

UTILIZATION OF FICTION LITERATURE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF TWO PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NSUKKA, ENUGU STATE NIGERIA

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Abstract

Purpose: This research work is on the utilization of fiction literature in teaching and learning in primary schools, University Primary School Nsukka (UNN) and Model Primary School (I) Nsukka were used as case study.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Descriptive survey Research Design was adopted for the study..Accidental sampling technique was used to select a sample size of fifty-four (54). Data was collected using a well-structured questionnaire. Data collected was analysed using the mean deviation.

Findings: The study was able to establish that fiction literature was used in teaching and learning in primary schools but only to a low extent. It was also found that many do not apply modern approach to learning. Sequel to this, pupils are not very much exposed to handling some developmental tasks which subject content inculcation could not handle. The study also identified challenges hindering the proper utilization of fiction literature to include, poor curriculum content, poor professional development of teachers, teacher's apathy, lack of indigenous publishers, non-availability of indigenous children's literature and non-availability of funds for purchase of fiction literature materials.

Practical Implication: The appropriate strategies that could be employed to enhance maximum utilization of fiction literature in teaching and learning in primary school were modification of primary school curriculum, continuous training and retraining of primary school teachers on new methods of teaching emphasising role of library, provision of incentives to enhance teachers apathy towards use of new method of teaching and use of library, improved publication of indigenous fiction literature by indigenous publishers, improved allocation of finance for purchase of fiction literature were seen as appropriate strategies that could be employed to enhance maximum utilization of fiction literature in teaching and learning in primary school.

Originality/Value: The researcher recommended that fiction literature should be employed in teaching subjects like Arts, Mathematics, Primary Science, Social Studies etc. and not only in English Language during reading and comprehension sessions.

Keywords: Children's Literature, Fiction Literature, Primary Education,

Paper Type: Empirical study

Introduction

Literature is writings that are valued because of their power or their beauty. Literature records how men feel and think and help them to understand themselves and the world they live. The etymology of the word "fiction" is "something made", it is generally distinguished from non-fiction, which implies a subject matter of fact. (Djikic, Oatley and Moldoveanu, 2013:31). All fiction is a falsehood of sorts because it relates events that never actually happened to people (characters) that never existed, at least not in the manner portrayed in

the stories. This does not in any way imply that fiction has no elements of factuality. Writers of fiction literature derives their inspiration from non-fictional sources, they derive their inspirations from their outward and innermost environments, from the society. Their writings are aimed at educating the society. Thus the function of fiction literature is the abstraction and simulation of social experience. (Mar and Oatley, 2008).

In the work titled '*reading other minds; effects of literature on empathy*' Djikic, Oatley and Moldoveanu (2013) suggested four basic

characteristics of fiction which includes; subject matter, narrative, emotion and identification. Fiction is not meant for a particular subject study, fiction is usually in form of stories, purporting to be true but with facts that have been fabricated. Narrative on the other hand is a distinctive mode of thinking about agents, their intentions, and the vicissitudes these intentions meet. Fiction tends to be written in narrative mode. A prominent feature of fiction is that it enables readers to identify with a protagonist, sympathize with him and other characters, thus becoming emotionally engaged with the work. This emotional engagement often times transcends into real life experience. Thus we can assert that fiction affects a child cognitive domain thus contributing to a great extent to the child emotional development. To sum it up all, a far better characterization of fiction is that it is a model, just the way scientist are able to model the solar system in laboratories for studies and analysis, so in the same way fiction literature is able to model social experience. Supporting this, Dike (1993), rightly maintain that storytelling with the aid of story books (which is an integral part of fiction literature) helps children articulate and understand human experience, introduces them to the joys of oral and written literature, furthers social development, acquaints children with the possibilities of language, stimulates the imagination and contributes to moral and emotional development.

The benefits of fiction literature in the lives of children cannot be over emphasised. Okeh (2003:11) rightly avers that 'many parents and teachers see fiction as story-books and therefore, not worth reading'. According to Okeh, "it is true that they are works of the creative imagination but they nurture and develop the emotions and sensitivities of children bringing out the finer qualities of humans. In another submission, Surtherland, (1997), argued that "while non-fiction literature may teach children how to read, fiction literature teaches them to love reading."

The potential of literature to increase empathy was investigated by Djikic, Oatley and

Moldoveanu, (2013). Their findings indicated that fictional literature has a role in facilitating development of empathy. The benefits of fiction literature in the lives of children were best captured by Lukens, (2003) in Johnson, (2014:2). He submitted that story thrills and can transport a child into foreign lands. Again it was further stressed that literature shows human motives for what they are, inviting the reader to identify with or to react to a fictional character.

Clark and Rumbold, (2006:10), explores reading for pleasure, its importance, and its impact on literacy attainment and other outcomes. (It is important to note that their work related mostly to children), they argued that reading for pleasure not only impacts on reading achievement but also increases: general knowledge, better understanding of other cultures, community participation, greater insight into human nature and decision-making. In line with this librarians should encourage the integration of storytelling and the oral literacy tradition with the school curriculum especially at the primary school. Telling children interesting stories to encourage their attention and focus develop their listening skills and help stimulate voluntary reading.

In Europe for instance, four universities (University of the West of England (UK), University of Akureyri (Iceland), Gazi University (Turkey), and the University of Murcia (Spain) came together to undertake a project of two-year investigation into the learning and teaching of children's literature. The project was funded by the Comenius sub-programme of the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme. One of their findings which the research considers relevant to the current study is that "In all the countries teachers seem to read frequently for the children they teach, often with the intention of developing a positive reading ethos; however, the data collected does not support the proposition that all teachers are likely to value the importance of children's literature in teaching". Thus, this study indicates that not all teachers appreciate the value of fiction literature in the lives of children.

One of the ways to introduce pleasure or fun to reading is by reading together. Reading

together can take place in the classroom, library or at home. Parents, school librarians, teachers and children can read aloud to themselves at home, in the class or library, getting to an exciting point in the story book before stopping. The interest generated during such period will inspire many students to continue the story on their own. In the course of shared reading, the passage read aloud can be discussed and a new book can be introduced to the students before its shared reading commences. The experience of reading and hearing increases speed; facilitates comprehension, good pronunciation; develops reading and critical thinking skills. In addition, shared reading put confidence in some timid children and encourage them develop voluntary reading habit. Excursions to libraries and exhibitions: Children/students in schools where there are no libraries can be taken on excursions to libraries in other schools or in their locality. They can also be taken to book exhibitions/fairs. During such visits, children would be introduced to the library and its resources. They will also be educated on the importance of books and reading to their education and future lives. The functions of fiction literature as discussed above are in line with the national objectives of education in Nigeria.

The overall philosophy of education in Nigeria as stated by the National Policy of Education (NPE) 2004 is to prepare the Nigerian citizen to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of freedom, equality and justice, secondary to promote inter-African solidarity and world peace through understanding. Furthermore, section two and three of the policy, exhaustively discussed pre-primary and primary education. According to the document, early childhood or pre-primary education is the education given in an institution to children prior to their entering the primary school. It includes the crèche, the nursery and the kindergarten. Primary education, on the other hand has been defined by the document as the education given in institutions for children aged 6 to 11 plus. The document laid emphasis on the importance of primary education, it emphatically states that "since the rest of the education system is built

upon it, the primary level is the key to the success or failure of the whole system". Hence the goals of primary education can be summarised as follows;

- Inculcation of permanent literary, numeracy and basic communication skills
- Laying a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking
- Citizenship education
- Moulding of sound moral character
- Laying the right foundation for the child's further educational advancement.

The above stated objectives cannot be adequately met with the use of factual textbooks because research has indicated that children often find textbooks boring (Udoh 2005:1). They learn best with the use of fiction literature which can be inform of oral fiction (story telling), novels, story books, picture books, toys and games etc. In addition, the Nigerian National Policy on Education recognizes libraries as one of the most valuable educational resources. It stipulates that all schools have functional libraries manned by professional trained librarians as well as training for the managers of such schools. (Udoh, 2005:13). Regrettably, most schools in Nigeria don't have libraries; the few schools with libraries are inadequately equipped. Library resources with fictional content ought to have dominated library collections in school libraries due to the fact that children learn better with such materials; toys for instance are rarely part of school library resources.

It is against this background that the researcher has chosen to research on the topic "utilization of fiction literature in teaching and learning in primary schools".

Fiction literature can serve as learning resources for primary school pupils, its special ability to associate learning with fun cannot be ignored. With fiction literature, play becomes a platform for learning. This has been proven to be very effective tool for teaching and learning especially for pupils. According to, Obafemi (2001:6) in (Olowonmi, Olayiwola, &Falade, 2009:5), "literature reflects, represents; and

refracts the reality of the world across age and time". Thus, literature though maintains its elemental features of fiction and entertainment; yet it is "a tool, which is employed to appeal to the people's consciousness and mental alertness to the world around them". In the same view, Boulton (1980) in Ade, Okunoye, &Iwuchukwu, 2008:18) rightly highlighted the functions of imaginative work to include recreation, recognition, revelation and redemption, what he describes as R's, and all these are geared towards improving the learning process. Regrettably, fiction literature has been under-utilized in teaching and learning, due to a variation of factors ranging from lack of proper orientation to total ignorance. Many school teachers and parents lacks proper orientation as regards the roles and potentials of fiction literature in the learning process, thus often times they wrongly assume fiction literature is only meant to entertain and has nothing else to offer. Secondly, the quantity and quality of fiction literature acquired in school libraries is inadequate. School librarians are found of giving more attention to factual literature forgetting the fact that fiction literature is equally important. Children particularly find factual literature boring, they learn better with fiction literature in form of story books, cartoons and comics etc. (Fayose, 2003:14).

Statement of Problem

The common axiom "if you want to hide something from a Nigerian, put it in a book" is well known to most people. The fact that Nigerians have poor reading culture is a well-known. Henry (2004), as cited in Aina, et al, (2011:171) reported a study that revealed that "40% of adult Nigerians never read a non-fiction book from cover to cover after they finished school, and that average Nigerian reads less than one book per year, in fact only 1% of successful men and women in Nigeria read one nonfiction book per month". The question most scholars have failed to ask is, why this poor reading culture? What might be the root causes for the poor reading culture among Nigerians. Perhaps, this attitude could be associated with poor use of literature such as picture books, juvenile fiction literature at the foundation level

most especially primary education. The researcher investigated the use of fiction literature in teaching and learning in primary school so as to provide lasting solution to the poor attitude towards reading in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of study is to find out the use of fiction literature in teaching and learning in primary schools in Nigeria. The specific purposes are to:

- i. find out from the perception of educators the benefits of fiction literature in the lives of children
- ii. find out the areas of use of fiction literature in teaching and learning
- iii. find out the extent of use of fiction literature in teaching and learning
- iv. identify the problems associated with use of fiction literature in teaching and learning
- v. identify the strategies that can be used to enhance the use of fiction literature in teaching and learning

Literature Review

Uses of Fiction Literature in Teaching and Learning

Fiction literature, characterized by essential ingredients such as education, enlightenment and morals is integral to the social transformation of a nation. To this end, fiction literature occupies a pertinent position in the socio-cultural, and socio- political sphere of a nation. Hence, its primary target is the young minds, who are widely believed to be the "future leaders. (Mohammad, 2013).Indeed, literature plays a crucial role in the intellectual-cum-emotional development of man, wherever he finds himself on the globe. (Okoh, 2013:12). The quality of a fiction literature is directly proportional to its education impact. According to Fayose, (2003:14), "mystery and detective stories build up children's reading speed, an important ability for information seeking and use.

Some fiction books provide additional information for the better understanding of class text books or specific subjects. Ekwensi's *The Passport of Mallam Ilia* and Teresa Meniru's

The Drums of Joy, for example, give beautiful geographical descriptions of Nigeria. Comics and easy to read books provide the necessary fodder for the large number of children who cannot read continuous print or are slow readers. According to Ngwuchukwu, (2010) a good fiction text for children should be appealing to individuals from infancy through the teens. Not much empirical works have done on the uses of fiction in teaching and learning (especially in the developing nations). Theoretically, scholars of children's literature have always advocated for proper integration of fiction literature to enhance teaching and learning (Dike 1993, Fayose 2003, Udoh, 2005, Mar and Oatley, 2008, Ngwuchukwu, 2010, etc).

Bortnem, (2008) in his study examined the results of a survey that was given to childcare providers and preschool through 2nd grade teachers about the amount of time they read aloud to children and the amount of time they spend reading fiction compared to nonfiction text. Results showed that teachers in classrooms (pre- through 2nd grade) reported reading to children almost every day, though the time devoted to this activity was a small percentage of the total time spent in class. Also, nonfiction literature was a small percentage of the literature that was being read to children. In line with his findings, he further advocated for use of nonfiction genre as well, arguing that vocabulary development is a key ingredient in the learning-to-read process and is a predictor of success in future reading skills.

Fiction literature can be used in different areas, like in English classes (during reading and comprehension), poetry class, story hours etc. However, no empirical work has been done in this area. In her book, titled "How to use children's literature to teach Mathematics" Welchman-Tischler(1992), suggests ways to use literature in the mathematics classroom to enhance students' learning experiences. In her activity, such an activity will provide a context or model for an activity with mathematical content, it will serve as to inspire a creative mathematics experience for children.

Every discipline, from History and Hydrology, Geography and Geomorphology, to Thermodynamics or Aeronautics claims and,

rightly so, to teach. But the crux here lies in the particular "methodology": literature employs a mode decidedly devoid of drudgery, as may characterize a typical classroom or any other formal learning setting. Teachers may prove incompetent or their teaching methods boring, but literature always offers us a pleasurable means or kind of learning (Okoh, 2013:11). Research has shown that of the books and informational resources available to children such as fiction is what they read out of their own volition.

In essence, children's literature educate and influence "the tender mind" to respond appropriately to the challenges or exigencies of life, as often captured in their stories. These challenges could be environmental, psychological or spiritual. However, the hall mark of this literature is character or personality moulding through participation. Thus the young minds would grow both intellectually to become responsible adult members of their society. In other words, many literary texts today evolved from old fairy-tale are juxtaposed with modern stories for the enjoyment of the children. One can trace children's literature back to the stories and songs, part of a wider oral tradition that adults shared with children before publishing existed. Associating reading with pleasure, children and students can be motivated to read and thus form good reading habit through storytelling, reading together (shared reading), formation of reading/book clubs as well as provision of conducive reading environment devoid of unwarranted noise and distractions.

Research Methodology

The research was carried in University Primary School, University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Model Primary School (1) Nsukka. Enugu state, Nigeria. Survey research design was used for this study because it is an audience research involving opinions, attitudes, emotions and behaviour. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. Five research questions were formulated to guide the study. Random sampling technique was used to select a sample size of fifty four (54). Data was collected using a well-structured questionnaire. A total of 54 questionnaires were shared out to primary

school teachers in University Primary School (UNN) and Model Primary School (I) Nsukka respectively. 39 were filled and returned and 16 were lost. Data collected was analysed using mean as a statistical tool. The instrument used for data collection is questionnaire. It was validated by two experts in Library and

Information Science University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Results and Discussion of Findings

The data collected were presented in tables and charts.

Table 1.: Teachers Perception on Benefits of Fiction Literature in the Lives of Children

S/N	ITEMS	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	T	\bar{X}	R
1	Fiction literature can help instil moral values in the lives of children	20	19	0	0	39	3.51	1 st
2	Fiction literature can help develop a child's imaginative faculty	19	20	0	0	39	3.49	2 nd
3	Fiction literature is generally enjoyable to children	18	20	1	0	39	3.44	3 rd
4	Fiction literature can help children learn better compared to factual literature	15	24	0	0	39	3.38	4 th
5	Fiction literature can help develop a child cognitive domain	19	18	2	0	39	3.38	4 th
6	Fiction literature help children associate reading with fun	16	21	1	1	39	3.30	5 th
Overall		3.42						

Key: \bar{X} – Mean, SA- Strongly Agree – A -Agree – D – Disagree SA – Strongly Disagree

All the respondents agreed that fiction literature is valuable in the lives of children, moral values ranked highest with mean score of 3.51. This was complemented by another

response that the imaginative faculty of a child is developed if fiction is used. Indeed, Fiction literature is of a good benefit to children.

Table 2: Areas of Use of Fiction Literature in Teaching and Learning

S/N	ITEMS	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	T	\bar{X}	R
1	Fiction literature is used in English classes during reading and comprehension sessions	17	19	3	0	39	3.36	1 st
2	Fiction literature is being used during story hours	13	20	5	1	39	3.15	2 nd
3	Fiction literature is generally used in subject teaching and learning	11	21	7	0	39	3.10	3 rd
4	Fiction literatures are used during library hour	10	14	13	1	39	2.79	4 th
5	Fiction literature is used in debates and reading clubs	8	13	16	1	39	2.67	5 th
6	Fiction literature is used during break time	7	11	18	3	39	2.56	6 th
Overall		2.94						

Key: \bar{X} - Mean, SA- Strongly Agree – A -Agree – D – Disagree SA – Strongly Disagree

Results from table 2 above indicate that respondents strongly agreed that fiction literature is highly used in English classes most especially during reading and comprehension

sessions with the highest mean of 3.36. It is also highly read during story hour period but less used during break time with and during teaching and learning classes.

Table 3: Extent of Use of Fiction Literature in Teaching and Learning in Primary Schools

S/N	ITEMS	VHE 4	HE 3	VLE 2	LE 1	T	\bar{X}	R	Decision
1	Fiction literature is used during story hours	16	15	8	2	39	3.26	1 st	Accepted

2	Fiction literature is used in English classes during reading and comprehension sessions	11	14	12	2	39	2.87	2 nd	Accepted
3	Fiction literatures used during library hour	8	19	8	4	39	2.79	3 rd	Accepted
4	Fiction literature is generally used in subject teaching and learning	6	8	21	4	39	2.41	4 th	Rejected
5	Fiction literature is used in debates and reading clubs	5	12	14	8	39	2.36	5 th	Rejected
6	Fiction literature is used during break time	2	13	18	6	39	2.28	6 th	Rejected
Overall							2.66		

Key: \bar{X} – Mean, VLE- Very high extent – HE- High extent- VLE Very less extent – LE – Less extent

Result from table 3 above indicates that fiction literature is used during story hours to a very high extent with acceptance mean of 3.26. Furthermore, the results indicated that fiction

literature is generally used in subject teaching and learning to a very low extent with the rejection mean of 2.41.

Table 4: Problems Associated with Use of Fiction Literature in Teaching and Learning

S/N	ITEMS	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	T	\bar{X}	R
1	Poor curriculum content	10	25	3	1	39	3.13	1 st
2	Poor professional development of teachers	10	24	3	2	39	3.05	2 nd
3	Teachers apathy	11	19	6	3	39	2.97	3 rd
4	Non availability of funds for purchase of fiction literature materials	3	24	9	1	39	2.72	4 th
5	Children are not usually interested in fiction literature	3	23	11	2	39	2.69	5 th
6	Lack of indigenous publishers	5	17	14	3	39	2.62	6 th
7	Non availability of indigenous children literature	5	16	16	2	39	2.62	6 th
Overall							3.3	

Key: \bar{X} Mean, SA- Strongly Agree – A -Agree – D – Disagree SA – Strongly Disagree

Results from table 4 above indicates that the respondents strongly agreed that poor curriculum content was the major problem associated with proper utilization of fiction literature in teaching and learning with the

highest acceptance mean of 3.13. Other items in the questionnaires were equally accepted with the means of 3.05, 2.97, 2.72, 2.62 respectively.

Table 5: Strategies that Can be Used to Enhance Use of Fiction Literature in Teaching and Learning

S/N	ITEMS	VA 4	A 3	FA 2	NA 1	T	\bar{X}	R
1	Continuous training and retraining of primary school teachers	17	18	2	2	39	3.28	1 st
2	Provision of incentives to enhance teachers apathy	15	20	3	1	39	3.28	1 st
3	There should be improved publication of indigenous fiction literature by indigenous publishers	15	20	3	1	39	3.26	2 nd
4	Modification of primary school curriculum to include the utilization of fiction literature in teaching and learning	12	23	3	1	39	3.19	3 rd
5	Improved allocation of finance for purchase of fiction literature	17	17	4	1	39	3.08	4 th
6	Fiction literature should be translated into vernacular language	9	16	13	1	39	2.85	5 th
Overall							3.7	

Key: \bar{X} – Mean, VA- Very Appropriate – A -Appropriate – FA- Fairly Appropriate – Not Appropriate

Results from table 5 indicate that continuous training and retraining of primary school teachers is very appropriate with the highest acceptance mean of 3.28. Other items on the questionnaire were equally accepted with the acceptance means of 3.26, 3.19, 3.08, and fiction literature should be translated into vernacular language was accepted as fairly appropriate with the lowest mean of 2.85.

Discussion on Findings

Primary school teachers perceived that fiction literature is highly beneficial to the lives of children due to the fact that it is generally enjoyable to children; it helps them learn better compared to factual literature; it can develop empathy, their cognitive domain and imaginative abilities; it can also help to instill moral values in the lives of children and finally it helps children associate reading with fun. This finding is in line with Djikic, Oatley and Moldoveanu, (2013). They indicated that fictional literature has a role in facilitating development of empathy.

Areas of use of fiction literature in teaching and learning were also found to include; general use in subject teaching and learning; used in English classes during reading and comprehension sessions, story hour sessions, library hour, break times, and also used in debates and reading clubs. Among the many areas of use provided in the questionnaire for the respondents to fill, majority of the respondents agreed most that fiction literature is used in English classes during reading and comprehension. This finding is very significant due to the fact that during literature review, there was no direct empirical literature available in this area however common sense suggests that during reading and comprehension in English classes, factual literature is hardly relevant, this study has indicated the same thus adding credibility to the responses provided by the respondents.

Though the findings of this study indicated that fiction literature is used in teaching and learning in primary schools, the extent of use was found to be very low except in English classes during reading and comprehension sessions. According to Fayose, (2003:11), "research has shown that

of the books and informational resources available to children, fiction is what they read out of their own volition". Increased use of fiction literature in other subject areas will enhance self-education on the part of the pupils, and will equally help pupils to love reading. (Surtheland, 1997)

Another possible challenge militating against the use of fiction literature in teaching and learning might be due to improper arrangement of fiction materials on the shelves. Story books and other fictional materials that are available may not be used if they are not properly kept in a place where the pupils can access them. According to Ngozi, (1984:23), "it is not enough to simply collect asserted materials in the centre. It is essential to organise them properly for easy storage, retrieval and use by the clients." Depending on the nature of the school, library materials can either be organised in school libraries or classrooms to meet local convenience. In as much as the Nigerian School Library Association (NSLA), have prescribed professional academic requirement for managers of school libraries, what is obtainable in practice is a situation where most school librarians have no professional training in librarianship. Thus they are mal-informed as regards the role of children literature (fiction literature) in the teaching and learning process. Dike (1984:31) highlighted three basic skills needed by school library personnel. They include library science skills; production skills; technical skills and clerical skills.

Other possible challenges facing proper utilization of fiction literature in teaching and learning might include; non-availability of funds, high cost of printing and publishing, society stereotypes etc.

Conclusion

Fiction is a major genre of Children's literature. Its' use in teaching children brings about functional education which the modern education philosophy advocates for. Education should go beyond the inculcation of subject matter content. The problem is that fiction is not adequately emphasised in schools. This

research work proved this point and therefore recommends the following points below.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher made the following recommendations:

- i. Fiction literature should be employed in teaching subjects like Arts, Mathematics, Primary Science, Social Studies etc. and not only in English

Language during reading and comprehension.

- ii. Primary school curriculum should be reviewed to categorically state the role of fiction literature in teaching and learning.
- iii. School librarians should acquire fiction literature resources that reflect the local environments of the children been taught.

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