*Creativity is inventing, experimenting, taking risks,*

*breaking rules, making mistakes, and having fun*

*Mary Lou Cook*

*Creativity involves ordinary cognitive processes yielding extraordinary results, ability to illustrate what is outside the box from within the box*

***Anonymous***

**Creativity in Young Children in Ethiopia:**

**The Seed, the Soil, the Plant, and the Harvest**

***Belay Tefera and Daniel Tefera, College of Education and Behavioral Studies, Addis Ababa University***

***Abstract:*** *Creativity is a fundamental human attribute that traces its origin back to the early years. This paper examined the seed of creativity, the soil it is sewed in and nurtured, the growing seedling as a creative being, and the ultimate harvest of it under the Ethiopian sky. It attempted to examine the paradoxes (in the seed, soil, plant, and harvest), the drivers, and the wheel to ultimately straighten up the road for a better move. The paper employed a triarchic approach that blended theoretical, empirical and critical analysis to bring to light conceptions and misconceptions, practices and malpractices, enablers and disablers, and gains and losses that surround the creativity landscape in Ethiopia. The ultimate goal was of course to inspire scholars for further intellectual, investigative, and empirical pursuits to establish a platform for creativity to take shape in Ethiopia.*

**Introduction**

The need to recast the goal of education in the new millennium has become increasingly pronounced in the academic discourse. Actors of education need to feel that it impossible to do business as usual and expect change in this new era. The 21st century calls for newer skills that require schools redefine course. There has been a mounting critique that existing system of schooling is making a narrow focus on academic learning and this appears conspiring against the bigger missions of preparing citizenry behavior for the 21st century (CDE, 2005). School systems in many countries are based on “the 19th-century teaching techniques, in 20th-century classrooms, to preparing students for 21st century careers that do not yet exist” (Pink, 2011). Students in many schools have been exposed to learning experiences that “under motivates, under- educates, underprepares, and subjects them, because of its inadequacy, to remedial preparation for further education, civic participation, and career engagements” (ASCD, n.d., p.1). The disproportionate focus on academic rigor seems to predispose students to “high levels of social-emotional stress, disconnection to school and the community, and boredom in a culture of rote memorization and repetition, such that they too are unprepared for anything beyond the world of multiple choice exams” (ASCD, n.d., p.1). It neglects skills like collaboration, teamwork, problem solving, creativity, and living and working in an ever changing environment (OECD, 2008) that are on high demand for success in the 21st century (ASCD, 2007). Schooling, therefore, needs to primarily play the role of catalyzing development of mature citizenry behavior, skills for lifelong learning, and holistic development of the student population (Hargreaves & Sahlberg, 2013). According to Hargreaves and Sahlberg (2013), schools and other educational institutions should cultivate attitudes, cultures, and skills needed within creative and collaborative learning environments of today. Martin Luther King Jr. once held that “Intelligence plus character that is the goal of true education.” I would prefer to add one more point to this, ‘creativity and creative adaptation’.

Creativity, as a production of novel and useful ideas, is closely intertwined with cognitive[[1]](#footnote-1) (Sternberg & O’Hara, 1999) and emotional intelligence[[2]](#footnote-2) (Averill, 1999; Ivcevic, Brackett & Mayer, 2007), on the one hand, and innovation on the other. While the relationship between creativity and intelligence is not straightforward (e.g. see Sternberg, & O’Hara, 1999), creativity rather stands out clearly from innovation as implementation of creative ideas (Amabile & Pratt, 2016) either by being put into active use or by being made available for use by other parties, firms, individuals or organizations” (OECD & Eurostat, 2018). Russ (1996) suggests a more inclusive view that creativity is composed of the following three elements:

* Personality traits, such as self-confidence, being able to tolerate ambiguity, curiosity and motivation. Characteristics of creativity are described as adventurous, courageous, curious, determined, explore, flexible in thinking, feeling and doing, intuitive, non-conforming, sincere, self-disciplined, visionary and willing to take risks (Isbell & Yoshizawa, 2016)
* Emotional processes, such as emotional fantasy in play, pleasure in challenge, involvement in tasks and tolerance of anxiety.
* Cognitive abilities, such as divergent thinking, ability to transform thinking (for example, by being able to reorder information or shift thinking sets), sensitivity to problems, breadth of knowledge and judgment.

Given these multicolored and complex texture of creativity, a lot of conceptions and misconceptions surround the concept. According to Prentice (2000) creativity is inherently a complex and abstract concept that is surrounded by a number of beliefs and misconceptions. Its meaning, features, components as well as development are most contested, controversial and debated (Prentice, 2000). For example, is creativity inborn, biological and inherited or a social and environmental influence? Does formal schooling affect creativity? If formal schooling affects creativity, is this effect a hindrance or a facilitation of creative thinking? Is it limited to art and music spheres or is it crosscutting? Is it a personality trait or cognitive ability? Is it a cognitive style or level of cognitive performance? Is it predictable; does childhood creativity predict adulthood creativity? Is creativity universal or context-specific? Is it unitary, singleton or multidimensional? Does it decline or incline with age? Does it change qualitatively with cognitive development and the accumulation of life experience and expert knowledge? (*Yigzaw, Fisseha & Belay, 2021).*

Sharp (2004) has shown that creativity is replete with myths and, therefore, has tried to put the major myths together and then unpacked them one at a time. These myths are ‘creativity is inborn and, therefore, limited to the talented few’, ‘it is limited to arts subjects’, ‘it is easy to transfer learning from one area to another’, and ‘it is a creative process that is fun’. In recognition of these and many other misconceptions, Yigzaw, Fisseha and Belay (2021), made attempts to conceptualize the meaning, models and strategies of fostering creativity in young children through critical review of existing literature in the field. In this present paper, further attempts are made to clear other uncertainties and confusions keeping in view the creativity landscape in Ethiopia. It attempts to examine the seeds, the soil, the plant, and the harvest of creativity in Ethiopia with focus on the following questions:

* How inborn is creativity (the seed)?
* Are there cultures more suited and less suited to creativity? What does the creativity landscape look like in Ethiopia? (the soil)
* How creative are the growing children in Ethiopia (the plant) and
* What were the outcomes of the creative experience in Ethiopia (the harvest)?

**Approaches and Methods**

**Conceptualization of creativity**

Review of the literature on creativity shows confusions and contradictions pervading the many definitions given. Definitions so far are one-sided, narrow and exclusionary of the voices of different contexts. The existing definitions also pose a lot more challenges in understanding childhood creativity at large as well as creativity even among adults in different creative contexts. Differences in creativity conceptualization most strikingly center on two perspectival moves; creativity identified as a generic human characteristic and defining what makes highly creative people special and different from others (Yigzaw, Fisseha & Belay, 2021). But, the concerns are so critical that require revisiting, redressing and re-conceptualizing them all in a new light as follows.

Creativity was considered, first and foremost, as a key ability of an individual (e.g., Kampylis & Valtanen, 2010; Smith, 1996; Yates & Twigg, 2017), and others believe that it is a capacity to work autonomously (e.g., Adams-Price, 1998; Albert, 1996). However, it is not only an individual but also universal trait. It is not also confined to individuals but also to groups, communities and societies. It is a capacity to work interdependently, too.

Second, creativity was regarded as a product (tangible, unconventional, original results) (e.g., Kampylis & Valtanen, 2010) that can help us manage satisfying lives and that is increasingly in demand in education, work place and general life (see Yigzaw, Fisseha & Belay, 2020); but, the product that may as well be intangible. Creative production may also bear unintended outcomes that may harm individuals, societies or may not have either of the two outcomes. It may be a product not only validated by others (criteria) (Runco, 2003; Kampylis & Valtanen, 2010; ERIC, 1988) but also needs to be re-conceptualized as a product that may not be validated by others.

Third, creativity may not necessarily be a product; is also a process that is on the becoming. It is a process of producing original things, opinions, new products and inventions ((McCarcken, 1998; Torrance, 2000), a sensitivity to problems, deficiencies, and gaps (McCarcken, 1998; Torrance, 2000) etc.

Fourth, it is a universal ability that unfolds in non-universal ways. Hence, alike multiplicity of intelligence that Howard Gardner creatively formulated, we presume that there is “multiple creativity” that needs to be formulated in the years to come; like, for example, emotional creativity, physical creativity, musical creativity etc. In fact, Sternberg (2006) holds that creativity is differently viewed in different countries across the globe in the sense, for example, that Westerners view creativity more in terms of the individual attributes of a creative person, such as their aesthetic taste, while non-westerners view creativity more in terms of the social influence of creative people like what they can contribute to society (Niu, 2006). Some researchers have come up with linguistic findings about lack of words that translate creativity into in some African languages; thus casting shadows on creativity in Africa (e.g., Mpofu et al., 2006)[[3]](#footnote-3). Leaving aside this and related other findings for closer scrutiny and further research, we just want to underscore that lack of equivalent term for creativity is not evidence of absence of creativity in Africa but linguistic differences would fuel different thought processes as the principle of linguistic relativity holds; rather than making some people any less or others any more creative[[4]](#footnote-4). After all, Africa has a rich heritage of creative pursuits such as agriculture, architecture, music, art, storytelling, childcare and socialization that propelled not only ancient African civilization that was weakened firstly through colonization and subsequently through globalization but also Africa’s modern adaptive capacities to manage the multifaceted crisis that challenge survival and development of African nations. Our knowledge about creativity today is thoroughly grounded on findings in the northern hemisphere where creativity has been thoroughly investigated (Smith & Carlsson, 2006) showing that creativity is an individual attitude which helps in coping with life's challenges (Smith & Carlsson, 2006) while little research on creativity is available in Africa (Mpofu et al., 2006) and Latin America (Preiss & Strasser, 2006); thus making the northern notions of creativity global while in effect there are cultural differences among nations even between countries or groups of countries in close proximity.

Creativity is then an individual and collective production of knowledge, skills, and practices that may lead to individual, communal and societal progress, civilization. Now recasting creativity on young children as well as adults in different contexts, the focus of definition of creativity needs to be broad (Runco, 2003), process and product-oriented (Robinson Report, 1999; Gable, 2000), a potential and a performance (Runco, 2003), a universal as well as non-universal attribute (ERIC, 1988), and communal as well as individual attribute. Creativity may be adaptive and original for that particular child and/or in relation to children in their class or age group (Runco, 2003). Creativity in young children is about the creative process, rather than a judgment on the quality of their products. It is not only because young children may not have developed all the skills they need to achieve a successful creative outcome (Craft, 2003; Tegano, Moran, & Sawyers, 1991) but also that collective creativity is less visible, is continuously evolving, and, therefore, is becoming than being.

**Data types, methods and analysis**

A triarchic strand is followed to map out the seeds, the soil, the plant, and the harvest. The first one of these approaches is a cursory inspection of local and foreign literature to reflect on all of the research questions. The second one involves empirical data drawn from stakeholders to show patterns of the creativity environment surrounding children. The third one involves a reflective inquiry of the researchers that gives free ride to their intuitions, insights, and arguments.

The empirical strand may require further specifications. The setting consists of nine public preschools in Addis Ababa with profiles summarized in Table 1. The age of the preschools ranges between 1 to 10 years with Hibret Fire, Qey Kokeb, and Africa Birhan having the lowest year of service. With a total population of 2562 students and 111 teachers (6 males), student-teacher ratio was a good size (23) with ranges from 1 to 15 in Meskerem and a maximum of 1 to 49 in Salayish. The staff population, being predominantly females, would mean a more caring, less threatening, and conducive environment for children’s creativity; though this would mean feminization of the ECCE field. In fact, the preschool personnel were gendered: while almost all the guards were males, the greater majority of academic (teachers) and support (caregivers and janitors) staffs were females. Teachers were trained in ECCE at a certificate and diploma level.

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| Table 1: Profile of the schools and the preschools | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Name of**  **the**  **Pre-Primary**  **School** | **Year of service** | **Number of students and staff** | | | | | | | **Teachers’ education in pre-primary** | | | |
| **Students** | **Teachers** | **Sample** | | **Support staff** | | | **Diploma & above** | **Diploma** | **Certificate** | **<1 year certificate** |
| **Questionnaire** | **Classroom Observations** | **Caregivers** | **Janitors** | **Guard** |
| Tesfa Kokeb | 9 | 222 | 12 (F) | 2 | 2 | 6 (F) | 2 (F) | 1 (F) |  | 1 | 11 |  |
| Ediget Besira | 10 | 236 | 13 (1M) | 2 | 2 | 4 (F) | 5 (F) | 1 (M) | 1 |  | 12 |  |
| Salayish | 9 | 738 | 25 (4M) | 3 | 3 | 3 (F) | 3 (F) |  |  | 4 | 21 |  |
| Klinto | - | 335 | 14 (F) | 2 | 2 | 3 (F) | 3 (F) |  |  | 2 | 10 | 2 |
| Key Kokeb | 3 | 160 | 9 (F) | 1 | 1 | 4 (F) | 2 (F) | 3 (M) |  | 2 | 7 |  |
| Africa Birhan | 1 | 245 | 7 (F) | 1 | 1 | 4 (F) | 2 (F) | 3 (M) | 1 | 1 | 5 |  |
| Hibret Fire | 3 | 219 | 12 (F) | 2 | 2 | 5 (F) | 3 (F) | 5 (F) |  |  | 12 |  |
| Gelan No. 2 | 9 | 319 | 13 (1M) | 2 | 2 | 6 (F) | 2 (F) | 1 (M) | 6 | 1 | 6 |  |
| Meskerem 1 | 8 | 88 | 6 (?) | 1 | 1 | 2 (F) | 2 (F) |  |  | 1 | 5 |  |
| **Total** |  | **2562** | **111 (6M)** | **16** | **16** | **35** | **24** | **14** |  |  |  |  |
| *Source: Children’s School Readiness in Public Preschools in Addis Ababa (Belay and Belay, 2020)* | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Teachers’ service years in preschools ranged from 1 year to 10 years with an average of 4.5 years. In some preschools (Tesfa Kokeb, Ediget Besira, and Salaysish), there were transferred teachers from pre-primary to primary school upon their completion of their diplomas; implying that while the upper schools are believed to be better in terms of training profiles, payment and related other privileges, preschools are likely to have less educated, less experienced, less paid and less motivated teaching force.

About one to three preschool teachers were sampled from each preschool depending on the size of teachers. These sampled teachers (n=16) were presented with a rating type questionnaire (research assistant-administered) so that they would rate their own classroom discipline strategies (7 items), classroom organization (5 items), and children’s engagements (8 item) on a five point scale that ranges from very lowly observed (=1) to highly observed (=5). The same set of questionnaire items were used to conduct classroom observation of the teacher whose opinion was captured through the questionnaire; thus one classroom being observed for one session of about a full period of 35 to 40 minutes (n=16 classrooms). Four graduate (MA) students of ECCE were trained and deployed for data collection.

Five parents of preschool children were also randomly sampled from each school through the names of guardians that appear against the list of the children in the preschool roster. They were contacted over the phone, communicated about our need to talk to them on the relationship between themselves and the children in person on the morrow, if in fact they consented to do so. A total of 45 parents were then contacted one at a time to read them aloud and fill in the three point rating type questionnaire (activities happen most of the time, only occasionally, and never) regarding their relationships and activities done with the children focusing on the following themes:

* Type of parental support to children (7 items)
* How far parents make the child do the following (7 items)
* How far child requests to do activities (5 items), and
* How far child requests support from you (6 items)

On top of this structured interview, parents were asked about the kind of materials they avail to the children at home purchasing or creating themselves. Table 2 presents the profile of sampled parents in each preschool.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 2: Profile of sampled parents with preschool children | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Name of  the  Pre-Primary  School | Guardian interviewed | | Child lives currently with | | SES: how do you compare yourself with others | | | | Educational level | | | |
| Nothing | Primary | secondary | First degree |
| Father | Mother | Both parent | Only one or none | Better | Equal | Less | Very less |
| Tesfa Kokeb | 3 | 3 | 28 | 10 | 0 | 20 | 18 | 6 | 5 | 19 | 14 | 2 |
| Ediget Besira | 1 | 3 |
| Salayish | 1 | 3 |
| Klinto | 2 | 3 |
| Key Kokeb | 1 | 5 |
| Africa Birhan | 3 | 3 |
| Hibret Fire | 2 | 2 |
| Gelan No. 2\* |  | 3 |
| Meskerem 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Total\*\* | 14 | 28 | 32 | | 42 | | | | 40 | | |
| \*one guardian was grandparent | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| \*\*one parent was with unidentified preschool | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| *Source: Compiled from the questionnaire and observation forms* | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Nearly 66.7% of the parents contacted were mothers (32% fathers) since the responsibility of childcare including escorting children to preschool still rests on mothers. It was worrisome to observe that about 23.8% of the guardians were single parents; mostly fathers as expected (n=8/10). Parents who take their child to public preschools are usually the ones who can’t afford paying tuition fees in private establishments that are considered to have better quality ECCE service. Parents were then asked to rate their SES status in comparison to others to which no parent self-described as better than others, while the majority (57%) self-identified as lesser or very less and a reasonable proportion considered oneself like the rest (47.6%). They are predominantly with secondary or lesser education (90.5%) and with this background they are likely to be unemployed, daily laborers, housewives, and other informal workers. The participants can, therefore, be considered as low income group.

In the section that follows, attempts are made to consider each research question/ objective one at a time and then conduct analysis and discussion to shade light on the questions raised therein.

**The Seed:**

***How inborn is creativity? Is childhood creativity detrimental? What elements constitute the seed?***

A classical philosophical and psychological debate over the relative importance of ‘nature’ and ‘nurture’ still lingers with respect to the development of human traits that are believed to be incredibly important for human civilization. For example, many parents today assume that creativity is an inborn talent and that their kids either have it or not. This tendency of mystifying creativity is dangerous because it condones the role parents are supposed to play in nurturing childhood creativity and leaves everything to a ‘wait- and- see’ wrong policy of creativity education. The implicit assumption is that creativity would abruptly unfold even in unstructured and free play once the child is endowed with the biological seed. In contrast to this deterministic nativist view stands another strand of environmentalism in which creativity is rather a skill that parents can help their children acquire over the course of their life. The seed of creativity in this view is focused externally and any child will, therefore, grow into a creative being within a rewarding and enriching environment. Leaving this debate once again for personal perusal of interested readers, it would, for our present purpose, suffice to underscore, as the case is in other traits, that striking a balance between the two would provide a better understanding of the real nature of creativity. While the potential ingredients of creativity may fall into the territory of inheritance, the extent to which this potential would turn into effect depends to a greater extent on the environment. Credence to these two, apparently opposing but in real sense complementing, forces would determine how thick or thin the seed of creativity is in the growing child. Hence, just as all children are not equally temperamental, extravert, or intelligent, all of them are not equally curious, imaginative, or creative (ERIC, 1988). All children are not equally creative because the interactive role of the two forces makes creativity a multi-colored, multi-tasked, and multi-leveled human trait. It is said that children exhibit behaviors which evidence the potential for creativity right from birth (ERIC, 1988) but how far this momentum is kept alive and sustained is all in the hands of all that surround the child. According to Sharp (2004), as a multifaceted and pluralistic trait, the creativity potentials of few strains of creativity may be biologically-based; but, the potentials of these limited biologically-structured creativity strains can only turn into actual capacities if the environment is conducive and stimulating. All people are capable of creative achievement in some area of activity, provided that the conditions are right and they have acquired the relevant knowledge and skills (Robinson Report, 1999 para. 25).

In this seed of biology and the socio-cultural historicism that sets out the platform for creative development is also the psychology of personhood as a creator. The biological seed that would transact with socio-cultural and historical artifacts would generate creativity only when there is in the seed the psyche of a person that informs h/she can create something out there.

The seed of creativity can also relate to the age at which its development assumes a detrimental role in the developmental history of creative individuals. Evidences suggest that creativity seems to take special flavor in the early years due in part to the fantasies, imaginations, and experimentations that dominate the life of the child that tend to refine the buds and tentacles of creativity (Bronson & Merryman, 2010). These precursors of creativity become pervasive in the life of the preschooler, and research suggest that the first 10 years of life are critical for creative thinking development (Doidge, 2007; McCain, Mustard, & Shanker, 2007); though it reaches the peak on or before the age of six (Gardner, 1982 cited in Leggett, 2017) after which it will begin to decline with the onset of formal schooling and the developmental drive towards conformity. Children appear to become more conventional around the fourth grade where more attention is devoted to peer reactions instead of self-expression (Runco, 1999 cited in Leggett, 2017). Hence, supporting children’s creativity in preschool sets the foundation to foster its continued development in the years beyond. It is the perfect time to support the development of divergent thinking where children generate unique solutions and make new connections without being tied to the one right answer or way of doing things (convergent thinking) (Jaquith, 2011; Boldt, 2019). Hence, the early years are critical for children to have more exposure on creativity and it is where it has the potential to be nurtured and developed the most. This will have an impact on children’s mindset particularly to make them successful in their life for the future. To realize it, teachers and other agents are advised to understand children’s characteristics (Isbell & Yoshizawa, 2016). Creative children become the adults who make a difference in our world with their creative problem-solving skills (Gable, 2000).

Despite the fact that early childhood is an ideal age of creative engagements, some evidences seems to suggest that childhood creativity is a poor predictor of adult creativity (Albert, 1996) and this is attributed to the influence of environmental factors.

Finally, the third seed of creativity pertains to the ingredients that make up creativity full-blown. Eleven different elements/ contents or attributes that relate to creativity were found to prevail in every child (Armstrong, 1998) with a potential of direct implications for early childhood education: curiosity, playfulness, wonder, imagination, wisdom, inventiveness, vitality, sensitivity, flexibility, humor, and joy. Other qualities such as a capacity to take risks, to tolerate ambiguity and break boundaries, along with openness to experience and a freshness of perception are recognized as fundamental features of creativity (Prentice, 2000). According to Sharp (2004), the creative process involves a number of components including imagination, originality (the ability to come up with ideas and products that are new and unusual), productivity (the ability to generate a variety of different ideas through divergent thinking), problem solving (application of knowledge and imagination to a given situation), ability to produce an outcome of value and worth.

**The soil:**

***Are there cultures more or less suited to creativity?***

***What does the creativity landscape look like in Ethiopia?***

***History***: collective creativity is a cumulative effect of the past. Creativity history of a nation is a historical creativity capital that can serve as a springboard for current initiatives to venture out.

***Social and cultural environment***: The social and cultural environment including role models, values, attitudes and practices are likely to inhibit or nurture creative impulses (Powell, 1994). In school and work environments, creativity “killers” include working under surveillance; restricting choices; working for inappropriate extrinsic rewards; fearing failure, judgment, or appearing foolish; having to find the “right answer”; being evaluated; working under time pressure, and competing (Grupas, 1990). Although it requires yet to be intensively explored, interdependent cultures that value sharing, cooperation, interdependence and at the same time are highly prescriptive, enforcing (conformity, obedience, decency) and retain hierarchically organized system of social and individual functioning would impact creativity in ways that are different from those upholding individualism as life’s orientations. Those grounded on the same soil would still undergo through a different kind provision that nourishes creativity in one and starves the other. For example, a growing body of research has examined how environmental factors affect the creativity of men and women in different ways suggesting, then, that creative expression of women is limited by their education and training, cultural standards, lack of social support, and traditional gender expectations while creative identity for men is balanced by the experience of parenthood (Pohlman, 1996). Women inventors cite gender discrimination as a hindrance to creative activity (McCracken, 1998). Women artists describe difficult family-related choices they had to make that diverted them from their art, although such obstacles as lack of support, money, or childcare contributed to the creative process and their identity as artists (Kirschenbaum & Ries, 1997).

***Parenting and child rearing*:** Child Rearing practice at home and in the community also impact on type and level of creativity. Western literature posits that the responsive, encouraging, and democratic parenting, that gives children freedom with more responsibility on different matters, is likely to promote children’s creativity. In Ethiopia, findings send mixed messages in the sense that some studies depict that authoritarian parenting style is dominating in some cultures particularly in rural areas (Abraham, 1996; Cox, 1967; Habtamu, 1979, 1995; Haile, 1970) whereas other studies show that authoritative parenting style is commonly practiced particularly in urban as well as in rural areas (Abesha, 1997; Seleshi, 1998; Yekoyealem, 2005; Kassahun, 2005; Ayele, 2012). Authoritarian parenting style is used for boys than for girls in some cultures (Seleshi, 1998; Selshi and Sentayehu, 1998). But, parenting in Africa and Ethiopia is so complex that it may not boil down into a specific style. Child socialization is more inclusive of different stakeholders. Furthermore, parenting is gendered and, therefore, the role of mothers and fathers is so different but complimentary that children in the family may simultaneously be exposed to differential parenting. While mothers are more democratic, fathers tend to be more authoritarian. The goals, roles, and methods of maternal and paternal parenting are different; sometimes complementing and other time competing, or even contradicting.

***Evidences in the current parental involvements***: Attempts were made to briefly scan the parental practice in Addis Ababa with focus on those having preschool children attending in public preschools, where there is no tuition fee and school feeding system is currently put in place. These groups of parents were predominantly a low education and income group and one in five were single parents with precarious source of livelihood. The questionnaire data are summarized in Tables 3 to 6 depicting relationships, services and support to the children.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 3: Type of parental support to children (N=42) | | | |
| Type of support | Do most of the time | Do occasionally | Never |
| Checking on child’s exercise book | 35 | 7 | 1 |
| Support child in doing homework | 35 | 5 | 3 |
| Workout assignment for the child | 3 | 1 | 39 |
| Tell stories to the child | 11 | 20 | 12 |
| Entertain the child through play | 14 | 22 | 7 |
| Play with the child | 13 | 20 | 10 |
| Sing for the child | 7 | 17 | 19 |

Data summarized in Table 3 shows that parental support sounds better in academic areas: check on exercise book, and support in doing homework; interestingly helping the child to do homework than working it for the child. But, telling stories, engagements in play with children and individual or joint singing is thinly spread among parents. Table 4 presents data regarding how parents initiate children’s activities.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 4: How far parents make the child do the following (N=42)? | | | |
| How far do you solicit your child to: | Do most of the time | Do occasionally | Never |
| Tell you stories | 13 | 24 | 5 |
| Sing for you | 14 | 22 | 7 |
| Tell you about the preschool | 21 | 19 | 3 |
| Tell you about lessons learned | 24 | 16 | 3 |
| Tell you about the teacher and caregiver | 23 | 15 | 5 |
| Tell you about friends, classroom mates | 21 | 16 | 6 |
| Tell you about her/ his day, experiences | 23 | 17 | 3 |

Alike data in Table 3, initiating children share stories and songs is relatively lower possibly suggesting lesser values being placed on these activities as important areas of learning. But, encouraging children to share about preschool experiences (lessons, teachers and caregivers, friends) is relatively better.

Tables 5 and 6 present data on the children’s side. Table 5 is about how far children on their part request to take the initiative to do activities for parents.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 5: How far child requests to do activities (N=42)? | | | |
| Activities the child requests to do | Do most of the time | Do occasionally | Never |
| Read literature to you | 14 | 26 | 2 |
| Tell you stories | 19 | 22 | 2 |
| Sing for you | 18 | 22 | 3 |
| Do counting numbers to you | 15 | 28 | 0 |
| Play with you | 16 | 23 | 4 |

As natural as the case is, children, unlike parents, request to share stories and songs as reading and counting suggesting that parents need to address these two needs as well. Additionally, Table 6 presents data regarding how far children request support from parents; which again is minimal. Children may feel that requesting parental support would be a reminiscent of the dependency of infancy and, therefore, prefer to stagger doing business by oneself.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 6: How far child requests support from you (N=42)? | | | |
| **Support the child requests from you** | **Do most of the time** | **Do occasionally** | **Never** |
| Read him/her a literature | 13 | 23 | 7 |
| Support him/ her do homework | 10 | 21 | 11 |
| Sing for him/her | 8 | 20 | 14 |
| Play with him/her | 13 | 23 | 6 |
| Tell him stories | 12 | 22 | 8 |

Generally, although these groups of parents are expected to have little time for their children and need to work longer to make a living, they were able to forge a space to support the children and initiate them into a learning process; though stories, songs and paly were not in an outstanding scene. There is then hardly in this scene an experience that limits creativity, to the say the least.

***Education and schooling*:** education and schooling environment including preschool policy and implementation, curriculum issues, pedagogical approaches, resources and assessment culture would still affect development of the creative sprit among young children. We need to examine what this situation looks like in Ethiopia.

***Policy issues****:* Despite poor implementation fidelities, there has been a very encouraging tradition in Ethiopia to work out policy documents in almost all sectoral ministries to help clarify visions and missions as well as the strategies for translating these expectations. However, Ethiopia is a country lacking in a national policy for creativity even at this particular point in time it is crying for one. Of course, there is an organization (Ministry of Science and Technology) and legislative provision to protect the rights of inventors. But, this seems like having “a cart before the horse” in the sense that the country is claiming to protect the rights of inventors before having the inventors themselves in the first place. The policy for creativity is basically a document showing the roadmap a country follows in inventing the inventors, promoting their growth to full maturity, and strategizing how their inventions can be put to use by the society (Yigzaw, Fisseha and Belay, 2021). Such policy needs to clearly articulate that the goal of education is changing society by changing individuals; self-advancement in a creative spirit is a foundation for national development suggesting that education is a tool to promote creativity rather than creativity being a tool to learn standard knowledge, curriculum. Strategic points also need to be stipulated as to how this goal is to be materialized depending on the objective realities (Yigzaw, Fisseha & Belay, 2021).

***Educational relevance*:** use of foreign curriculum, resources, language, and books were repeatedly shown to characterize ECCE in Ethiopia. For example, Belay and Belay (2021) argue that there is, on the one hand, an apostasy of the traditional methods of education and care over the years in favor of “modern” practices and, on the other hand, these modern practices were introduced externally, inaccessible to the greater majority, not modern as they claim to be, are less indigenized, and not rooted into the communities. According to these authors the ECCE policy documents and standards governing implementation did not seem to encourage indigenization initiatives. Curricular materials particularly in private centers were largely imported. Although the Ministry of Education has designed a central curriculum guide, the contents seemed largely to be adaptations from others. No major initiative was observed to incorporate locally produced resources for educational purposes. Use of local languages is in fact much better in rural centers but seemed to be a serious concern in urban areas where English is more preferred. These concerns of indigenization were also evident even in the physical set up of ECCE centers as they hardly captured the community features. Hence, it was generally concluded that indigenization of ECCE was a serious concern. Related observations also came out from other researcher, too:

* Lack of application of indigenous indoor and outdoor games constraining implementation of ECCE curriculum in government O- classes program (Yigzaw and Srinivas, 2017; Mebratu, 2017).
* Lack of indigenous indoor and outdoor materials was also serious problems in preschools (Manaye, 2017; Mebratu, 2017; Yigzaw and Srinivas, 2017).
* Language of instruction (Belay and Belay, 2016)
* Imported curriculum (Tirussew et al., 2018)

***Education content and approach*:**curriculum plays an essential role in fostering creativity in different ways; in terms of objectives envisaged, methods and approaches suggested, content selection, purposes of assessment, role of the teacher and students, curriculum resources, as well as the format and language of the curriculum (Mayesky, 2015); in short, in terms of how the curriculum is presented to the child (Tegano & Burdette, 1991). Examining the Ethiopian ECCE curriculum content in terms of the extent to which it mainstreams creativity is essential. In this connection, evidences suggest that ECCE content seems to give emphasis on literacy and numeracy over creativity (Habtamu, 1996), and curriculum contents, teaching strategies and tasks are not developmentally appropriate (Yigzaw and Sirnivas, 2017). Bredekamp (1996) further mentioned that the Ethiopian curriculum, content, teaching strategies and tasks are not developmentally appropriate as well as highly focused on academic content and rote memory. Pedagogical methods were drill-based and hardly stimulate imagination, curiosity, experimentation and creativity.

***Recent evidences on the ground:***As indicated earlier in the methods section, attempts were made to examine the opinion of teachers in nine public preschools. Using similar contents of the tools, classroom pedagogical practices were also inspected. Findings are summarized in Table 7 (teaching activities), Table 8 (classroom management), and Table 9 (classroom organization).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 7: Teaching/ learning activities conducted and observed | | | | | | | | | | |
| Activities conducted | Teachers’ Responses(n=16) | | | | | Classroom Observation (n=16 classrooms) | | | | |
| Very low | Low | Moderate | High | Very high | Very low | Low | Moderate | High | Very high |
| Opportunities created to develop math skills (counting, shapes, color, quantity…) | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 9 |
| Opportunities of support created to develop their reading and writing skills | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 9 |
| Learning opportunities for speaking created | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 2 | 8 |
| Read age-appropriate and visually supported story books for them to encourage their listening and speaking skills | 0 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 8 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 8 |
| Decisive opportunities created to help children develop writing, drawing, coloring, gathering tools, order these items | 0 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 9 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 9 |
| Activities created that allows free play, help children choose items they want | 0 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 9 |
| Opportunities created for children to engage in learning through activities, songs, dancing, role plays | 0 | 0 | 5 | 3 | 8 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 8 |
| Opportunities created for children learn through all kinds of activities: running, stretching, dancing, soccer, plays | 0 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 9 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 9 |

Data summarized in Table 7 about teachers’ perspective of opportunities created for young children to engage in conducive/ effective learning exercise is high to very high; while classroom observation of these activities showed a little lower rating that included ‘moderate’ performances as well.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 8: Teachers’ classroom discipline conducted and observed | | | | | | | | | | |
| Classroom discipline strategies | Teachers’ Responses | | | | | Classroom Observation | | | | |
| Very low | Low | Moderate | High | Very high | Very low | Low | Moderate | High | Very high |
| Communication with the child (threatening, shouting, insulting, intimidating, pinching, beating, put them in stress | 8 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 8 |
| Make children participate | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Make children seat idle for about 10 minutes | 11 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 3 | 1 |
| Use different kinds of grouping (all in one, small group, pair, single) | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 10 |
| Follow up and supervise children | 0 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 10 | 10 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Conduct discussion on themes useful for children | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 11 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 8 |
| Make individual child-focused support and guidance | 0 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 9 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 9 |
| Encourage equal participation of boys and girls | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 8 |

Classroom disciplinary measures of teachers’ responses and classroom observation are both summarized in Table 8. The two sources more or less corroborate one another in suggesting that teachers’ strategies are encouraging except for communication patterns where teachers claim to very rarely use threatening, shouting, insulting, intimidating, pinching, beating, and putting children in stress while classroom observation suggests that these punitive acts are highly employed. An added exception goes to ‘follow up and monitoring children’s progress’ in which teachers made a higher level endorsement but classroom observations worked in the contrary. The classroom observation is more likely to capture the episodes of the two events because the situation in public preschools is that, although class size seems smaller, teachers are to simultaneously manage children of different sections/ groups that entail a heavy work load; thus resorting to physicality to ensure order. Teachers know that this is inappropriate and, therefore, responded otherwise to ensure social desirability. However, it needs to be underscored that if children do not get freedom to perform in a classroom, they fail to get the necessary experience to develop curiosity and imagination that ultimately lead to creativity.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 9: Classroom organization | | | | | | | | | | |
| Classroom organization | Teachers’ Responses | | | | | Classroom Observation | | | | |
| Very low | Low | Moderate | High | Very high | Very low | Low | Moderate | High | Very high |
| Each child has a portfolio | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 10 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 10 |
| Classroom space allows all children to play | 0 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 8 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 7 |
| Conducive situations created for all children to seat and practice writing | 0 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 7 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 6 |
| Make children use learning corners | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 10 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 7 |
| School compound has enough space for play and also putting all equipment and materials for children’s activities | 0 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 7 | 2 | 6 |

Classroom organization in Table 9 is even more encouraging. In a more or less comparable way, teachers’ responses and classroom observations concur to suggest that teachers were somehow effecting classroom organization that supports children’s learning.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 10: Participate children in different activities | | | | | | | | | | |
| Activities | Teachers’ Responses | | | | | Classroom Observation | | | | |
| Very low | Low | Moderate | High | Very high | Very low | Low | Moderate | High | Very high |
| Writing tools (pencil, pen, chalk, color) | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 10 | 0 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 3 |
| Drawing (papers, color, chalk, marker, sand, clay, scissors, cloths, glue, sticks, grass, natural objects…) | 0 | 2 | 8 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 2 | 8 |
| Pleasurable play materials (dolls, cloths to wear, clowns…) | 3 | 6 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 10 | 2 | 3 |
| Blocks | 2 | 3 | 9 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 10 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Educational dolls or math materials (corks, dyes, water, beads, stones, abacus, counting objects…) | 2 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 7 | 7 | 0 | 2 |
| Story books with drawings | 12 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Books in Amharic | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 10 | 7 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Books in English | 1 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 8 |

Table 10 summarizes perceived and actual participation of children in classroom chores with an implication that participation was encouraged more in academic areas than such less academic activities as story books, recreational ones and play-based engagements were less frequently practiced.

In general, there are promising support practices and classroom provisions but more is needed to promote a creative environment because the observed classroom environment is not adequate enough to provoke children’s curiosity, imagination, and creativity. Children need to get materials to draw with; pictures/ puzzles or other materials to cater for their imagination. In particular, experience in drawing provides assistance to children to reflect on what they think, feel, make image and act on it. In doing so, children’s fine and gross motor skills and language development are to be facilitated.

***Educational resources*:** preschools, public preschools in particular, are characterized by poor preparation of personnel, inadequate provision of facilities and materials, absence of proper and adequate government involvement and generally lack of professionals (Tirussew *et al*., 2009; Hoot *et al*., 2004; Yigzaw and Sirnivas, 2017). Although a little better in our present report, high class size was also another challenge that affect the quality of preschool education. For example, the teacher to student ratio is on average 1:112 and the preschool to teacher ratio is 1:3 (Tirussew *et al*., 2009; Yigzaw and Sirnivas, 2017; Yigzaw, 2016; Beide and Yigzaw, 2019). Low parental involvement in preschool education and lack of awareness about the value of play were some of the challenges identified through local research (Yigzaw and Sirnivas, 2017; Mebratu, 2017).

***Children’s assessment:*** formal, paper-based, and academic assessment of learning is commonly practiced. Children are compared, graded and labeled prematurely and this promotes working for external rewards from early in life. Therefore, there is a need to modify assessment practices that narrowly focus tests and the narrow accountability associated with them as tests are “useful servants but bad masters” (ASCD, 2010). Assessment is needed to be freed from the burden of the bad master of testing and become serviceable to what it is also created for; feeding the teaching-learning activities to optimize student progress in all areas.

**The Plant:**

Now, to the plant: how creative are we Ethiopians as a nation? How creative are the growing children? Given that creativity is not researched in Ethiopia, there is no data to substantiate arguments here. So, it appears like having a free ride to the arguments we raise. We believe that humans are made in the image of God and, therefore, creativity is fundamentally human. There can be a thin or think creativity among individuals, some being highly creative and others lowly creative. In the same vein, there can be highly creative societies and those lowly creative societies. In fact, same society can be creative one time and this creativity may slow down at another time. We are endowed with the potential and how this potential unfolds itself depends on how much the individual and his/her environs lets the cat out of the cage.

The national Ethiopian Science, Technology and Innovation Award (STIA) was commenced in Ethiopia in 2010 to grant awards to outstanding works of creativity in science and technology annually. It was just established to encourage potential innovators to come to the center stage of creativity because there was an implicit assumption that creative people are only to be nurtured. Whether Ethiopian innovators were just around or nurtured through the opportunity created by STIA, the experience is just stunning. It has indeed proved that creativity was not Ethiopia’s past as shown in the next section, but the country is still blessed with the minds and hearts of creative citizens. Only in nine years of its commencement, the Science, Technology and Innovation Award was granted to a total of 1,887 awardees. For instance, in June 12/2019, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has handed over the national STIA to 194 winners; of whom 15 were women winners. Four years earlier, the former PM Hailemariam Dessalegn handed over awards to 268 outstanding innovators on 14 November 2014.

The 2019 African Innovation Week had 200 innovators who were trained on how to deliver pitches to investors and then presented their innovative solutions in several selected thematic areas. The participants were from various start up countries such as Nigeria, Togo, Uganda and Ethiopia. Out of the 50 finalist innovators, Ethiopia was in the top 5 innovators (Rwanda and Togo being the other countries) receiving the award.

This is only in science and technology; one can imagine how big the number can be if other annual awards are included in literature, film and drama, agriculture, business and entrepreneurship etc. To say Ethiopia is a land of creativity and it only takes little effort to sparkle the creativity of children is then to say the least. Designing and implementing intentional and creative projects to nurture development of creativity in young children are even more cost-effective, sustainable and bear multiplying effects.

**The Harvest:**

***What were the outcomes of the creative experience in Ethiopia?***

Ethiopian statehood begun nearly 700 years BC in the northern Ethiopia at D’mot with Yeha as its city. Since then, Ethiopia went through a lengthy and difficult process of state formation; each state giving way to subsequent one leaving its footprints of civilization behind. Ethiopia’s ancient civilization is full of wonders that are beyond human imagination to believe the artifacts that are left behind are hard to imagine that they are makings of human beings particularly at that time. Considering modern Ethiopia’s backwardness, some observers give commentaries that the Ethiopian civilization was not genuinely local but brought by foreign travels and visitors. Some of these wonders were already registered in UNESCO’s registry of global wonders.

Some illustrative examples of Ethiopia’s ancient creative productions include the following:

1. Agriculture: Ethiopia, mainly Axumites were reputed to invent the first sedentary farming through ploughing with oxen
2. Architecture: the three Axum’s oblisques each of them taller than 20 meters and were grooved from single rock; Lalibella’s amazing church buildings again grooved from rocks, buildings in Gondar built successively by kings in power
3. Administration, governance and law: A lot of indigenous governance systems, customary laws and conflict resolution systems in the country; some of which are still functional. The Gada system of the people of western Ethiopia (mainly the Oromos) that was introduced in the 16th century. This is the most democratic system ever seen in the country. It has a lot of innovative structures and functions.
4. Literature: Ethiopia is one of the ancient nations which invented its own Ethiopic scripts, had a lot of publications about its history with its own script and language. It is also a country having its own calendar.
5. Philosophy: Ethiopia has a lot of rich and indigenous philosophies passed from generation to generation. The renowned Canadian philosopher (Professor Claud Sumner), who used to consider himself as an Ethiopian by choice (for he had spent much of his career life in Ethiopia-Addis Ababa University) was able to introduce Ethiopian philosophers whose works were in Geeze language and were not accessible to modern readers. He translated into English the Geeze scripts containing the philosophical writings of Zereyacob and his disciple Woldehiwot. Zaryacob’s philosophy was written in the 16thC at a comparable period with the French philosopher Rene Descartes. Foreign philosophers who had access to the English translation once again sparked a debate that this was copied from European philosophers.
6. Education: the indigenous Ethiopian education that was rooted in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Islamic tradition had a lot of interesting and complex teachings above and beyond the religious teachings. For example, the priest school education that children were expected to attend before join primary school was found to employ pedagogical principles that commonly described to characterize “modern” pedagogy of a western making. Passing through all the stages of the church education was found to take over twenty years; comparable to the time needed to secure a PhD in modern education.
7. Cultures: A lot of colorful socio-cultural processions are conducted annually in Ethiopia. Some of these celebrations that were also in UNESCO’s intangible heritages include: Fiche Chambalala of the Sidama people, Timket and Masqual of the Orthodox Church, the Erecha celebration of the Oromo people, and Ashendiye of girls celebration in northern Ethiopia.
8. Childcare and parenting: African and Ethiopian child rearing practices are replete with a lot creative practices that have tremendous positive contributions in socializing children. The rites of passages in different African traditions which smoothen transition to adulthood, which some developed countries have adapted them as schools of rites of passages for their teens to practice, collaborative childcare in which children are regarded as sons and daughters of the community and every member of the community takes charge of all the children in the community irrespective of family background and other factor, and alternative non-institutional childcare customary systems (e.g. Adera, Gudifecha, Kenja) for children who lost parents.
9. Religion: Indigenous and non-indigenous religions: the numerous innovative practices that are built into the Ethiopia Orthodox Church and Islam are amazing. For instance the spiritual enchantment that happens through Qidase (holy prayer to God through Yared’s music notes) is amazing. St. Yared has invented special musical notes to guide Qidase in the Orthodox Church. The musical notes were not introduced to the international community; but were just as impressive innovations as Mozart’s. The administrative set up of the church, ordination hierarchies, and the ancient religious books that also became part of the bible are just amazing.

The Martin Luther’s type religious reformation initiated within the Ethiopia Orthodox church during the reign of Zereyacob by Father Stifanos (Aba Estifanos) and his disciples (Deqiqe Estifanos) around the town of Debrebirhan had occurred nearly 100 years earlier than the Luther’s protestant reformationism in Germany.

1. Creative military strategies: Ethiopia has been invaded by different foreign forces over the turn of centuries. However, we have not read from history books about its defeat. Surly, this is not because of superiority, because of armaments and weapons; but because of creative military strategies that enable defeating its enemies who were equipped with sophisticated military machinery. King Menlik’s Adawa, that enabled Ethiopia become the only non-colonized African state by defeating European colonialism, continued to serve as a living symbol of Black’s independence in the 19th and 20th centuries.
2. Food and dressing are others areas of creativity to be seen in Ethiopia
3. Art, music and dance: annual artistic creativity productions are innumerable in Ethiopia.
4. Technology: the traditional technologies that involve creative production of materials from clay, cattle’s horn, garment making (shimena) and blacksmithing are amazing; though they are almost on the verge of extinction.
5. System of governance, social transformation: unification and consolidation during King Menelik, the socialist revolution during the Derge Regime, social democracy during EPRDF, and synergy or Medemer during the current regime, and creation of 110 different political parties currently suggest creative revolutions that were made to transform the country.

Generally, Ethiopia is a land of creativity. But, if Ethiopia is indeed a land of creativity, then why are we so poor, why are we unable to solve our problems, or why everything (education, economy, culture etc.) is in crisis? Why is Ethiopia’s creativity not evident in recent years? It is true that we are into a lot of crisis to an extent that every Ethiopian opts to move out of the country for a better life. We are not even able to lead a harmonious enter-ethnic relationship and currently we are hosting the greatest number internally displaced persons in the world. We are unable to change the traditional farming that we were the first to introduce to the world nearly before 3000 years ago. But, note two things:

* What this means is creativity is in the making; risks, problems, crisis are opportunities for creativity to take hold
* There was a disruption of creative development (in education, governance, technology etc.) because of a wholesale importation of values, systems, technologies etc. through globalization, internationalism, or westernization that devalues what is local and promotes supremacy of the non-local

**Conclusions and recommendations**

This article discussed what it labelled as ‘the seed’, ‘the soil’, ‘the plant’ and ‘the harvest’ of creativity within the Ethiopian setting of the ECCE establishments. It began redefining the narrow, one-sided, and exclusionary conception of creativity into an attribute that is both a product and a process as well as an individual and communal engagement with outcomes that are tangible or intangible, desirable and undesirable, individual or communal. The seeds are in biology, anthropology, sociology and psychology. Creativity is a fundamental and universal trait but how far the potential in the biology actualizes depends on the social and cultural stuff that interacts with individuals and societies and, more importantly, the creative spirit built in to the psyche of people. A society gifted with creativity may turn out to be less creative if it fails to believe so and ascribes the attribute to someone else. It was shown that there is surly the seed in our children, the soil mayn’t be fertile enough to nourish creativity as much as it is sought and in a balanced way but it is not acidic to kill creativity. The plant is, therefore, seen mushrooming; indeed tremendous when reference is made to the more grown plants or older children and adults as it can be seen in the lots of innovators in the different disciplines. The harvest is innumerable when we particularly go back to Ethiopia’s ancient past. More recent experiences suggest that creativity is not only in Ethiopia’s past but is taking an interesting texture at the moment, too. Given that creative thinking is contagious from child to teacher, teacher-teacher, and child- to- child, this infantile creativity would one’s more flourish to take Ethiopia to the highest stage of prosperity.

What needs to be done?

* Redefine creativity and scientifically document the creative seed, plant, and harvest.
* Revitalize what we have and recast them all to the 21st century citizenry development
* Education and schooling need to be redefined:
  + Along with the whole child/youth education idea: reorient the traditional purpose of schooling along with the tenets and principles of the whole child approach that emphasizes holistic development rather than a mere focus on academic learning and testing of this learning.
  + Creative policy, creative curriculum and creative pedagogy helps a lot; incorporating creativity throughout the curriculum can contribute to the young children’s positive attitude towards learning (Kampylis & Valtanen, 2010).
* We can’t ensure creativity in an uncreative way; we need creative solutions for a creative society.

Some people make history; others write history, and the rest tell history. As authors of this article, we are here to tell history because untold history is forgotten; we tell history to bring the Ethiopian creativity from the graveyard back to life and remind all fellow Ethiopians that we are creative no matters what happens around now. So, this paper is partly political, partly academic, partly historical, partly empirical, and partly philosophical. We are sure you don’t call us “a friend of all is a friend of none”.

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1. *There are divergent views about the relationship between creativity and intelligence. Sternberg and O’Hara (Sternberg, & O’Hara, 1999) proposed a framework of 5 possible relationships between creativity and intelligence: Creativity is a subset of intelligence, intelligence is a subset of creativity, creativity and intelligence are overlapping constructs, creativity and intelligence are part of the same construct (coincident sets), and creativity and intelligence are distinct constructs (disjoint sets). According to Sternberg's Triarchic theory of intelligence (Sternberg, 1996), creativity is one of the three main components of intelligence: Componential (Analytic), Contextual (Practical), and Experiential (Creative). Experiential sub-theory – the ability to use pre-existing knowledge and skills to solve new and novel problems – is directly related to creativity. In the same way, the Cattell–Horn–Carroll theory (Kaufman, Kaufman & Lichtenberger, 2011) treats creativity as a subset of intelligence. The Dual Process Theory of Intelligence (Kaufman, Kaufman, & Plucker, 2013) posits a two-factor/type model of intelligence and creativity seems to occur as a result of the two processes working together in combination. Other scholars consider intelligence as a subset of creativity. For example, see Sternberg & Lubart's Investment Theory (Sternberg & Lubart, 1991), Amabile's Componential Model of Creativity (Amabile, 1982), and Amusement Park Theoretical Model (Baer & Kaufman, 2004). The third group considers creativity and intelligence as overlapping yet distinct constructs (see Renzulli's Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness (Renzulli, 1978), PASS theory of intelligence (Naglieri & Kaufman, 2001), and Threshold Theory (TT) (Torrance, 1962)).* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Some scholars say that there is also an emotional creativity (Averill, 1999) which is described as a pattern of cognitive abilities and personality traits related to originality and appropriateness in emotional experience (Ivcevic, Brackett & Mayer, 2007).* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *For example, Mpofu and colleagues (2006) surveyed 28 African languages and found that 27 had no word which directly translated to 'creativity' (the exception being Arabic) (Mpofu et al., 2006).* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *The principle of linguistic relativity holds that language can affect thought, suggests that the lack of an equivalent word for 'creativity' may affect the views of creativity among speakers of such languages.* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)