



## THE ROLE OF CULTURE AND CREDIT IN PROMOTING SENSE OF COMMUNITY AMONG STAFF AND STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITIES IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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### Abstract:

This study examined the role of culture and credit in promoting sense of community among Staff and Students of universities in Rivers State. Two objectives, two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design, with a sample size of 484 university staff and students drawn through stratified random sampling technique. The role of culture and credit Questionnaire (TRCCQ) was used for data collection. The reliability of the RICCCQ was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and a reliability coefficient of 0.75 was obtained. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings from the study indicated that there was a significant difference in the views of lecturers, administrative staff and students in terms of the role of culture and credit in promoting sense of community among Staff and Students of universities in Rivers State, but there was no significant difference in their views in terms of the role of culture aspect of the 5Cs. Based on the findings, the authors recommended that there is need for the universities to adopt a more practical curriculum that will increase the employability of Nigerian graduates into the labour market.

**Keywords:** sense of community, culture, credit

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## 1. Introduction

Community is an environment where every individual takes part in the smooth running of the affairs to achieve a common goal. Every individual is part of a community and is dependent of one another. The Oxford advance learner's dictionary (2018) defined community as feelings of sharing things and belonging to a group in the place where one lives. Nigeria as a country has several larger communities which is made up of individuals from different social cultural background, so also is the university system. The university community has its members such as administrative staff, academic staff and students or customers. Each of these groups have leaders or representatives who come together to make meaningful decisions for the smooth running of the university system. Hence, an ideal community creates a sense of belonging among individuals. This sense of belonging involves students being involved in the decision-making process such as: curriculum planning and design of indoor and outdoor learning spaces. According to Keonya (2016), when students feel valued, respected, and welcomed by their classmates and peers; it helps them have a stronger bond to the greater campus community. One way of creating a good sense of belonging is involving students and staff in the design of learning space in the university campus. Bringing staff and students from various discipline in the design of learning spaces creates a sense of belonging, hence creating a sense of culture and culture can be seen as the way people do things.

Culture is a phenomenon which has been skilled by people throughout history. Culture is seen as that difficult whole which includes information, beliefs, arts, law, moral, custom and any other skilled and habit gotten by man as associate of a society. Culture is the way of life of a group of people, the collection of all of the more or less stereotyped patterns of learned behaviours which are handed down from one generation to another through the way of language and imitation(Walid, 2017).Culture is an abstraction, a process, as well as an instrument in the society. No society can exist without culture. Creating a school culture is a very difficult process. However, Kent University was able to bring interdisciplinary work between academic and professional service staff and students to increase creativity and impact. Student and staff who participates in creativity and outstanding work performance could be given recognition through awards or credits. A credit or award is the appreciation for having taken part in a program or course at school or university, used as measure if enough hours have been made for graduation. These awards or credits could be in the form of physical cash, gifts, points or promotion. Hence, Kent University situated just outside Canterbury in South-East England came up with what is called the two aspect of the 5Cs which could help higher institutions in Promoting sense of community among staff and students. The 5Cs include: Curriculum, Community, Campus, Culture and Credit.

By Curriculum, Kent University meant that faculties should set up spaces not just for teaching and learning alone but also to get students keen for the labour market. These spaces are equipped with display areas, interactive digital screens to replicate the labour market. An example of projects positioned includes architecture crit space, wigodor law

clinic and moot room. The architecture crit space is a big studio area broken into sections, perfectly for small size teaching with display screens. The wigodor law building houses the Kent law clinic where students provide advice and legal advice to people within the community. While the moot room is built in the mode of a court room with design features drawn from United Kingdom Supreme Court so as to allow students to perform advocacy skills (Louise & Jan, 2014).

Community represents the inclusion of students in creating of the new spaces to enhance learning, as well as gaining experience and employability skills. This was done by setting up competition between the students to come up with ideas as piece of their module. The students with the best facts were chosen to work with the architectural team to bring the plan to life. The team designed a café, seminar room, display room and even a stage.

The Campus is used as a classroom to build outdoor learning environment that permit students to take on extracurricular activities which, although not piece of their core degree, are still acknowledged on students' transcripts. The team created an outdoor amphitheatre to be used for performances and seminars, and the campus nature trail and kitchen garden. These projects have involved students and staff from a multidisciplinary background (for instance Arts, Sciences) with interest in creating innovative space for the campus.

Culture involves bringing staff, students and professional services across diverse discipline in the plan of teaching spaces both indoor and outdoor. These physical learning environments need to sustain and promote numerous modes of students learning, supporting both individual and teamwork, providing space for arrangement and exploration, promoting communication and a sense of community.

Credit involve given awards to both students and staff for volunteering. The award for students is recorded on the student's transcript alongside volunteering points, in addition to amount outcome, while staff are awarded with local and international approval for their creative vocation through publications, books, invited lectures and awards (Louise & Jan, 2014).

Students through internship have been capable to connect and create noble learning and social spaces on campus and also gain new practical as well as academic skills. Some of the students and staff who participated in the projects have these to say; 'Creative campus has supported both my development and familiar my ambitious as a young designer, encouraging me to work together on project that produce fresh ideas' (Pier del Renzio, graduate intern, MELD). *"I think it is significant that students feel part of the campus topography and can leave their mark."* (Jules Roberti-di-Winghe, 2nd year conservation student). *"Engaging with innovative Campus has given me the chance to enhance my creative skills and given me greater buoyancy in my abilities."* (Sara, 2014) Graduate Intern, Architecture) (Creative Campus: Using creativity in educational development (p.3).

## 2. Literature Review

Dennen and Bong (2018) investigated on 'Cross-cultural dialogues in an open online course: Navigating general and organizational cultural differences. The study examined the connections of educators and instructional planners during a four-week open online professional growth course about using social media in education. Discourse analysis was used to expose points where national and organizational cultural differences arose, noting whether and how learners expressed and bridged differences. Findings were that the learners first recognized with their national culture, and then, if they did not experience any cultural challenges, began to discover topics related to organizational culture. In this course, Chinese students were most likely to experience national cultural challenges, and Western participants were most likely to lift organizational culture issues. Language and national political climate also involved a role in how and what learners expressed in an online learning environment. Adaptable course design and facilitation can be adopted to help make learners from all cultural backgrounds feel more relaxed and engage in cross-cultural sharing.

Masood and Mohammed (2014) conducted a study on award of fineness in institutions of higher education. The study used a descriptive survey design, an analytic hierarchy method model was developed and presented, allowing decision makers to couple presentation evaluation and college reward/awards and recognitions offered by institutions of higher education, and provide an objective way to evaluate faculty members. Reward/award systems may include support decision, merit pay, tenure, long-term contract, and annual reward/ awards of excellence in research, teaching and service. It is very obvious on the above reports, that the 5Cs creates a beautiful synergy between staff, students. In addition to this, students have the chance to connect in hands on learning which builds in them entrepreneurial and creative skills which are very vital skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This study however will focus promoting sense of community among Staff and Students: the role of two aspects of the 5CS.

## 3. Problem Statement

Engaging students and staff effectively and efficiently as partners in the design of instructional process and learning spaces is perhaps one of the primary concerns facing higher education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. If done correctly could improve individuals and enable them to reach their highest potentials. Higher education equips individuals with the information and skills needed to grow intellectually. It equips them for work life and enables them to add meaningfully to the society. Tola (2015) stated that the goal of establishing higher institutions is to build inter-institutional co-operation and dedicated service to the community. To achieve this aim, the creative team at the University of Kent came up with the 5Cs (Curriculum, Community, Campus, Culture and Credit) protocol to help higher institutions to bring staff and students. How ready are the Universities in

promoting sense of community among Staff and Students: the role of two Aspects of the 5Cs. This is the problem of this study.

### **3.1 Purpose of the Study**

The role of culture and credit in promoting sense of community among Staff and Students of universities in Rivers State, Specifically the study will seek to:

- 1) determine the role of culture aspect of the 5Cs.
- 2) ascertain the role of credit aspect of the 5Cs.

### **3.2 Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study.

- 1) What is the role of culture in promoting sense of community among Staff and Students of universities in Rivers State?
- 2) What is the role credit in promoting sense of community among Staff and Students of universities in Rivers State?

### **3.3 Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses guided the study:

- 1) There is no significant difference in the views of lecturers, administrative staff and students in the role of culture in promoting sense of community among Staff and Students of universities in Rivers State.
- 2) There is no significant difference in the opinion of lecturers, administrative staff and students in the role of credit in promoting sense of community among Staff and Students of universities in Rivers State.

## **4. Methodology**

The research was done in Rivers State of Nigeria. Descriptive research design was adopted for this study. Simple random sampling was used to draw a sample of 484, which comprised of staff, administrative staff and 300 level undergraduate students of the faculty of education from the three universities in Rivers State.

The role of culture and credit Questionnaire (TRCCQ) was used for data collection. The questionnaire is made up 30 items, including sections A and B. Section A gathered demographic information of respondents while section B contained statements addressing the implementation of the 3Cs which are to be responded to on a 4-point rating scale of Very Low Extent (VLE), Low Extent (LE), High Extent (HE) and Very High Extent (VHE) scored 4,3,2 and 1 respectively.

Face and content validity of the instrument was determined by two experts in Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was determined through test-retest method for a measure of its stability. Simple random sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 20 staff, administrative and undergraduate students for the reliability test. Copies of the instrument were distributed to this sample to elicit response.

After an interval of three weeks, the same instrument was given to the same sample. The initial and the retest scores were correlated using Pearson Product Moment. The statistical analysis of the data was conducted using the computer software for statistical analysis, the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions, while Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

**Research question one:** What is the role of culture in promoting sense of community among Staff and Students of universities in Rivers State?

Items 1-5 of the questionnaire were used to answer research question four. Data were subjected to mean and standard deviation statistics and results are presented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1:** Mean score and standard deviation on the role of culture in promoting sense of community among Staff and Students of universities in Rivers State?

S/N	Statement	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Create cross-disciplinary teams to bring staff, students and professional services together to deliver projects	60	219	190	15	484	2.67	0.73	Accept
2.	Engage with stakeholders at various levels and come up with a generally accepted blueprint that govern all activities on campus	83	223	168	10	484	2.78	0.75	Accept
3.	Take a 'bold step' initiative to encourage experimentation	54	293	118	19	484	2.79	0.69	Accept
4.	Engage innovate and creative minds in the design of teaching spaces both indoor and outdoor	89	277	209	96	484	2.89	0.74	Accept
5.	Employ student internship to work with staff to develop designs and project plans	84	225	166	9	484	2.79	0.74	Accept
<b>Grand Mean</b>							<b>2.78</b>		

**Note:** Criterion mean = 2.50 (mean < 2.50 = reject, mean ≥ 2.50 = accept)

Table 1 the reaction from the respondents shows that culture promote a sense of community among Staff and Students of the three universities in terms of creating a synergy between students, lecturers and other professionals across different disciplines to work together in creating innovative projects both indoor and outdoor. However, 50% of the respondents agreed to items 19-23, while just few of the respondents disagreed to the items. Consequently, the grand mean of 2.78 on a criterion mean of 2.50, confirm that most respondents agreed that Universities in Rivers State are ready to execute the culture aspect of the 5Cs in terms of establishing a synergy between students, lecturers and other

experts across different disciplines to thrive together in creating innovative projects both indoor and outdoor.

**Research question two:** What is the role credit in promoting sense of community among Staff and Students of universities in Rivers State?

Items 6-12 of the questionnaire was used to answer research question five. Data were subjected to mean and standard deviation statistics and results are presented in Table 2 below.

**Table 2:** Mean score and standard deviation on the role credit in promoting sense of community among Staff and Students of universities in Rivers State?

S/N	Statement	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	N	Mean	SD	Decision
6.	Provide student awards for volunteering	65	195	183	41	484	2.59	0.83	Accept
7.	Engage students with creative campus projects activities that are recorded on the student transcript alongside volunteering points, in addition to degree outcome.	43	232	173	36	484	2.58	0.76	Accept
8.	Recognize and award staff effort through their publications, books, etc	89	202	163	30	484	2.72	0.83	Accept
9.	Promote staff professional development and recognition through prize and promotion	58	229	151	46	484	2.62	0.82	Accept
10.	Involve staff in outdoor activities through local and national recognition for their creative work	45	191	209	39	484	2.50	0.77	Accept
11.	Engage in campus-wide creativity initiative guided by a multi-disciplinary team of staff and students	78	179	181	46	484	2.60	0.87	Accept
12.	Create a force/agency that will reward persons' who live and advocate for positive social and cultural change for a better society.	73	206	145	60	484	2.60	0.89	Accept
<b>Grand Mean</b>							<b>2.60</b>		

**Note:** Criterion mean = 2.50 (mean < 2.50 = reject, mean ≥ 2.50 = accept)

Table 2 shows the reaction from the respondents shows that credit promote a sense of community among Staff and Students of the three universities in terms of awarding credits to students, lecturers and administrative staff who participate in innovative projects. However, 50% of the respondents agreed to items 24-30, while just few of the

respondents disagreed to the items. Consequently, the grand mean of 2.60 on a criterion mean of 2.50, confirm that a major part of the sample accepted that Universities in Rivers State agree that credit promote a sense of community among students, lecturers and administrative staff who partake in innovative projects.

**Hypothesis one:** There is no significant difference in the views of lecturers, administrative staff and students in the role of culture in promoting sense of community among Staff and Students of universities in Rivers State

Data for answering the hypothesis were derived from responses of the fourth cluster of the instrument (Culture) and the category of the respondents in section A of the instrument.

**Table 3:** Summary of Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of views of lecturers, administrative staff and students on the role of culture in promoting sense of community among Staff and Students of universities in Rivers State

Sources	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P-value
Between Groups	20.77	2	10.38	2.10	0.12
Within Groups	2380.85	481	4.95		
Total	2401.61	483			

Table 3 shows that there is no significant difference in the views of lectures, administrative staff and students on the extent to which professionals across different disciplines work together in promoting culture aspect of the 5Cs ( $df_2, 481 = 2.10, P > 0.05$ ). The null hypothesis four is retained.

**Hypothesis two:** There is no significant difference in the views of lecturers, administrative staff and students on the role of credit in promoting sense of community among Staff and Students of universities in Rivers State

Data for answering the hypothesis were derived from responses of the fifth cluster of the instrument (Credit) and the category of the respondents in section A of the instrument.

**Table 4:** Summary of Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of views of lecturers, administrative staff and students on the role of credit in promoting sense of community among Staff and Students of universities in Rivers State

Sources	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P-value
Between Groups	204.28	2	102.14	6.68	0.00
Within Groups	7350.22	481	15.28		
Total	7554.50	483			

Table 4 shows that there is significant difference in the views of lecturers, administrative staff and students on the type of credit given to staff, administrative staff and students aspect of the 5Cs who participate in innovative projects ( $df_2, 481 = 6.68, P < 0.05$ ). The null hypothesis five is rejected.



## 5. Discussion of Findings

The study examined the role of culture and credit in promoting sense of community among Staff and Students of universities in Rivers State. Findings in table 1 showed that more than 50% of the respondents agreed that Universities in Rivers State are ready to implement the culture aspect of the 5Cs in terms of bringing staff and students and professional services across diverse discipline in setting up spaces both indoor and outdoor. Furthermore, the result of table 1. showed that there is no significant difference in the views of lectures, administrative staff and students in terms of the role of culture aspect of the 5Cs. These findings are corroborated to the findings of Dennen and Bong (2018). Their findings were that the learners first recognized with their national culture, and then, if they did not experience any cultural challenges, began to discover topics related to organizational culture.

Also, the findings in table 2 showed that more than 50% of the respondents agreed that culture promote a sense of community among Staff and Students of universities in Rivers State in terms of giving awards to students and staff in the design of new learning spaces. Furthermore, the result of table 2. showed that there is significant difference in the opinion of lectures, administrative staff and students on the role of credit in promoting sense of community among Staff and Students of universities in Rivers State. These findings are in agreement with Masood and Mohammed (2014), who noted that college rewards/awards and recognitions offered by institutions of higher education, provides an objective way to encourage and evaluate faculty members.

## 6. Conclusion

The result of the study shows that culture and credit promote a sense of community among staff and students of the three universities. This is evident of the fact that teaching and learning in this 21<sup>st</sup> century has moved from what it was known for (talk and chalkboard approach) to a more dynamic and engaging approach. This buttresses the need for university administrators all around the world to key-into the wave of change in educational infrastructural growth.

The results also show that generally, solid education programme with modern learning facilities in a favourable environment will build a strong and sustained community of staff and student synergy. The findings of this study have affirmed that this can only be achieved by creating a quality relationship between what is learnt and what operates outside the school. Hence, it behoves on school administrators in every society and Nigeria at large to key in the paradigm shift in the education area around the world, for a more creative teaching and learning.

## 6.1 Recommendations

- 1) It is necessary for universities to adopt a more practical curriculum that will enable graduates from Nigerian Universities to be employable in their various field of study.
- 2) It is important for universities to encourage teamwork and collaboration by involving lecturers, administrative staff and students in the design of learning space.
- 3) Awards and prizes should be given to both lecturers, administrative and students who participated in setting up learning spaces.

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