

EVALUATION OF CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION AS A STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINING ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

R.S. Dickson (Ph.D)^{1*}, E.J. Edet² and G.A. Emerole (Ph.D)²

¹ Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island Amassoma Bayelsa State, Nigeria

² Department of Business Administration, College of Management Sciences, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria

* Author for correspondence, Mobile: +234-8162656660, Email: Racheldickson400@yahoo.com

Abstract

Creativity and Innovation in any organization are vital to its successful performance. The paper reviewed the rapidly growing body of research in this area with particular attention to organizational participation in terms of employees and management. Conceiving of both creativity and innovation as being integral parts of essentially the same process, a new integrative definition was put in place. Notably, creativity has typically examined the stage of idea generation (Creative Thinking) whereas innovation studies have commonly included

the latter phase of idea implementation. After discussions on the concepts, the components of creativity are identified, several ways of overcoming the myths about creativity and innovation are analysed, an application of a comprehensive levels-of-analysis framework to review extant research into individual and workplace creativity and innovation highlighted. In conclusion, the paper proposed a guiding framework for management participation and establishment of creativity and innovation as a key strategy for organizational performance and improvement.

Keywords: *Creativity, Innovation, Strategy, Organisational performance*

Introduction

The need for creativity and innovation began with the need for growth in the socio-economic and cultural affairs of an organization. The cultural activities induce development and advancement in science and technology within an organization. Consequently, the concepts of creativity and innovation have emerged as *fait accompli* for sustained growth and performance in both private and public sector of the economy.

With diverse definitions of creativity as a concept, Ayla [2005] saw creativity as stemming from suppressed desires. Maslow [1934a,b] considered creativity to be self-actualization and Rogers [1961] believed that creativity is the ability to ‘relate to others in non-judgemental ways’. However, authors, industry practitioner and professional bodies have at different

times made attempts to define and examine the concept of creativity. May [1994] explained creativity as the process of bringing something new into being from the onset therefore, creativity requires passion and commitment. It brings to our awareness what was previously hidden and points to new life.

After an exhaustive scientific review of literature centred on the concept of creativity, Mumford [2013] concluded that ‘over the course of the last decade, scholars and practitioners seem to have reached a general agreement that creativity involved the production of novel, useful products. Sternberg [2011] viewed creativity as the production of ‘something original and worthwhile’. Anderson [1992] saw creativity as ‘nothing more than going beyond the current boundaries, whether those are boundaries of technology, knowledge, current practice, social norms, or beliefs. Creativity is nothing more than seeing and acting on new relationships thereby bringing them to life.

Creativity is not a personality trait available to only a few. Research has shown everyone has some creativity, but it has been stifled by Freud’s thinking that artistry and creativity are associated with mental illness and scientific emphasis on materialism and analytical thinking. The above explanations notwithstanding, the diversity on a centrally accepted definition of creativity has persisted and so has divergence of views among authors. However, with the seemingly inconclusive definition of creativity, it is obvious that creativity emanates

from the human mind. It is the ability to generate new ideas and new connections between ideas and ways to solve problem in any field or realm of our lives in a dynamic manner.

Being creative is seeing ideas and objects in a different context, either by recognising their inherent potentials to be used in a different way or by putting previously unconnected ideas together to create something completely new. It is therefore the act of turning new and imaginative ideas into reality. Creativity is characterized by the ability to perceive the world in new ways, to find hidden patterns, to make connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena and to generate solutions. It is the application of imaginative ideas to create realities.

There are over a hundred different, special and measurable aspects of creative thinking which particularly distinguish humans from other species. These wide-ranging creative faculties have been and continue to be, critical to mankind's ability to adapt to changing situations, environments and systems. Extension studies of creative thinking have firmly established that individual exhibiting higher than average scores in creative thinking also exhibit higher than average scores in areas of mental, emotional and health course of instructions which is imaginatively applied to produce significant gains in personality traits such as confidence, self-reliance, persuasiveness, initiative and leadership. The challenge is to create an environment that will bring out the creativity of

everyone and make those who have demonstrated creativity even more creative.

A study has identified six factors of environmental stimulants to creativity [freedom, positive challenge, supervisory encouragement, work group supports, organisational encouragement and sufficient resources] and two environmental obstacles to creativity [organizational roadblocks and excessive workload pressure].

A creative environment requires more than providing intrinsic rewards. It requires rethinking organisational designs by putting responsibilities into functions and people into roles with boundaries and a secure sense of control.

How does creativity emerge?

- Land and Jarman [1993] reveal that we are naturally creative and as we grow up we learn to be uncreative. Creativity is a skill that can be developed and a process that can be managed.
- Creativity begins with a foundation of knowledge, learning a discipline and mastering a way of thinking. Creativity skills for improved performance can be learned though not from sitting in a lecture room, but by learning and applying creative thinking process based on daily activities or performances.

According to Amabile (1998), creativity arises through the population's confluence of three components as diagrammatised below:



Figure 9.4.3.1: The three components of creativity:
Sources:Amabile (1998)

Expertise: Knowledge, technical, procedural and intellectual: These are recurrent understanding an individual brings to bear on a creative effort.

Creativity Thinking Skills:-How flexibly and imaginatively people approach problems depending on personality and thinking/working style.

Motivation:- Intrinsic reward [influence by work environment] is more than extrinsic [tangible] rewards.

It is therefore expedient to corroborate the widely held view that creativity is a skill that can be developed and a process that can be managed. Creativity begins with a foundation of knowledge, learning a discipline and mastering a way of thinking. We learn to be creative by experimenting, exploring, questioning, assumptions, using imagination and synthesizing information.

Dyer and Christensen [2011] in their study uncovered the existence of what they called ‘the innovators DNA. They argued that a person’s ability to generate creative idea is not merely a function of the mind, but also a function of the five key behaviours that optimise the brain for discovery:

1. Associating: Drawing connections between questions, problems, or ideas from unrelated fields.
2. Questioning: Posing queries that challenge common wisdom.

3. Observing: Scrutinizing the behaviour of customers, suppliers and competitors to identify new ways of doing things.
4. Networking: Meeting people with different ideas and perspectives.
5. Experimenting: Constructing interactive experiences and provoking unorthodox responses to see what insight emerges.

Overcoming myths about creativity

Beliefs that only special, talented people are creative and that one has to be born that way diminish our confidence in our creative abilities. The notion that geniuses such as Shakespeare, Picasso and Mozart were born specially gifted is a myth. Researchers examined outstanding performances in many areas of life and ascertained that the high levels of ability of a person is not as a result of innate potentials called talent. In their conclusion, the researchers posited that excellence is determined by:

- Opportunities
- Encouragement
- Training
- Motivation, and
- Most of all – practice.

Exploring Creativity and Creative Tendencies

It has been observed that most people are creative in their private lives but tend to be less creative in their places of work or during community service. An individual's conditioned behaviour encourages the person to keep problems secret and find quick fixes that involve as few people as possible. This habit can be broken by spending time to explore new ideas specially relating to persistent problems and involving other people in one's search for solutions. Divergent thinking (also called creative thinking) involves opening up your mind to finding new solutions.

This suggests that quite a number of means and options through which creative thoughts can be generated, are available. These include:

- **The use of your past experiences to find solution:** Moret al., (2002), affirms that solutions to managerial challenges could often though not always, be derived from past experiences. The advice to quickly refer to under this premise is that managers should be encouraged in confronting immediate or future challenges when they draw confidence from unexpected solutions of past challenges. Successful manager must therefore be mindful of muddling

up managerial challenges left to chance and those that follow scientific processes.

- **Understanding that logical and creative thinking are integral to each other:** Many notable authors in management have further buttressed the logical aspects of creativity for effective application to solving socio – economic challenges. This suggests that as soon as the flow of logical processes is distorted, the creator may not achieve the desired result at the end. Creativity therefore does not assume a predetermined end to a problem but left to be determined by valid scientific processes. Creativity is not about experimenting and discovering.
- **Appreciating that solution should be analysed in order to choose the best:** The solutions to socio – economic challenges are explored with limitless possibilities. This assumes that no one solution is absolute. Solutions and processes can always be improved and better managed.

How Do We Become Creative?

It is now clear that we all have the ability to create but the mind-sets of some people are better developed than others. It is

therefore important to examine how to overcome the conditioning that blocks your creativity and learn to use your knowledge and experience more productively. Mor et. al., (2002) have outlined six effective ways individual can become creative at workplace:

- **Use your imagination to find different solutions:** imaginative reasoning (The Mind Power) has remained the most important tool available to mankind. Once a solution to a challenge is conceived in the mind, its manifestation therefore becomes inevitable. The imaginative power of the human mind is what recreates the circumstance and situation and therefore creates the new solution. When the human recreative mind falls asleep, all work is dead.
- **Remain Open – minded:** living in the world of limitless scientific and technological possibilities should keep the creative mind constantly searching for solution with optimism.
- **Ask questions and challenge old ideas that yielded limited results:** Legrenzi (2002) posits that the effective creative mind begins with a probe of how well past solutions

were delivered. This suggests that the creative mind must be critical of past work, challenges and solutions no matter how well articulated they seemed as at time they were delivered.

- **Be sure to work within safe regions and teams that know better:** No one man can deliver the best results at all times. Effective management solutions are often products of team work. A team may produce effective results even when they are not officially assembled. More often than not, teams working under immense pressure with limited time frame have often been proved to be the most effective in challenging work environment.
- **Aim to look at information in more productive and insightful ways:** information and particularly historical information have remained the platform for generating solutions and new ideas. Care must be taken to analyse relevant information by ensuring their accuracy. The use of inaccurate information could in this circumstance be very catastrophic and have the capacity of even ending the lifespan of an organization.

- **Identify and connect the unconnected:** A problem may occur in an organization because interrelated events are separated and different events fused together. A proper audit of source of any challenge requires the engagement of a person who reasonably understands the working structure of that system.

Innovation

Conceptualized from a generalist perspective, innovation is usually a new idea, and/ or more effective device or process. Innovation can be viewed as the application of better solutions that meet new requirements, unarticulated needs or existing market needs (Maranville 1992). This is accomplished through more effective products, processes, service, technologies, or ideas, that are readily available to markets, governments and as something original and more effective and as a consequence, new, that “breaks into” the market or society (Frankelius 2009).

Social innovation is commonly defined as new ideas (products, services, and models) that simultaneously meet social needs and create new social relationships or collaborations. These innovations are considered both good for the society and capable of enacting greater societal involvement

in the provision of social service. Murray, Caulier-Grieco and Mulgan (2010).

Social innovations are new strategies, concepts, ideas and organizations that meet the social needs of different elements which can be from working conditions and education to community development and health. They extend and strengthen civil society. Social innovations include the social processes of innovation, such as open sources methods and techniques and also the innovations which have a social purpose.

According to the business Dictionary.com (2015), innovation is the process of translating an idea or invention into a good or service that creates value or for which customers will pay. To be called an innovation, an idea must be replicable at an economical cost and must satisfy a specific need. Innovation involves deliberate application of information, imagination and initiative in deriving greater or different values from resources. It includes all processes by which new ideas are generated and converted into useful products.

In business, innovations often result when ideas are applied by the company in order to further satisfy the needs and expectations of the customers. In a social context, innovation helps create new methods for alliance creation of buyer's

purchasing power. Innovations are divided onto two broad categories:

1. Evolutionary innovations

(Continuous or dynamic evolutionary innovation that are brought about by many incremental advances in technology or processes, and)

2. Revolutionary innovations

(Discontinuous evolutions) which are often disruptive and new.

A business innovation is the process of translating an idea or invention into a good or service that creates value or for which customers will pay. To be called an innovation, an idea must be replicable at an economical cost and must satisfy a specific need. Innovation involves deliberate application of information, imagination and initiative in deriving greater or different values from resources, and includes all processes by which new ideas are generated and converted into useful products. Consequently a business innovation is often the results of ideas that are applied by the company in order to further satisfy the needs and expectations of the customers. In a social context, innovation

helps create new methods for alliance creation, joint venturing, flexible work hours, and creation of buyer's purchasing power.

While a novel device is often describe as an innovation, in economics, management science, and other fields of practice, an analysis innovation is generally considered to be a process that brings together various novel ideas in a way that they have an impact on society.

In business and economics, innovation is the catalyst to growth. With rapid advancement is the in transportation and communications over the past few decades, the old world concepts of factor endowments and comparative advantage which focused on an area's unique inputs are outmoded for today's global economy Schumpeter (1943:81-84), a great contributor to the study of innovation economics, argued that industries must incessantly revolutionize the economic structure from within, that is innovate with better or more effective processes and products, as well as market distribution, such as the connection from the craft shop to factory. He famously asserted that "creative destruction is the essential fact about capitalism".

So what do we understand by innovation?

Innovation is the implementation of a new or significantly improved product, service or process that creates value for business, government society.

Types of innovation

Three main types of innovation were identified by Mor et. al, (2002) which include:

- 1) Process innovation
- 2) Technical innovation
- 3) Administrative innovation

Process innovation: Process innovation is achieved through the creation of new means of producing, selling, and/or distributing an existing product or service. Some examples are: Online Banking, e- marketing etc.

Technical innovation: Technical innovation is simply the creation of a new product or service. Some examples include: a new line of televisions or automobiles, the introduction of window phones.

Administrative innovation: Administrative innovation is the creation of a new organization design which better supports the creation, production and delivery of services or products. Example include: virtual Teams: any task-focused group that meets with or without all members being in the same room or even working at the same time.

Strategy

According to Andrews (1980) in Pierce and Robinson defines strategy as the pattern of decisions in an organization that determines and reveals its objectives, purpose and goals, produces the principal policies and plan for achieving those goals and define the range of products and services the organization is to pursue, the kind of organization it is or intends to be and the nature of the contribution it tends to make to its constituencies. Therefore strategy can simply be seen as an action taken by an organization to attain a superior performance.

With the brief definition of strategy, it is therefore deduce that every strategy put in place within an organization to sustain its high performances, creativity which leads to innovation becomes the most veritable tools.

What Strategy Stimulates Creativity and Innovation in the Workplace?

In designing a workplace environment conducive to creativity and innovation, management must consider the same elements that are key to creativity in individuals: Knowledge, creative motivation. Ambile explains that in the workplace, it is easier to influence intrinsic motivation than to influence knowledge or creative thinking styles which are longer term pursuits. She suggests that management can bolster intrinsic motivation through focus on the following six areas:

- ❖ **Challenge:** Match people to jobs where challenge/stretch is optimized
- ❖ **Freedom:** Give people autonomy concerning the process, not necessarily the end. Infact clearly specified strategic goals often enhance people's creativity, but freedom in process to enhance sense of ownership. Mauzy& Harriman (2001:124)
- ❖ **Resources:** Resources in both time and money are important. Under some circumstances time pressure can enhance creativity by increasing urgency and sense of challenge, but fake or impossibly tight deadlines create distrust and cause burnout. People are less creative under

time pressure, despite the fact that they think they are more so. Allowing time for evaluation and playing is the key. Johansson (200:112)

- ❖ **Work-Group Features:** When teams include people of varied perspectives, ideas combine and combust in interesting ways. Teams must share excitement, be team players, and recognize the value that each member brings to the table. Creating such teams requires managers to have excellent knowledge of their people.
- ❖ **Supervisory Encouragement:** Freely and generously recognize creative work even before the commercial impact of that work is known. In general, people react to new ideas with a criticism bias. They think about why not to use it instead of how to explore it further. This creates a climate of negativity and fear and should be consciously overcome. Organizations that tolerate failure and encourage risk-taking are more likely to see successful innovation.
- ❖ **Organizational Support:** Intrinsic motivation increases when people are aware that those around them are excited and where there's information sharing and collaboration. Bad policies are to be avoided and gets in the way.

In addition to motivation approaches, collective knowledge and thinking processes are also paramount. Just as a creative individuals must be capable of breaking down barriers between disciplines and combining knowledge in a new ways and making of new corporate connections. According to Mauzy and Harriman (2001), the key to this process lies in encouraging conflict and risk taking, and in encouraging the flow of information through the organization. Promoting diversity and flexibility among team members involved in such discussion is important.

Information flow is a crucial aspect of promoting creativity throughout the organization, ‘creatively healthy organizations have a high volume of diverse information that flows freely throughout the organization, increasing the likelihood of collision among beliefs, presumptions, possibilities and new facts.’ Mauzy& Harriman (2001:75)

Complimentary to information flow, management must also build diverse teams and create mechanisms by which individuals with different perspectives can interact productively.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Due to globalization and automation of work processes, manual work has declined and a bigger demand for professional knowledge workers occurred. Knowledge has become a valued form of capital and innovation, the predominant engine for economic growth. Creativity and innovation as a strategy for organizational performance becomes very important as factors for the organization's struggle for survival in today's society. However, the angle is seen from the management's point of view, which has great benefit if organizations are to be engaged in the right direction.

It is however recommended that management should ask for technical innovation through creatively participation of every stakeholder, demand it, encourage it, stimulate it, find it and reward it. Peter and Waterman (1982). Management must truly want and be committed to creativity and be willing to sacrifice short term results for innovation.

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