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LITERATURE LEARNING THROUGH READ A LOUD INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES: A BASIS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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\BSTRACT

Literature plays signifIcant roles in language learning and modelling of behaviour, and pa\7es way for sustainable development. Regrettably, literature courses have not been properly reflected in the curriculum for Nigeria CertifIcate in Education (NCE:) that produces teachers who teach at primary and junior secondary schools levels neither is it being taught well at all levels. This makes literature lessons very boring and consequently children virtually learn nothing. One of the ways of rekindting interest in literature in the minds of children and make them learn faster, better and permanently is by using read aloud instructional strategy. Unfortunately, experience has shown that many teachers are not even aware about the strategy let alone using it to arouse interest in the children and make its teaching effective. Accordingly, it is recommended that more relevant literature courses be added into the existing NCE English curriculum and teachers should be sensitised on read aloud strategy, among other recommendations.

KEYWORDS: Literature, Read aloud, Instructional strategies, Sustainable development

INTRODUCTION

Change is natural and inevitable but certainly not any kind of change brings about positive development. The most reliable instrument for development is education and it will not be possible without language as language is a unique human attribute which enables people to learn, think rationally and change their environment positively.

Therefore, without language, development and sound education would be practically impossible, so also progress and advancement. Countries like America, Britain and other super powers attained their prestigious status not because of geographical location or population but stable government, improved economy, high literacy level as a result of language development and sound education. Contrarily, Nigeria and other African countries perceived as under developed due to low level literacy, weak economy, instability, politicised education and other factors like backwardness of language which is significantly contributing to illiteracy, are still having problems with meaningful sustainable development.

Notably, one of the promising ways that can change and develop Nigeria is ensuring literacy development among millions of Nigerian children who,it has been reported, lack fundamental reading skills (Education Development Center, EDC, 2006). Without competency in reading, children will never succeed academically (Yahaya, n.d). The academic success of children is paramount since they are the future leaders on whose shoulders the hrture of their countries lie. Children therefore could be more productive if they are exposed to the learning of literature which is often believed to widen students' horizon of knowledge and make them develop critical thinking. Thus, its teaching and learning should commence right from the primary level in order to produce well groomed children who are determined to read more for the sustainable development ofNigeria.

However, even in the recent minimum standard(2012) produced by the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) (the body charged with the responsibility of producing the curriculum for Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE)),there is no provision for rich and versatile content of literature courses that would pave way for the production of promising children on whom the country can depend.

The Concept of Literature

Literature as a concept has different definitions as it is perceived differently by different people. Historically, it originated from the Latin word meaning 'writing' and has been commonly used since the eighteenth century to designate fictional and

imaginative writing such as poetry, prose and drama (Yahaya, n.d). Accordingly, literature can be seen as anything that is -written which .posses a permanent expression in words of some thoughts or feelings of ideas about life and life itself. Literature springs from man's inborn love for telling stories, arranging words in pleasing patterns, expressing in words some special aspects of the human experiences (Ade, 2014). Literature expresses thoughts, feelings, ideas or other special aspects of human experiences, not only what is written or voiced, but what is invented, in whatever form.

Relatively, literature is connected to language learning. Eagleton (2003) believes that literature transforms and intensifies ordinary language and deviates systematically from everyday speech. It includes every text worthy of teaching to students. Literature can be said to be a study that concerns itself with there presentation of the whole range of human life and activities either in prose, poetry or dramatic form. It could equally be infered that literature takes a clear look at ramifications ofhuman life, including the words and actions ofpeople, and expresses them in language.

Literature helps learners to develop understanding of other cultures, imbibe tolerance and learn more on the need to love one another and avoid war, acquire skills and most importantly, be self reliant. Similarly, when students enjoy and appreciate literature, it gives them the ability to develop interest in books and reading as they move away from their studies into adult lives. As such, they will have the confidence to approach and tackle new forms of books and writings, since they were exposed to a range of reading during their school days and they can eventually cherish the spirit of integrity, hardwork, patriotism, honesty and other good qualities that make a country to develop rapidly and sustain development.

The objectives of the NCE English programme as enshrined in the NCCE (20 12)minimum standard are as follows :

1. Development of full English skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing for communicative purpose.
2. Make students to become confident and competent in the use of spoken and written English for various purposes.

3 . Equip students to teach English effectively at the J.S.S level; and

4. Prepare students for further studies.

Although literature has not been reflected in the objectives of NCE English programme, it has been boldly captured in the courses offered, only not substantially enough to make any meaningful impact, espeQially on issues like sustainable

development. Accordingly, the NCE English courses are (2012) extracted from NCCE andare hereby presented for perusal.

The NCCE Minimum Standard for NCE on English Teacher year 1: First and Second Semester Courses

Course Codes	Course Title	Credits	Status
ENG 111	Practical Listening Skills and Speech Work		C
ENGI 12	Introduction to Phonetics and Phonology		C
ENGI 13	Basic Grammar	1	C
ENG 114	Introduction to Literature	1	C
ENG 121	Basic Reading Skills and Comprehension	2	C
ENGI 22	English Language and Literature Methods		C
ENGI 23	Modern African Literature/Female Writers in Africa		C
	Total	**12**	

Year II: First and Second Semester Courses

Course Codes	Course Title	Credits	Status
ENG21 1	The Structure of English .	2	C
ENG212	Applied English Linguistics	2	C
ENG2 13	Selected European Authors		C
ENG2 14	Research Method		C
ENG221	Comprehension		C
ENG222	Summary Writing II	I	C
ENG223	Critical Theory and Practical Criticism		C
ENG224	Young Adult Literature	I	
	Total	**14**	

Year III: Second Semester Courses

Course Codes	Course Title	Credits	Status
ENG32 1	Long Essay	I	C
ENG322	Varieties of English and Stylistics	2	C
ENG323	Theatre and Drama in Education	1	E
ENG324	Language Testing	1	C
ENG325	Orature	1	C
	Total	**06**	

Except in NCE three first semester where students go for teaching practice throughout the semester, in every semester there are available English and literature courses that students offer. However, literature courses have only ten credit units out of which two are not even compulsory. Also, despite the fact that the literature courses are grossly inadequate, some of them are not even relevant, especially in the perspective of issues like sustainable development.

By policy, NCE teachers are produced in Nigeria in order to teach at the primary and upper basic schools (known in some quarters as junior secondary schools). This

:'auld mean there is the need to properly teach, train and produce very focussed, ::termined and versatile teachers who are qualified and competent enoughto teach -ie younger ones effectively. With the scanty and shallow content ofliterature :ourses presented, the teachers themselves may not receive adequate training, let 3ione teaching the children of the lower level to imbibe the culture of perseverance, :olerance, dedication, selfishness, patriotism, love for one another. These attributes must be inculcated in Nigerians before we think of having sustainable development]r any transformation.

Having the desired and enough literature courses alone is not enough, especially u'hen teachers only learn and master them without knowing how to effectively teach de children. Since among the numerous aims of teaching literature are to develop critical thinking among students and facilitate literacy skills, it is there for every pertinent to acquaint ourselves with the universal best practices of teaching reading, one of the key skills that if properly learned will make the realization of national development achieveable. One of the undisputable universal best practices of teaching is the read aloud strategy. Thus, for better teaching of literature, the strategy should be imbibed for its numerous benefits.

Tbere are various ways of teaching the components of English language and literature. Read aloud is one of such ways and has been practised for decades by teachers as a useful activity for teaching. By way of definition, read aloud connotes reading a book out loudly, reading aloud with instruction, reading for enjoyment, by a whole group, small group, of individual. Specifically, read aloud enhances literacy skills. By their nature, children'like and enjoy play and they as well learn in the process. Read aloud is one of the instructional strategies that gives room for interaction and full participation of children through which they learn. Beck and Meckeown (2001) believe that read aloud facilitates reading and enhances literacy development.

Accepting the relevance and jmpact of read aloud strategies in developing reading ability and subsequently understanding of literature, Mecaffrey and Hisrish (2017) stated that most of the researches conducted on read aloud to children in the 80's and 90's focused mostly on the benefits of reading aloud. The purpose of the study was to motivate and sensitise teachers to adopt read aloud as an instructional strategy. This becomes absolutely necessary as a means of making children learn reading at an early stage, for them to read more literature and be exposed to the realities of life.

Sadly> the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) baseline report carried out in Nigeria revealed that children in Bauchi and Sokoto States lack foundational reading

skills(Education Development Center (EDU), 2016). According to the report, even primary three pupils lack the foundational reading skills in English to comprehend what they read. Without the reading ability, children will never develop interest in literature and once the interest is not there, they will never acquire vast knowledge, let alone contributing to the sustainable development ofNigeria.

It is therefore worth reiterating that read aloud is the single most reliable activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading. The practice of read aloud offers opportunity for oral language development, literacy benefits and broadens learners' horizon of knowledge.

The Strategy of Read Aloud for Better Literature Learning

Since read aloud entails reading a book with instruction, there are things that should be done before, during and after the lesson. This is in order to make the lesson worthwhile and beneficial, such that the children will later develop interest in reading more literature texts, for a brighter future. Preparation is very vital before delivering any lesson. Accordingly, teachers are expected to first and foremost select a suitable text, guided by the age and reading readiness of the learners. The teacher must make sure that he/she reads the book earlier and understands every bit of its contents and be familiar with how to pronounce each and every word correctly, to avoid distorting meanings. During the lesson, teachers should encourage oral participation through making the children make predictions and express their opinions. It is pertinent for teachers to infuse meaning into the way words are spoken to avoid what Moran (2015) observed as part of the shortcomings of pre-service teachers. After the lesson, teachers should encourage the children to make comments and to interact freely on the story,

Regrettably, according to Rouch (2013) most teachers ask more close-ended questions in read aloud than open-ended. The former are just yes or no questions that do not give opportunity for the learners to think deeply and critically, and therefore not contribute meaningfblly to the development of the nation. The latter, which enables the learner to think beyond the lines are found to be neglected by teachers. If this continues, learners will never develop critical thinking and consequently will be unproductive. This might have serious repercussion in a country like Nigeria, a developing country with unsustainable economy.

Therefore, for the best teaching of literature, such that will develop the cognitive, psychomotor and affective faculties of learners to contribute meaningfully in the development of the nation, it is pertinent for teachers to prepare their lessons very well. The preparBtion should take into consideration theme and length of specific

curriculum units as well as time, age and readiness of the children. Lack of preparation will certainly lead some teachers to have difficulty in using linguistic contents effectively. Read aloud provides a way to help all students to access the materials and develop their skills as active listeners. Since by their nature, children like and enjoy stories, read aloud strategy will make them to be interested in reading. The more children are engaged in reading, the more their learning ability increases. An increase in the learning ability among children who are future leaders has relevance and impact on the sustainable development of a country.

CONCLUSION

Nigeria is one of the developing countries faced with a lot of economic, social, political and religious disharmony. These problems are detrimental to the sustainable development of the nation. The problems are not divine and therefore Nigeria should not think of divine solutions without other efforts. The problems are enormous and encompassing and their solutions ought to be diversified and lie in education as the most reliable instrument for change. Literature is one of the aspects that makes acquisition of knowledge easy and more meaningful. Literature itself can best be learned when read aloud instructional strategy is put in place, considering that it makes children have interest in reading and is a skill that makes people acquire vast knowledge that can be used for the sustainable development of a nation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are believed to be useful in improving both the teaching and learning of literature and sustainable development in Nigeria:

1. There is need for diversifying the scope of literature courses in the NCE English curriculum
2. Teachers should be sensitised on how to use read aloud instructional strategy 3 . Parents should encourage their children to study literature
4. There is need for more.relevant literature textbooks in schools

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