



Teacher-Student Perception of Humour, Playfulness and Creativity on Student Learning Outcome in Ibadan, Nigeria

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Author's contribution

The author designed the study, facilitated the focus groups with the assistance of some trained research assistants and drafted the focus group questions, which some creativity and educational evaluation experts validated. The author performed the qualitative analysis with the trained research assistants. The author wrote the first draft of the manuscript and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Use of humour, playfulness and creative learning seem to be unpopular in the Nigerian educational system. This study documents the perceptions of teachers and students of secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria on the role of humour, playfulness and creativity/creative learning in the classroom. Focus group discussions were conducted with 48 teachers and 50 students. Participants were asked their knowledge of and attitude towards the variables. Constant comparison analysis or method of constant comparison revealed that the teachers have a good knowledge of the roles of the variables in the classroom. However, factors like pressure to complete the syllabus, competition among schools in external examinations and the like, promotion of one right answer to every problem and fear of losing respect before students inhibit the use of these variables in the classroom by teachers. The students believe that the variables bring quarrel and distractions among students even though they help academic achievement. The outcomes suggest a strong dominance of cultural influence which effectively affects acceptance in practice of the benefits of the variables in

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the teaching-learning process. Policy makers and government must, therefore, train teachers in the deliberate utilization of playfulness, humour and creativity/creative learning in the teaching-learning process.

Keywords: Playfulness; humour; creativity; creative learning; teaching-learning process; cultural influence.

1. INTRODUCTION

Every educational system seeks to improve the teaching-learning process. This desire for improvement has occasioned many studies by stakeholders into various aspects of the school system. The findings of such attempts have consequently shaped policies, practices and other aspects of the educational system both locally and internationally. In a place like Nigeria, the role of students in the teaching-learning environment has continued to gain currency [1,2]. In the same token, other educational activities are becoming areas of interest to researchers. Educational researchers and other stakeholders in the field of education have continued to underscore the essence of effective teaching. Administrators, teachers themselves and other stakeholders are interested in factors that facilitate student outcomes. This concern demands that instructional improvement should be promoted. Thus Kher [3] contends that there is a need to focus on the students for instructional effectiveness. The focus on instructional effectiveness concerns looking for styles or methods which will best serve the interest of the students during instruction.

The teacher is key to the production of student-oriented learning. There must be an established connection between the instructor and the learner for the teacher's instructional styles to be effective [4]. The teacher thus becomes crucial in managing the teaching-learning process to achieve instructional objectives. This teaching-learning process involves variables such as the quality of instruction, the instructional materials, the learning environment, which is physical and psychological among others. Out of the practices that have continued to characterize the teaching-learning process are humour, playfulness and creativity nurturing. These practices have continued to enjoy some attention in contemporary efforts at improving the teaching-learning process and the educational system as a whole.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Historically, the study of play is problematic [5]. However, play among children has long been

documented and conceived as a children's preserve while adults and play do not enjoy the same privilege [6]. This fact is borne out of what Lieberman [7] described as specialists thinking of play as mainly a juvenile action with no serious import to adult life. In some cultures, play for adults may be perceived as frivolous, a waste of time and an indication of the absence of seriousness [8]. This position holds true in a culture like Nigerian's where derogatory terms are used to describe adults engaged in play, e.g., *agbaya* or *oki na gwo ofe* [9]. Play affects the cognitive, physical and social aspects of the individual [8]. It facilitates imagination, exploration, and optimism [10]. In other words, playfulness allows for freedom which enables the participants to reach limits which lack of play would not have facilitated. Play gives room for risk-taking behaviour which brings about a high possibility for imagination and discovery. Consequently, play makes the teaching-learning process a more enjoyable experience for the teacher as well as the students.

Play and playfulness are part of the factors influencing human cultures for ages. Humanistic psychology, and positive psychology view play and playfulness as part of the greater human values and meaning creation, while the 20th-century scientific investigation was mainly worried about their evolutionary benefits [11]. There is an important distinction between play as an activity, and playfulness as an attitude [12]. For Whitton [12], therefore, playfulness is about openness to new experiences, exploration of possibilities, imagination, and a spirit of make-believe. Despite the fact that play is beneficial throughout life, supporting creativity and happiness, it is still seen by many in education as a frivolous waste of time, and not really relevant to proper learning [12]. Playful learning approaches encourage the development of playful learners not just through the use of toys and games, or even play-based teaching approaches, but through the development of fundamental playful values. Playfulness is crucial to fashioning spaces for positive failure, which the current educational system ignores, with its persistent system of high-stakes testing from early years [12]. Howard, Bellin and Rees [13]

make a useful distinction between the construct playfulness and the act of the play. They perceive play as an action identified chiefly by observable characteristics. They describe playfulness as an internalised quality that improves over time as a consequence of experience and interaction. Though playfulness is usually associated with children, literature revealed that it can similarly apply to both children and adults making it possible to conceive the nature of playfulness as also an attribute of adult behaviour [14].

Further, Walsh, Sproule, McGuinness and Trew [14] introducing the need for playfulness in the learning process through a playful structure, assert that:

The idea of playful structure invites teachers and children to initiate and maintain a degree of playfulness in the learning experience, even when the learning intentions demand a supportive structure. Thus, playfulness becomes a characteristic of the interaction between the adult and the child and not just a characteristic of child-initiated versus adult-initiated activities, or of being situated in play-time versus task-time. All classroom activity, not only free play, can assume playful characteristics. For example, the tone is light-hearted, the activity becomes self-sustaining because of its inherently enjoyable nature and unexpected turns and directions are allowed, while still allowing the adequate structure to support effective learning. (p.110).

Playfulness in this present work is, therefore, the attitude which facilitates any behaviour which provides some enjoyment, fun and reduces anxiety during the teaching-learning process.

How do we explain humour? What makes us respond with laughter to whatever we find funny? The list of questions seems endless. Humour has become an interesting human phenomenon influencing many studies. It is at times interchanged with laughter. Some studies do not even distinguish between the two concepts [15]. Despite the fact that they are distinct, some researchers link the two concepts [15]. Yet there is no universal definition of humour and laughter. Wikipedia [16] defines humour as the tendency of experiences to elicit laughter and offer fun. The word originates in the humoral medicine of the early Greeks, which explains that the balance of fluids in the human body, known as humour, control human well-being and feeling.

Kruse and Prazak [17], define humour as life-affirming; a powerful coping mechanism used to decrease fear, anxiety and psychological stress. Therefore, generally speaking, "humour can help individuals to cope with undesirable or otherwise upsetting situations by disarming anxious individuals and relieving tensions within the group and signalling a friendly environment." [18]. For Hornby [19], humour concerns the quality of a thing that qualifies it as amusing or hilarious. Humour always elicits laughter. Humour in the teaching-learning process is perceived as a method for facilitating an encouraging learning environment [20].

Humour in the classroom provides a positive learning environment which enables students to learn freely. Further, the effect of humour on the learning environment becomes appreciated when students learn difficult subjects like mathematics, statistics and the like. Teachers can nurture classroom magic or charm by using enhanced communication with learners through playful attitude and readiness to employ appropriate humour [21]. Humour improves learners' receptiveness to difficult subjects, thereby impacting positively on students' achievement [22]. The improvement is simply because humour "lightens the emotional and psychological burdens of people" [23]. Humour is related to play in so many ways than we can imagine. The play brings about humour. Humour could be deployed playfully. Humour could also be used outside of play. However, not all play could facilitate humour. Humour in this study, therefore, refers to that phenomenon which elicits laughter or pleasure to decrease anxiety, fear or stress in any given circumstance. It acts like a balm, a sweet social stimulant, and at times like a barb? [24]. However, there is a need to note that within the Nigerian cultural milieu, "play" within the teaching-learning context might necessarily not be seen in the sense of an activity but in the sense of playfulness within the teaching-learning process. For the sake of clarity, therefore, this study uses "playfulness" as explicated above.

The role of creativity in the classroom for improved learning outcomes continues to interest stakeholders in the educational system globally [25]. This development has given rise to the term "creative learning." This development is ostensibly to incorporate creativity into the teaching-learning process. Haydon [25] defines creative learning as "the integration of creativity, content, self-growth, and collaboration." She

further stressed that four central assertions characterize creative learning:

Learning is meaningful to student interests and needs, students are intrinsically motivated to learn, creativity is integrated with academic content teaching and learning and the outcome is a change in thinking: new, meaningful ideas (sometimes expressed in the form of a product), skills, or personal growth. p. 116.

Puccio [26] indicated that it is commonly acknowledged that creativity is the production of something novel and useful. For researchers and writers in the field, creativity is prevalently defined as “a process that leads to the production of original ideas that respond to a perceived problem or opportunity” [27]. This definition accommodates the fact that creative outcomes could be both tangible and intangible.

The fact that creativity or creative problem solving is teachable gained acceptance in the 1960s with the works of Jerome Bruner [28]. He posited that children should be stimulated to see every task as “a problem for which one invents an answer, rather than finding one out there in a book or on a blackboard” [28]. His studies gave scholars the impetus to design instructional programs which promote creativity in all kinds of students [29]. However, they note that the evidence supporting the possibility of teaching for creativity comes mostly from works with young children.

In a survey of 103 instructors, Bull, Montgomery, and Baloché [30] asked them to rate the importance of different characteristics for enhanced student creativity. The respondents rated the following highly: a social climate that facilitates students’ safety, an open classroom which tolerates ambiguity and independence, the use of humour, metaphorical thinking and problem definition. Most scholars agree that the process of creative thinking involves a multifaceted combination of factors that include cognitive flexibility, inhibitory control, memory control and analogical thinking enabling the mind to wander and analogize freely, focus and test [29].

Literature revealed that creative learning significantly benefitted learners [31]. Moreover, this benefit includes such things as improved school attendance, academic achievement, self-confidence and resilience, enhanced motivation

and engagement, development of social, emotional and thinking skills. The challenge, therefore, is to ensure that instructors deliberately teach students for creative learning using skills that would ensure that instructional objectives are met. The need to teach for creativity is because “when one is learning creatively, one is gaining meaningful self-knowledge” [25].

The need to use play and humour to promote creativity or creative learning in the classroom suggests that the teacher has to be adept at managing the classroom. Haydon [25] in proposing the concept of creative learning as an ecosystem that will promote creativity in the classroom, asserted that culture and climate derive from leadership practices and teaching processes. Within the context of education, culture refers to school and classroom management practices. When we talk about the classroom management practices, we arrive at issues concerning the creative environment for the nurturing of creative learning. Consequently, within the purview of this immediate task, mention must be made of few of the measurable factors which Eckvall [32] acknowledged are related to the creative environment. These include lack of conflict, trust, humour, play or playfulness, risk-taking behaviour, liveliness, freedom, and openness.

In spite of the benefits and interconnectedness of playfulness, fun, and creativity, there would seem to be no serious attempt at deliberately promoting or weaving it into the curriculum. For instance, Chiasson [33] observed that instructors sometimes overlook humour in teaching or in adding to the positive environment for learning. Further, literature would seem to return little details about its pedagogical values [23,34]. In Nigeria, the idea of deliberate creativity is still at its embryonic stage [35]. While the few Nigerian researchers in the field are aware of many advantages inherent in this field of human activity, there appear to be barriers hindering full promotion of the culture of deliberate creative living [36]. This lack of concerted effort at nurturing and applying creativity is evident in the Nigerian educational system. Consequently, it would not be correct to state that the goal of the Nigerian school system in most part, at present seems to be to initiate the teaching-learning process towards producing students who at the end of instructions can provide the “one/right answer” to every question asked. Such an objective would seem to leave no room for other

considerations that are still relevant to the growth and development of the educational system. The implication of such a structure is multifaceted. Conclusively, with the role of playfulness, humour, and creativity/creative learning in the educational system, there is the need to discover some stakeholders' perceptions of these variables in the Nigerian teaching-learning process. The findings would help suggest the way forward to improve the teaching-learning process in the Nigerian educational system.

2.1 Purpose of the Study

The study set out to find out the knowledge of both teachers and students of secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria on the role of humour, playfulness, and creativity/creative learning in the classroom and their attitude towards the role of humour, playfulness, and creativity in the classroom.

2.2 Study Questions

1. What do Nigerian secondary school teachers know about the role of humour, playfulness, and creativity/creative learning in the classroom?
2. What is the attitude of the secondary school teachers towards humour, playfulness, and creativity/creative learning in the Nigerian classroom?
3. What is the knowledge of the secondary school teachers on the role of humour, playfulness, and academic achievement in the Nigerian classroom?
4. What do Nigerian secondary school students know about the role of humour, playfulness, and creativity/ creative learning in the classroom?
5. What is the attitude of the secondary school students towards humour, playfulness, and creativity/ creative learning in the Nigerian classroom?

3. METHODOLOGY

The researcher personally recruited participants by visiting secondary schools and asking both teachers and students to sign up for the discussion sessions voluntarily. Additionally, some teacher and student participants were recruited to get their colleagues to sign up for the discussion sessions. Those so recruited helped to monitor and remind their colleagues of the appointed place and time for the discussions. Focus Group Discussions were employed to elicit

data. This approach presented significant advantages to respondents and investigation. The discussions provided a complementary interface among the participants. These interactions ensured that the participants built on each other's ideas to provide richer data than an individual interview would have achieved. The Focus Group Discussions helped the moderators to analyze the experiences, beliefs, and feelings of the participants [37]. Participants were excited to supply information about the variables of the investigation because no one had ever asked them to provide their opinions on the topic of discussion. The fact that the participants were being asked their perceptions about play, humour, creativity, and learning for the first time created a sort of motivation for them to freely engage in the conversations. The enthusiasm helped the participants at each of the Focus Groups to build on one another's contributions thereby providing richer contributions to the discussions.

Preference for Focus Group Discussions emanated from the need to delve deeper into how teachers and students who actively participate in the teaching-learning process characterize and conceptualize the variables of study within the teaching-learning process. The opportunity enabled both teachers and students to provide data of emic dimensions freely. Such, personal emic perspectives are usually absent in quantitative research [38]. Consequently, before the commencement of the focus groups, the researcher recruited a school principal and a teacher as moderators for the discussions among the teachers. This approach further helped to get the number of participating teachers because they saw the principal as a boss and senior colleague who needed support. All the teachers who agreed to participate did not renege. The teachers were able to connect easily with their moderator-colleagues. The researcher was present at the discussions to monitor proceedings. The participating teachers therefore cooperated and willingly contributed during the sessions. Three secondary school students were also trained to assist during the Focus Group Discussions among the students. The researcher facilitated discussions among the students because he realized that the student-participants needed an authority figure to moderate the discussion sessions because they were mostly adolescents.

Focus Group Discussions (hereafter FGD) were organized for teachers and students of

secondary schools in Ibadan Nigeria. A total of 48 teachers and 50 students participated in the FGD for teachers and students all in Ibadan, Nigeria. The breakdown for the teachers is as follows: 28 private school teachers, 20 public school teachers, 38 males, and 10 females. The FGD for students comprised 30 females and 20 male students. The number of those attending private secondary schools is 26, while 24 students confirmed that they attend public secondary schools. The Focus Group Discussion sessions were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Due to a large number of participants, the 48 teachers were divided into four FGD of 12 teachers each. The 50 students were also divided into four FGD (two groups of 12 and two groups of 13 students).

Data from the FGD were analyzed using constant comparison analysis or method of constant comparison developed by Glaser and Strauss [39], explained that constant comparison analysis or method of constant comparison consists of three major stages. The first stage is the open coding stage. Here, the data are broken into small units. The researcher assigns a descriptor, or code, to each of the units. During the second stage which is the axial coding stage, the codes are clustered into categories. The third stage is the final stage where selective coding occurs. The investigator develops one or more themes that define the content of each of the groups. Further, the choice of analysis grew out of the fact that "there are multiple focus groups within the same study, which... allows the focus group researcher to assess saturation in general and across-group saturation in particular." [39]. Onwuegbuzie and his colleagues continue that this method of analysis helps to assess the significance of the themes and to perfect themes. Moreover, investigators could use the multiple groups to judge if the themes that developed from one group also appeared in other groups. Doing so would enable the researcher to reach data saturation or theoretical saturation. The researcher could also attain both data saturation and theoretical saturation. Consequently, the qualitative thematic content analysis was employed. The researcher and the trained encoders used the three categorizations enumerated above to arrive at themes to explain the data. These themes became the unit of analysis of the data. The investigator and decoders subsequently arrived at the essence of each of the ideas raised during the discussions by removing personal phrases which ordinarily would distract from the ideas expressed during

the conversations. Researcher and two decoders coded data independently to ensure reliability. The categories were defined. Differences arose while assigning categories. Further dialogue helped to settle these differences. Inter-rater agreement (90%) was attained in the identification of themes and categories for both teachers and students FGDs. These yielded full concordance on the classifications. Percentages were also used to analyze the data.

The discussion with the teachers covered knowledge of the role of play, humour and creativity/creative learning in the classroom. It also concerned their attitude towards the role of play, humour and creativity/creative learning in the classroom setting. The Focus Group Discussions with the secondary school students aimed to find the knowledge and attitude of students towards the role of play, humour and creativity/creative learning in the classroom.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: What is the knowledge of the secondary school teachers on the role of playfulness, humour and creativity/creative learning in the Nigerian classroom?

Of the 48 teachers who participated in the FGD, 40 representing 83.3% exhibited knowledge of the role of playfulness, humour and creative learning in the classroom. This number agreed that playfulness, humour, and creative learning are interconnected. They, however, advocated a moderation of the use of playfulness and humour in the classroom. This call for moderation they attributed to the inadequate time allotted to the teaching of each subject during the school's daily activities and the need to cover as many topics as possible before the end of term examinations. The rush to complete the syllabus they said was very important in the private schools. Explaining why the private secondary schools' teachers take the completion of the syllabus seriously, one teacher captures it thus:

A lot of competition exists among private schools. Proprietors would not joke with any teacher who fails to complete the topics in the syllabus. Any teacher who does not cover the syllabus in the name of playfulness, humour and creative learning is in big trouble. Teachers are under extreme pressure to cover the syllabus always.

The above results would seem to support the findings of Bolkan, Griffin, and Goodboy [40],

who studied the outcome of two studies on intergration of humour in the classroom. They found that the students exposed to the humorous instruction found the lesson to be more humorous. While those exposed to the usual standard or serious lesson did not find their lesson humorous. However, in terms of the effect on achievement, the set of students exposed to the humorous instruction scored lower than the other group. This result led them to conclude that the incorporation of humour into their educational instruction, potentially decreases the subjects' capacity to retain and transmit the thoughts presented during instruction. This failure to achieve might be due to the distraction caused by the inclusion of humour during instruction.

For teachers in the public schools, they would rather not worry about completing the topics in the curriculum during the allocated time frame. The disparity in attitude brings up the issue of supervision in public secondary schools among others. Will a better supervision of the public schools improve the negative attitude of public school teachers in areas such as completion of the school curriculum before students sit for both internal and external examinations?

Further, the 40 teachers agree that playfulness and humour assist students to learn and accept difficult subjects like mathematics and others that are feared by students. They called for the possibility of making teachers use humour, playfulness and creative learning in the classroom to teach the difficult subjects. This position aligns with the position of Kher, Molstad, and Donahue [41] who affirm that humour helps learning-outcomes among students, especially in the dreaded or difficult courses. Authors such as Haydon [25], Dehaan [29] and Perkins and Wieman [42] have also suggested many approaches that will enhance classroom interaction using playfulness, humour, and creative learning techniques. On the need to reduce tension, Puccio, Cabra, and Schwagler [43] contend that study after study of the creative personality reveals the importance of humour. They assert that a good sense of humour facilitates a playful attitude which goes a long way in reducing stress and self-doubt. Self-doubt and stress are associated with the learning of difficult subjects like mathematics. Consequently, when a student fails in mathematics, for instance, "A good sense of humour helps one to rebound faster from such setbacks" [43].

Research Question 2: What is the attitude of the secondary school teachers towards the role of play, humour and creative learning in the Nigerian classroom?

The teachers are positively disposed towards the use of play, humour and creative learning in the classroom. However, there is a note of caution from them. They expressed fear about the possibility of play and humour leading to disrespect for teachers among students. Such expression of fear is surprising when we consider the fact that an overwhelming number 47, held that fun and playfulness should be highly encouraged during instructions. This number represents 97.9% of the total respondents. From the cultural perspective, therefore, one can hazard an explanation as to why this obsession with fun and playfulness being cautiously used in the classroom during instruction. In the traditional setting, respect from the younger to the older person is very sacred in all the hundreds of cultures that exist in Nigeria. Some Nigerians believe that playing with children could erode this traditional distance between the old and the young as a mark of respect for the older person. Consequently, the teachers would rather introduce playfulness and humour in classroom management sparingly with a lot of caution. This confirms the universal fear of change which has largely affected the full implementation of deliberate creativity and innovation in the country.

Further, the teachers would seem not to be too comfortable with the idea of introducing playfulness and humour in creative learning. They expressed the need for respect which is also borne out of their cultural backgrounds. They thus advised that teachers should be specifically trained in the use of humour and playfulness in classroom management. Such a specialized training should also include a deliberate emphasis on the cultural promotion of respect within the need for playfulness and humour in the classroom. The lack of confidence in the use of the variables in the classroom expressed by the teachers suggests that something is not right. The absence of confidence is even more worrisome because some of the teachers reported being taught by good teachers who adequately applied playfulness and humour while they were in either secondary schools or higher institutions. The fallout from such an attitude is that if the teachers' attitude does not favour playfulness, humour and creative learning, they lack the

atmosphere of freedom which facilitates risk-taking behaviour and such teachers who do not share any passion for playfulness, humour, and creativity or creative learning may take it out on their students. The result will be that creative learning is hugely missing in our educational system, and the system would not produce creative graduates who would solve problems creatively in their different contexts.

Context or environment is an integral part of creative endeavours. It was reported that humour and playfulness facilitate creativity. The teachers in this study agreed that humour and playfulness facilitate creative learning. Yet, for cultural reasons, they are not readily disposed to the two factors due to the fear of losing respect before their students. It is because the environment in which they would have loved to apply their ideas does not support these ideas. This situation would have informed Puccio et al's [43] contention that a quality for the occurrence of creativity does not reside in an individual but in the environment in which the individual finds themselves. A classroom environment in which there is a strong fear of loss of respect undoubtedly would be devoid of humour and playfulness. Consequently, areas of tension and fear like mathematics, physics and other subjects dreaded by students might not be fun to teach or learn due to this cultural barrier. This finding on the role of cultural barriers to creativity finds support in the experience of Gergely Imreh [Cited by 43]. He founded the first Hackerspace in Taiwan to provide easy access to a variety of tools those seeking to drive their creativity. This was available to everyone who otherwise might not have such access. Cultural tendencies prevented the realization of this dream. He found that emphasis on cultural values impacts the creative process significantly.

Research Question 3: What is the knowledge of the secondary school teachers on the role of playfulness, humour and academic achievement in the Nigerian classroom?

The participants were specifically asked to distinguish between creativity/creative learning and academic achievement. It is interesting to note that out of the 48 teachers present at the FGD; one teacher was non-committal while 24 teachers, representing 50% of the population of the teachers affirmed that playfulness, humour and creative learning would affect academic achievement positively. The other 23 representing 47.9% of the teacher population

believes that the three variables affect academic outcomes. This perception suggests that the respondents have delineated academic achievements from creative achievements. The closeness of the figures also points to the possibility of some underlying factors that need to be investigated as creative learning is also expected positively to impact academic learning [29,23].

Ai [44], contends that the study of the correlation between academic achievement and creativity dates back the pioneering works of Getzels and Jackson in the 1960s who reported his findings on the role of creativity in school achievement. Surapuramath [45] using secondary school students in India found a slightly positive relationship between creativity and academic achievement. Ai's [44] study found hardly any relationship between creativity and academic achievement. Similarly, Balgiu and Adir [46] working with undergraduates in a technical field in Romania found no relationship between their academic achievement and creativity. However, Nami, Marsooli and Ashouri [47], studied the relationship between creativity and academic achievement among 72 Iranian students. They found a significant relationship between the two constructs. Further, Gajda, Karwowski and Beghetto [48] doing a meta-analysis of 120 studies of the relationship between creativity and academic achievement, reported that an analysis of moderator variables showed that this relationship was consistent across time but stronger when creativity was measured using creativity tests in comparison with self-report measures and when academic achievement was measured using standardized tests instead of grade point average. Further, their study [48] revealed that verbal tests of creativity produced significantly stronger relationships with academic achievement than figural tests.

The above findings show that for teachers to be properly prepared for the role of creativity in academic achievement in Nigeria, more studies that emanate from the Nigerian context are needed taking into cognizance numerous variables that may significantly influence expected outcomes not only in the area of academic achievement but creative achievement.

Research Question 4: What is the knowledge of the secondary school students on the role of playfulness, humour, and creativity in the Nigerian classroom?

All the 50 students who represent 100% of the population at the FGD affirmed the productive role of playfulness, humour and creative learning in the teaching-learning process. Also, 46 students, representing 92% of the student participants believe the variables make them achieve academically. These positions imply that teachers in the secondary level of education in Nigeria should be well trained on the use of these three variables during classroom instructions. Moreover, Omede and Jimba [23] confirmed that playfulness and humour promote learning as well as the bond existing between teachers and the taught. Consequently, students who feel relaxed during instructions would achieve greatly. The study of Kangas [49] revealed that playfulness is an integral part of creative learning. The response from the student respondents also justifies Watkins & Mortimore [50] suggestion that contemporary pedagogy research must include a focus on teaching and the learner among other factors. The contributions of the learners to any discourse on the improvement of the teaching-learning process are important for the improvement of the process because they are the immediate beneficiaries of the teaching enterprise. Their inputs thus assist teachers, policymakers, curriculum developers, governments and other stakeholders in determining the direction that the teaching-learning process assumes. If humour also has been repeatedly confirmed to fuel creative learning in this chapter, it is only appropriate to align with the thoughts of Lin [51], that a confluence approach be adopted in the efforts to nurture creativity and innovation from the Nigerian classrooms and by extension in the educational system as a whole. The confluence approach in the context of this paper, therefore, would be to promote creativity in the Nigerian educational system through the deliberate weaving of playfulness, humour and creative learning into the classroom practices.

Research Question 5: What is the attitude of the secondary school students on the role of playfulness, humour and creativity/creative learning in the Nigerian classroom?

The FGD revealed the perception of students that playfulness and humour distract the students. If this holds true in their psyche, then creative learning might be affected. One may then be tempted to suggest that Nigerian secondary school students are not positively disposed to playfulness, humour and creative learning because they have the perception that

playfulness and humour distract from instructional objectives. When playfulness and humour are absent in the classroom, freedom is not promoted in a relaxed and conducive classroom environment. This absence of creative classroom climate stifles creative behaviour, and so students might not be able to engage in creative outcomes. The suggestion by the teachers that all teachers learn the art of playfulness and humour for creative learning becomes relevant in this case. The suggestion is important so that teachers trained in humour, playfulness, and creative learning will introduce same seamlessly into the teaching-learning situation. One implication of this suggestion is that teachers would need to be properly trained in the use of these three variables to become effective in their usage for effective management of the teaching-learning process.

Further, the attitude of some teachers in the sample towards playfulness and fun as distracting variables in the classroom confirms the findings of Omede and Ojimba [23]. Working with teachers in a College of Education in Nigeria, they reported that teachers expressed belief in the fact that humour and laughter in the classroom distract them from the task of teaching their students. This attitude they, however, suggested might be due to lack of mastery of the subject or topic to be taught or ill-preparedness on the part of the teacher. This inadequacy they posit might be noticed by the students thereby making them laugh at the teacher eliciting an ugly reaction from the same teacher.

Another revelation during the FGD with students is the belief that playfulness and humour will lead to quarrel among students. This conception is held by 45 out of the 50 students. The number represents 90% of the sample. The concern is not to dismiss this attitude as uninformed but to examine the kind of playfulness and humour used during the teaching-learning process by both the teachers and students. Related to this is the conception that humour could be distracting to the teaching-learning process or classroom interaction. Why then would anyone hold on to the perception that humour or playfulness during instruction distracts students or is a source of quarrel among students.

Ma [52], explains that there are three theories of humour: superiority, comic relief, and incongruity theories. Superiority humour concerns humour that concentrates on another person's mistakes, calamity or stupidity. Superiority humour could

also involve self-deprecation often employed by comedians. Typical examples are jokes about ethnicities and blondes. Comic relief humour concerns the breaking of tension or suspense with a joke. Filmmakers use this technique in dramatic and action films to release tension periodically throughout the film. This technique prevents fatigue for the viewer. The incongruity model asserts that humour occurs when logic and familiarity are replaced by things that usually do not go together. At the start of a joke, our minds and bodies anticipate what is going to happen and how it is going to end. That expectation follows a logical thought pattern that is tangled with emotion. Further, such a joke is affected by our past experiences and thought processes. When the joke goes in an unexpected direction, the incongruity between the various parts of the joke comes out as humorous.

From the above delineation of the three models of humour, it could be ascertained that the humour that the students consider an instrument of quarrel among themselves would be superiority humour. Here the students would want to ridicule their colleagues from the perspective of superiority based on any criterion of their choice. Such a joke would amount to making fun of the individual. Humour often relies on incongruity, on disrupting pattern and expectation [5]. Anybody who feels their psychological territory had been evaded naturally goes on the defensive protecting their valuables. Since every person seeks respect, there would be a scenario where everyone would fight to protect their image. In the same vein, when one judges this attitude of students about humour, one concludes that they must be talking about their experiences with jokes. Experience has also revealed that some teachers deliberately ridicule their students during instruction. Obviously, such students would not learn, and such teachers would not be able to facilitate a good rapport between himself/herself and the students. Since humour is a cognitive form of play [5] teachers, therefore, must develop the skills on how the cognitive employment of playfulness and humour would promote creative learning in our schools.

5. CONCLUSION

As Nigeria slowly but steadily joins the global journey into the world of deliberate creativity and innovation, students become very important. In the same token teachers are indispensable as they help to transmit creative and innovative thoughts to learners. While change is very

difficult, change is also not impossible to initiate, lead and sustain. The future of creative individuals that will help transform Nigeria lies in the hands of teachers who will facilitate cultures of creativity and innovation in the classrooms and elsewhere as they instruct learners. Scott, Leritz, and Mumford [53] found that the instructional approaches that are effective in communicating creativity to students were the ones that clearly informed students about the nature of creativity and presented clear strategies for creative thinking. At this stage of the infancy of culture of creativity and innovation in Nigeria, one could conclude that to foster creativity and innovation, playfulness and humour which students readily can identify with becoming veritable tools which instructors can use to improve instructions and classroom management. Teachers must therefore as a consequence of this revelation be deliberately trained to employ playfulness and humour in the classroom to foster creativity/creative learning and other goals of the educational setting. Policy makers and government must provide the enabling environment for creativity and innovation to thrive. The last two major stakeholders must do all within their power to facilitate the positive role of playfulness, humour and creativity/creative learning in our secondary education system in particular and the educational system at large.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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