

Read Aloud Instructional Strategy: A Basis for Sustainable Literature Learning In Our Schools

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ABSTRACT: Literature is fundamental to sustainable development, as it makes learning of language and modeling of behaviour easier; the two important instruments that facilitate human development. However, in Nigeria, literature is neither taught in all primary and secondary schools nor being considered as a compulsory requirement before admission into many universities. (Umar, 2018). Consequently, many students erroneously perceived literature is not a difficult subject, an action causing dislike ness to the subject and poor literacy skills among Nigerian children, which could be attributed to the way and manner the literature is being taught in our schools. Therefore, an attempt has been made in surveying some primary schools where it was discovered that many teachers do not use read aloud strategy as a means of inculcating the desire for literature into the minds of Nigerian children in order to facilitate reading culture in them. Without developed reading culture, effective learning seems to be difficult and without learning there could hardly be any sustainable development. To achieve this, the paper reviewed concepts such as literature, reading, read aloud and recommends for compulsory teaching of literature right from primary schools and the need for sensitisation to the primary school teachers to enhance awareness on read aloud strategy.

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I. 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 cannot be possible without language, being a unique human attribute which enables people. to learn, think rationally and change their environment positively. It is a vehicle of communication and an instrument for learning and teaching, (Obanya, 1979) in (Ifeyerni, 2013).

Therefore, without language development, sound education seems to be practically impossible, so also progress and development in a country. 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, courtesy from language development and sound education; contrarily to Nigeria and other African countries which are perceived as under developed due to low level literacy, weak economy, instability, politicised education and other militating factors among which backwardness of language is significantly contributing to illiteracy, a problem that always cause barrier to any 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 were reported lacking fundamental reading skills, (EDC, 2006). Without competency in reading, children will never succeed academically, (Yahaya, 2018). The academic success of children is paramount being future leaders whom countries fate lay on their shoulders.

Children therefore could be more productive if they are exposed to the learning of literature which is often believed it widens students' horizon of knowledge and make them develop critical thinking. Thus, its teaching and learning should commence right from primary level in order to produce well groomed children who are determined to read more for the sustainable development of Nigeria.

However, as a barrier in Nigeria, 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) does not provide rich and versatile content of literature courses that would pave way for the production of promising children on whom the country can depend reliably.

The Concept of Literature

Literature as a concept has different definitions as it is perceived differently. Historically, it originated from the Latin word meaning 'writing' and has been commonly used since eighteenth century to designate fictional and imaginative writing such as poetry, prose and drama. (Yahaya, 2018). Accordingly, literature can be seen as anything that is written and posses a permanent expression in words of some thoughts or feelings of ideas about life and life itself. Literature springs from our inborn love of telling stories, of arranging words in pleasing patterns, of expressing in words some special aspects of our human experiences. (Ade, 2014). Literature expresses thoughts, feeling, ideas or other special aspects of human experiences, only what is written but what is voiced, what is expressed, what is invented, in whatever form.

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

Literature helps learners to develop their understanding of other cultures, inculcate tolerance and learn more on the need to love one another, avoid war, acquire skills and most importantly, be self reliant. If every citizen of Nigeria does the same, our economy will be sound and sustainable. 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 and into their adult lives. As such, they 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, hardworking, patriotism, honesty and other good qualities that make a country to develop rapidly and sustain development as may be contained in the book.

Unfortunately for Nigeria, even the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), the body saddled with the task and responsibility for producing the curriculum for the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), the minimum teaching qualification does not attach priority to the teaching of literature itself, let alone how it should be taught, which should start right from primary level.

The objective of the NCE English programme as enshrined in the NCCE (2012) 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 course offered, only that not substantially enough to make any meaningful impact, especially on issues like that of the sustainable development.

Accordingly, the NCE English course are extracted from NCCE (2012) and hereby presented for perusal.

The NCCE Minimum Standard for NCE on English Teacher

Year I: First and Second Semester Courses.

Course Codes	Course Title	Credits	Status
ENG111	Practical Listening Skills and Speech Work	2	C
ENG112	Introduction to Phonetics and Phonology	2	C
ENG113	Basic Grammar	1	C
ENG114	Introduction to Literature	1	C
ENG121	Basic Reading Skills and Comprehension	2	C
ENG122	English Language and Literature Methods	2	C
ENG123	Modern African Literature/Female Writers in Africa	2	C
Total Units		12	

Year II: First and Second Semester Course

Course Codes	Course Title	Credits	Status
ENG211	The Structure of English	2	C
ENG212	Applied English Linguistics	2	C
ENG213	Selected European Authors	2	C
ENG214	Research Methods	2	C
ENG221	Comprehension	2	C
ENG222	Summary Writing II	1	C
ENG223	Critical Theory and Practical Criticism	2	C
ENG224	Young Adult Literature	1	C
Total Units		14	

Year III: Second Semester Course

Course Codes	Course Title	Credits	Status
ENG321	Long Essay	1	C
ENG322	Varieties of English and Stylistics	2	C
ENG323	Theatre and Drama in Education	1	C
ENG324	Language Testing	1	C
ENG325	Orature	1	C
Total Units		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, the literature courses have only ten credit units out of which two are not even compulsory. Also, despite 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 could mean there is the need to properly teach, train and produce very focused, determined and versatile teachers who are qualified and competent enough to teach the younger ones effectively. With the scanty and shallow content of literature courses we have witnessed above, the teachers themselves may not receive adequate training, let alone teaching the children of the lower level to imbibe the culture of perseverance, tolerance, dedication, selfishness, patriotism, love of one another. These attributes must be inculcated into the minds of Nigerians before we think of having sustainable development or any transformation.

Having the desired and enough literature courses alone is not enough, when teachers only learned and mastered them without knowing how to effectively teach the children. Since among the numerous advantages of teaching literature are to develop critical thinking among students and facilitate literacy skills, it is therefore very 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 both the former and latter advantages of literature. One of the undisputable universal best practices of teaching is read aloud strategy. Thus, for better teaching of literature, we should learn the strategy for its numerous benefits.

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

Accepting the relevance and impact of read aloud strategies in developing reading ability and subsequently understanding of literature, (Mecaffrey and Hisrish, 2017) realized 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 early stage, for them to read more literatures and be exposed into the realities of life.

Sorrowfully, the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) baseline report carried out in Nigeria revealed that children in Bauchi and Sokoto states lack the foundational reading skill, (EDU, 2016). According to the report even primary three 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 of Nigeria.

It is therefore worth reiterating that read aloud is the most single reliable important 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 the learners' horizon of knowledge. By acting effectively in literature genres.

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 on reading more literature texts, for 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 readiness for 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 to make prediction and express opinion. 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 interact freely on the story.

Regrettably, according to (Rouch, 2013) most teachers asked 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 could not contribute meaningfully to the development of the nation. The latter, which enable the learner to think beyond the lines, are found being 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, the developing country with unsustainable economy.

Therefore, for the best teaching of literature, such that will develop the cognitive, the psychomotor and the effective faculty of learners to contribute meaningfully in the development of our dear nation, it is pertinent for teachers to prepare their lessons very well. The preparation, should take into consideration theme and length of specific curriculum units, time, age and readiness of the children. Lack of preparation will certainly lead some teachers to have difficulty in using linguistic contents effectively, which believed to be fundamental in read aloud. 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 story, read aloud strategy will make them to be interested in reading. The more children are engaged in reading the easier their learning ability increases. An increase in the learning ability among children who are our future leaders has relevance and impact on the sustainable development of this country.

II. CONCLUSION

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

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