers are always willing to experiment, but they recognize the need to learn from experience which is not generally made available in a variety fields that are related to creativity because of the lack of proper understanding towards it. And because of this, they pay lesser attention, give lesser encouragement, and approval to creative students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made: English language teachers need to be aware of the need to be creative in their teaching approaches and methods. This will enhance students’ full participation in the lesson and make the teaching-learning procedure learner-centred.

English language teachers should encourage both teaching creatively and teaching for creativity. Teaching creatively enables the language teacher to employ collaborative class participation and team spirit in the learners. It also encourages the use of peer-tutoring method and effective use of instructional materials. And on the other hand, teaching for creativity enables the language teacher lead the students to read the comprehension passage and

turn the subject-matter into a life-on-stage to make the teaching practical.

English language teachers must develop creativity-relevant skills such as creative thinking, creative learning, creative teaching, and positive attitude towards being creative and total commitment to teaching creatively to enhance students’ achievement in English as a second language. In the face of frustration, language teachers’ morale must not be negatively affected because students’ achievement increases because of teachers’ commitment in the teaching process and techniques that is evident in increasing student participation in the classroom.

There is no gainsaying that good mastery in English language determines the extent to which a student can go in his academic career. English language is the core subject, the pivot on which all other school subjects anchor. Any student who is not good in English language reading comprehension is likely to find all the school subjects difficult. Therefore, English language teachers should endeavour to see that the subject is being creatively taught to enable the students (learners) gain mastery in it.

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