



## CREATIVITY RESEARCH IN NIGERIA: A RESEARCH AGENDA FOR THE STUDY OF ORGANIZATIONAL CREATIVITY

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### ABSTRACT

*In today's highly competitive environment, creativity has been used as a yardstick for measuring success and competitiveness among individuals, organizations and nations. Generally, whether in the domain of work or society at large, when a significant number possess creative ability it brings about transformational change in the personal professionalism and overall national development. Obviously, creativity research has been with us for some decades, but distinctively, in the western world researchers and practitioners have devoted increased attention towards the understanding of the factors predicting creative performance. An extensive review of creativity research in Nigeria revealed a substantial gap and inconsistencies in methodological approaches among scholars. Moreover, the Nigerian orientation to creativity research is out of tune with current conceptualizations and trends in creativity research. A research agenda assumed to overcome the shortcoming of earlier studies is proposed. In view of this, it is imperative to propose a research agenda towards understanding organizational creativity in Nigeria. It is believed that this would provide theoretical, practical and social, relevance to stimulate creativity and productivity in our organizations and also deal with the shortcomings of earlier research endeavour.*

**Keywords:** *Creativity, Transformational change, Creative performance, Organizational creativity, Work climate for creativity*

### INTRODUCTION

In the ever changing human society, creativity has been acknowledged to be decisive to all human activity. For some time now “to make”, “to innovate” and “to create” has become the yardstick for evaluating individuals, organizations and societies. Scholars and practitioners have highlighted the predominant role of creativity as a core competence needed by individuals, teams or groups working in diverse domains of work (Shalley, Zhou and Oldham, 2004).

Successful organizations and nations who continue to make progress as we get towards the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century must demonstrate a great level of creativity. According to Moorhead & Griffin, (1989) “without creativity, organizations would never change, and their employees would stagnate”. Amabile & Pillemer, (2012) have observed that over the past 35 years,



examination of social and environmental influences on creativity has become increasingly enthusiastic, with broad implications for the psychology of human performance, and with applications to education, business, and beyond.

According to Florida (2002), the key basis of growth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are not competition, knowledge or technology, rather the fundamental drive to economic growth is as implemented in creativity. As a core ability of mankind, it has been and continues to be our intangible asset to create something new, innovative and valuable.

Despite the increasing interest and attention toward investigating creativity globally, the concept has not received the need attention among scholars and practitioners in Nigeria. In this review considerable effort was made to expand existing literature by developing a conceptual rationale regarding the relationships which exist between Dispositional factors (Personality traits, motivational orientations, achievement motivation) and corporate culture on organizational creativity and thus proffering a research agenda. We believe this holistic approach will offer a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay among the variables that shapes and predict organizational creativity.

### **The concept of creativity**

Creativity has been defined in many ways by different theorists (Amabile, 1983; Pareek, 1993; Shalley, 1991; Akinboye, 2001; West, 2002; Mishra & Singh, 2010); for instance, Mayer (1999) cited in Penke (2003) reviewed seven definitions published in the 1999 "Handbook of Creativity (Sternberg, 1999), and found that a common thread runs through the gamut of definitions and summarized as follows:

*"Creativity involves the creation of an original and useful product"*

The above definition is the most common and widely used among psychologists (MacKinnon, 1962; Stein, 1953). No matter the divergence in the perspectives of theorists, it is generally agreed that creativity can be studied as an attribute of a person, product or even situation (Penke, 2003). It has also been identified as the answer to varied problems of man in today's society, and a highly valued human quality which has been known for a long time to have its influence on scientific, technological and artistic sphere of human activity (Khan & Gash, 2012).

After extensive research, Morgan (1953), cited in Cropley, (1999) listed the common denominator for creativity to be *novelty*. The main requirements for anything to be a novelty entail that, it must possess originality, innovativeness, and newness, its outputs must also have some level of uniqueness compared to some other ideas, and yet it must not be so bizarre such that adoption or its implementation is not feasible (Zhou & George, 2001).

Given the many definitions that has proliferate the literatures, in this study, the construct “creativity” is conceptualized as “the ability of a person, team or a group of people’s to originate, generate, and perpetuate unique ideas that are attainable in solving society’s immediate or future problem(s)”.

Generally, creativity is of three types, namely: *Individual creativity*, *Group or team creativity* and *Organizational creativity* (Seyedabdolmajid, Farzanehseifi and Seyedalireza, 2013). However, whether the attempt is focused toward individual, team and organizational creativity, one thing is very clear and common to the three types of creativity, that is, the ability of individual’s or group to produce ideas or outcomes that are both novel and appropriate to some goal (Amabile, 2013).

The focus of our review is, specifically to understand the work climate for creativity as stimulants or inhibitor for creativity in Nigeria. Amabile (1998) reiterated the fact that creativity is undermined unintentionally every day in work environments that were established – for entirely good reasons- to maximize imperatives such as coordination, productivity, and control. An understanding of what creative performance and creativity is has implications for Nigeria’s national development agenda and its continued existence, success and competitiveness.

### **Major Characteristics of Creative Behaviour**

Every scientific study of creativity has been focused on the four major characteristics of creative behaviour (the 4 P’s of Creativity). These are: the creative person, creative process, creative product and creative press (environment). The major distinctions among the major characteristics are highlighted in this review.

The first characteristic is that which focus on the *creative person*. This involves the study of creative persons to identify their personal characteristics. They are tested with various personality and intellectual instruments, interest inventories, observations and interviews to identify their characteristics and peak periods of creative productivity. Most tests of creativity, for example, Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT) (Torrance, 1960) along with Guilford’s Tests of Creative Ability (Guilford, 1963) - are developed to test such creativity types which can be demonstrated. These include originality, flexibility, fluency and elaboration

The second characteristic is the *creative process*; this involves the phases, steps, theories, techniques, models or mechanisms involved in the creative process. Researches in this category involve what happens during the creative act. The end result is then documented in terms of theories, models, and techniques of creativity.



The third characteristic, involves *creative products* such as art works, new designs, discoveries, and inventions. It considers the actual production process of a product. A criteria is provided by gatekeepers in the chosen field to determine (evaluate) whether the product is creative (original, novel) or not. Product research focuses on what constitutes a creative idea, how creative potentials can be measured and what differentiates creativity from other intellectual skills or abilities.

The fourth characteristic has been referred to as the *creative press* which deals with environment, which may provide or inhibit the development of personal or organizational creativity. Is it stressful or not, conducive or not? It is also concerned with the study of deliberate attempts (with techniques) to train or encourage creativity. This research agenda focuses on the creative press argument which is concerned with the environment for creativity- we argue that the social environment can influence creative behaviour either as a stimulant or a barrier.

### **Overview of Creativity Related Studies in Nigeria**

The pioneer attempt at understanding the construct of creativity started with the commonly recognized milestone in the modern systematic research effort which began with Guilford, (1950). The earliest approaches and noteworthy attempt to the study of creativity in Nigeria started with Akinboye (1976) in a study to determine effective methods of fostering creativity among Nigerian subjects. In the study Akinboye had experimented on the differential effectiveness of three methods of fostering creativity, namely: Direct-creativity Training, Brainstorming and Problem- solving approaches. One hundred and forty-four (144) subjects (72 boys and 72 girls) from two secondary schools in Ibadan Oyo State participated in this study. The findings from this study generally indicated that brainstorming is the most effective method during group work, it was observed to be better in fostering creativity.

Empirical studies by Akinboye have had innovative impact on the study of creativity in Nigeria. Contemporaneously, Akinboye developed the Ibadan Creative Assessment Scale (ICAS), an inventory developed to measure creativity. This inventory was used in the study of various creativity dimensions and measures, such as originality, initiative, ideative fluency, ideative flexibility and creativity motivation. Other related problems which he studied include the effectiveness of brainstorming in small groups. Akinboye also developed Akinboye's

Practical-Creativity-at-Work (APCAW). Akinboye (2001) conducted an experimental study using a battery of tests to find out the effectiveness of Edward De Bono's lateral thinking method and Akinboye's Practical-Creativity-at-Work (APCAW). Overall, the study was generally significant in buttressing the fact that creativity training programmes have significant impact on productivity, perception and enforcement of creativity skills.

Owolabi (1988) experimented on the differential efficacy of brainstorming and behavioural problem-solving techniques in fostering creativity in counselor trainees, using 250 counselors

as the participants of the study. This study demonstrated the relevance of application of creativity training techniques in counselling education in Nigeria (Owolabi, 1988). Olagunju (1990), in another related research effort aimed at exploring the efficacy and feasibility of the creative problem-solving technique, and the Kepner-Tregoe Technique. In this study, Olagunju used Nigerian trainees as participants in the study, using a 3 x 3 factorial design. The study findings were significant, because this marked the first time creativity was tested in industrial and managerial positions in Nigeria.

Zachariah (2000), investigated the manifestations of creativity and its therapeutics effects among psychotics. The aim of the research was to investigate two inter-related aspects of the postulated association between creativity and psychosis, namely the effects of psychosis on creativity and the impact of creativity on psychosis. The participants were 120 normals and 120 psychotics. Pattern of results suggests that active psychosis in combination with pathologically significant personality variables inhibits creativity, while enhancing aspects of creativity in combination with affective variables of stress and arousal. The findings in the study indicate that intelligence clearly moderated the creative process. Creativity itself was found to exert a significant therapeutic effect on psychosis. The core mechanism was identified as the synthetic integrating process implicit in the creative process. A major implication of the findings is that in contrast to existing viewpoints about therapy, the creative process can be used as a therapeutic tool in its own right. This would involve designing therapeutic strategies using individually tailored creative activity regimes, while at the same time complementing other psycho-therapeutic approaches facilitating the integration of the total personality.

Owodunni (2002), studied the effectiveness of Direct Attention Thinking Tools (DATT) and Brainwriting creativity techniques on business process re-engineering skills of customers' service bank workers in Ibadan. These were examined at the low, medium, and high experience levels of the subjects. A pre-test, post-test, control group experimental design was adopted with a 3x3 factorial design, in this study, the researcher generated and tested ten hypotheses. Three instruments including the Business Creativity Re-engineering Assessment Scale (BUCRAS), Creativity Aptitude Scale (CAS) and Ideative Originality Scale were administered to the participants. The researcher concluded on the basis of research findings that both Direct and Attention Thinking Tools (DATT) and Brainwriting had significant impact on trained subjects' Business Creativity Reengineering skills, creativity Aptitude, and Ideative Originality. The results of this study brought to limelight the supposed roles of creativity and knowledge innovation in the banks in particular, and in general. The major limitation of this study was that the nature of the works of the bankers made it impossible to work with them during week days except on weekends.

Animasahun (2002) assessed the effectiveness of Six Thinking Hats and Akinboye Practical creativity-at-work techniques in fostering life skills among convicted adolescents in two Nigerian prisons. A pre-test, control group design was adopted with a 3x3 factorial. One hundred and thirty –five (135) randomly selected adolescent inmates from Agodi (Ibadan) and Ilesa prisons whose age ranged from 18-21 years with a mean of 19.5 years were used. Seven

hypotheses were generated and tested. The results in this study demonstrated that the treatments were effective and that positive life skills could be fostered among convicted adolescents in Nigerian Prisons by using the Six Thinking Hats and Akinboye Practical Creativity at work (APCAW) programmes. Also, Owodunni (2002) investigated the effects of Direct Attention Thinking Tools (DATT) technique and Brainwriting technique on the business process reengineering skills of bank workers in Ibadan. The result of the study shows that the techniques were effective on treated subjects. However, DATT-low experience groups benefited most from the treated programmes.

Ortese designed a study to establish the effectiveness of Akinboye's Mind-Prompt and Edward de Bono's CoRT Thinking Techniques in fostering in creativity among secondary schools students in Makurdi, Benue State. The Stress Level Identification Inventory (SLH) was administered to SS II students in sampled schools. The pre-test, control group experimental design was adopted with a 3 x 3 factorial mix. The random sampling technique was used to select three secondary schools of the 33 schools in Makurdi. A total of 160 students were selected and assigned to the experimental and control groups. Amongst others, findings revealed that Mind Prompt CoRT techniques are effective in fostering ideative flexibility, originality, fluency and creativity motivation among students.

Olawale (2006) investigated the effects of "Do it" creativity and emotional mastery strategies in fostering life skills among adolescents with physical impairments in Oyo state. The study samples of the study were ninety (90) adolescents with physical impairment. The participants were matched into three Self-Concept groups (low, moderate and high) on the basis of their scores in the Self Concept Scale of the Adolescent Personal Data Inventory (APDI), while they were eventually assigned into the treatment and control groups on the basis of balloting. The study's finding was that the "Do it" creativity and emotional mastery strategies are effective in fostering life skills among adolescents with physical impairment thereby enhancing their ideative originality, creativity motivation and emotional intelligence. The treatment strategies were found to foster life skills in adolescents with physical impairments notwithstanding their disability and self concept levels. The researcher recommended that all programmes mounted for persons with disabilities should incorporate life skills to enable them survive meaningfully in the society.

Odetunde (2012) studied the dispositional (achievement orientation, proactive personality, role breath self-efficacy and competitive disposition) and contextual (participation in decision making, task autonomy, communication practices and management support) factors facilitating employee innovativeness in the mobile telecommunications industry in Nigeria. Data were collected from 430 randomly selected employees from the three major mobile telecommunication organizations (Airtel, Glo and MTN) in Lagos and Ibadan. A structured questionnaire consisting of standardized scales of creativity, innovation, adoption and the dispositional and contextual factors was used to collect data. The findings revealed that dispositional and contextual factors are important in facilitating employee innovativeness. It was also concluded that organizations in the mobile telecommunication industry in Nigeria can



promote innovativeness by recruiting employees who are proactive, achievement oriented and competitively disposed and instituting a work environment that facilitates participation in decision making, task autonomy, communication practice and management support.

Table one is a summary of the studies in Nigeria. It revealed that in more than ten decades, not much have been done on creativity related research. From the review of extant literature it indicates that though creativity researches have been of interest among Nigerian researchers, a causal look revealed that the studies have been limited.

**Table 1: Summary of Creativity studies by Scholars in Nigeria**

Author and year of publication	Population used	Study location	Instrument
Akinboye (1976)	One hundred and forty-four 144 secondary school students	Ibadan	Brainstorming techniques
Owolabi (1988)	250 counselors	Ibadan	Brainstorming and behavioural problem-solving
Olagunju (1990)	Nigerian trainees	Ibadan	Experiment 3 x 3 factorial design
Zachariah, (2000)	120 Normal and 120 Psychotics participants	Lagos	Battery of Instruments
Animasahun (2002)	One and thirty-five (135) adolescent inmates	Ibadan	Six Thinking Hats and Akinboye Practical creativity-at-work techniques
Owodunni (2002)	One and thirty-five (135) customer service bank workers	Ibadan	Business Creativity Re-engineering Assessment Scale (BUCRAS), Creativity Aptitude Scale (CAS) and Ideative Originality Scale
Ortese (2005)	One hundred and eighty (180) SSII students	Makurdi	Mind-Prompt and CoRT-1 Creativity Technique
Olawale (2006)	Ninety (90) adolescents with physical impairment	Ibadan and Oyo	Self Concept Scale of the Adolescent Personal Data Inventory (APDI)
Odetunde (2012)	430 employees working in mobile telecommunications companies	Lagos and Ibadan	Battery of Instruments

All the studies reviewed represent efforts by Nigerian researchers to understand creativity using participant ranging from students, adolescents, physically impaired, bankers, prisoners, trainees among others. The efforts of these researchers focused more on the efficacy or effectiveness of one creativity technique or the other development scales and use of creativity techniques.

Most of the studies had methodological issues and are not therefore generalizable, for instance, majority have used students in a bid to understand creativity amongst the generality of Nigerians, others have used the physically impaired, while others have conducted their studies with prison inmates. The only exceptions in this regard are Owolabi (1988); Owodunni (2002); and Odetunde (2012), who worked with the working population. However, none had paid attention to the press (environment) component of creativity. These revealed gaps in creativity research in Nigeria.

The studies reviewed have all revealed considerable conceptual and empirical connotations and more specifically with regard to conceptualization and the variables that interest researchers at any point in time. From the studies reviewed it is unequivocal that creativity study is still emerging in Nigeria. It is important to point out that few Nigerian researchers have reported findings of research on creativity; however, an insignificant few, if any, have empirically investigated the organizational climate for creativity.

The global trend in creativity research had been more in terms of the development of theories of creativity (Woodman, Sawyer, and Griffin, 1993; Akinboye, 2001; Amabile, 2012). Studies on creativity among Nigerian scholars have demonstrated the effectiveness of creativity tools and techniques (Owolabi, 1988; Olagunju, 1991; Adekunle, 2002; Animasahun, 2002; Owodunni, 2002; and Olawale, 2006). There are efforts also to develop and validate creativity instruments and tests (Akinboye, 2001; Nnedum, 2014) among Nigerian population.

## **A RESEARCH AGENDA FOR THE STUDY OF CREATIVITY IN NIGERIA**

The review of literature has revealed considerable conceptual differences and limitations of previous studies of creativity in Nigeria, this deserve a re-evaluation of the domain. Obot (1988) advocated that the research programme into any area should seek to achieve theoretical and social relevance. Accordingly, we offer the following recommendations which are summarized in Figure I and designed to achieve theoretical and practical significance for creativity research in Nigeria.

Literatures have shown that specific or combination of variables may differently determine processes of creativity (McLean, 2005), it is also important to note that most of the studies in the organizational setting has been dominated by studies which aimed at understanding





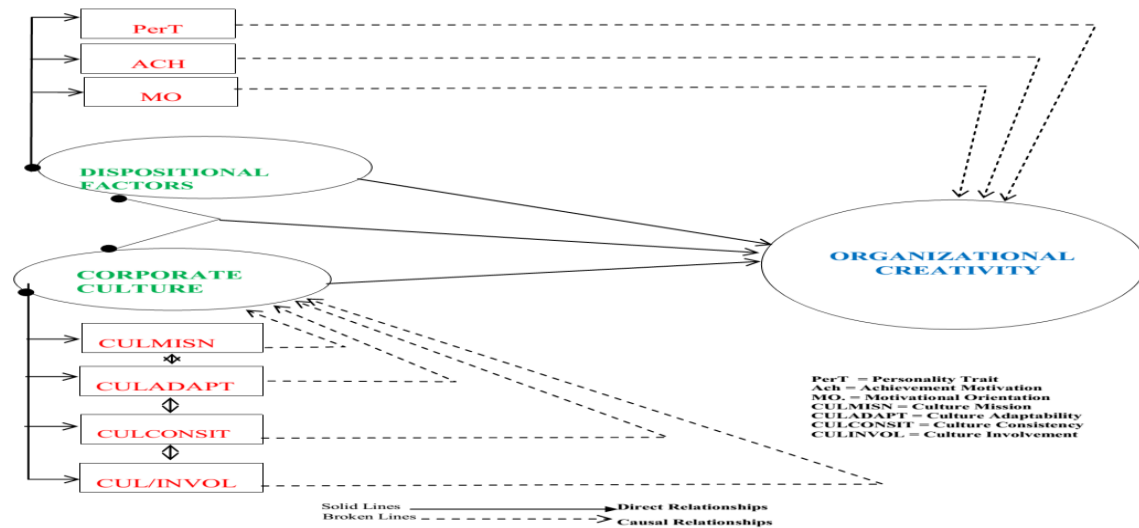
employee or individual creativity and group or team creativity in relevant social settings (Amabile, 1983; Amabile, Goldfarb, & Brackfield, 1990).

Depending on the inclinations of the various theorists, the different theories and models emphasize various personal and organizational factors which facilitate organizational creativity. The interactionist theory and componential theory have all emphasized on the innate and group characteristics of employees which impact on work related behaviours and attitudes, such as persistence at work, organizational citizenship behavior and varieties of other organizational outcomes and which can be used to articulate how people take actions to effect creativity in their organizations.

The significance of the theories of dispositional and organizational factors is anchored on the fact that researchers are able to investigate how the two sets of variables combine to improve the creativity process in the work settings. It is anticipated that when employees with their requisite dispositional and corporate factors are in consonance, the employees are able to express the creativity in them. In conclusion, there is the possibility that the organizational creativity is strongly influenced by the way dispositional and corporate factors supports, facilitates and is conducive to creativity relevant activities or its lack thereof.

A theoretical framework provides rationale for predictions about the relationships among variables in a research study. Given the variables involved in the proposed research agenda, eclectic approach has been considered appropriate. Componential theory of Creativity linking contextual factors with intra-individual factors (Amabile, 1988, 1997) and Woodman, Sawyer and Griffin (1993) "Interactionist" perspective are adopted to provide the theoretical framework on which the hypothesized conceptual framework for proposed research agenda has been developed.

**FIGURE 1:** Hypothesized Conceptual Model Showing The Relationships Between Dispositional Factors And Corporate Culture On Organizational Creativity



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Creativity as an important concept cannot be considered in isolation. Other factors may likely influence the full manifestation of creativity in any individual, team or group. Hence, in the present research, while considering creativity, we propose complex mix of interplay between the dispositional factors (Personality traits-OCEAN: Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism), Motivational orientations and Achievement motivation) and Corporate culture as predictors of organizational creativity.

Since for all intents and purposes a model assists in a clearer understanding of how a phenomenon is generated, supported and is sustained. It is vital that the proposed framework conceptualized (Figure 1) should be a model that will integrate the predictor variables to be variables that consistently correlate with creativity for a clearer understanding of the organizational creativity. The Figure 1 consists of research agenda (proposals) in which organizational creativity is treated as the dependent variable. As a dependent variable organizational creativity is hypothesized in the model are influenced by the dispositional factors (personality traits-OCEAN, motivational orientations, achievement motivation) and corporate culture.

While researches have revealed that there are personal factors/individual variables that are strongly associated with creativity, there are also studies which identified organizational factors believed to be important for creativity. Although the current knowledge base of factors that influence organizational creativity is considerable, there is the need by researchers to use



the multi-level analysis to study the plethora of factors which predict creativity in the organizational setting, and assists in the understanding of how creativity is generated, supported and sustained.

The goal of this research agenda is to address the important though relatively unstudied dispositional and corporate culture factors which affects organizational creativity in Nigeria. The following suggestions are derived from the model as a useful guide to conduct a worthwhile research on organizational creativity:

1. There is the need to understand how personality influences organizational creativity among individuals and groups in the work settings in Nigeria.
2. The relationship motivational orientations impact on creativity need to be known to ascertain how it triggers organizational creativity in the Nigerian work setting.
3. There is the urgent need for a careful analysis of achievement motivation and how it correlates with organizational creativity.
4. Few if any Nigerian researchers have investigated the influence of Corporate culture on organizational creativity in any Nigerian work setting.
5. From the considerations of previous studies, it is imperative that contemporary researchers consider the complex interplay between the dispositional factors and corporate culture, to determine if they independently or jointly predict organizational creativity.

This research agenda, in this way would have charted a course and assist to achieve relevance current global trend in organizational creativity research, thus achieving significance theoretically and practically, to further, confirm the usefulness of the model relevant date would be obtained to test the model fit of the hypothesized conceptual and the empirical model using structural equation modelling techniques. It is believed that the findings will add to the wealth of knowledge and solving of workplace creativity challenges in Nigeria.



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