

# **Folktales as Effective means of Teaching Nigerian Languages in Primary Schools**

By

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## **Abstract**

The paper examined the effective use of folktales for teaching of Nigerian languages at the primary school level. The paper noted that folktales mold the child's behavior positively by discouraging vices such as greed, aggression, ingratitude and also helps the child to imitate good leader qualities as lessons learnt from folktales and adaptation to other peoples' culture among others. This is made possible by exposing the child through myths, poetry and dramatic activities present in the traditional society. Critics of folktales stated that this kind of knowledge (story telling) is naive, premature, challenges children belief in Almighty God and that it is surrounded with traditional beliefs. In spite of the weaknesses identified with folktale use for teaching in primary school education, the paper recommended for government, curriculum developers, stakeholders in education and the society at large to see the need for the inclusion of folktales in primary school curriculum as an important issue not only in the teaching of Nigerian languages but as an effective tool for enhancing an all-round development of the child and preservation of our culture.

## **Introduction**

The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) stated that primary education is the education given to children within the age bracket of six and twelve. Primary school education is the spring board from which other levels of education take-off. Primary school education plays fundamental role in the molding of an individual, it is the first notable place for the child's intellectual advancement outside the home. The overriding aim of primary level of education and at the higher levels is the production of the total person that can live and not only let others live but also join in improving the society hence, the need to expose the child to folktale education. Primary school education determines the success and failure of the whole system.

## Folktales

Folktales have been given different definitions by many scholars. Folktales simply mean oral literature or storytelling. Patrick (2014) stated that folktale is as old as man and cultural practices of people passed down orally from one generation to the next and has become part of our tradition. It is an imaginative narrative (story) in prose form that has basis in real life intended to entertain rather than to record history or social experience. Mbunda (2006) defines oral literature as verbal art essentially non-literate societies. Oral literature has three branches technically referred to as "genres", these are prose, drama and poetry. Mbunda (2006) stated that folktales deals with imaginary world set in the remote past. Mbunda (2006) explained that folktales educate children by acting as vehicle of cultural propagation, provides an enjoyment escape from reality. This kind of oral literature present material in a direct and simple style which appeals to the thought of the child because they evoke the elements of nature e.g man, hills, sea, trees, vegetation etc. Children enjoy actions exhibited by individual's colorful characters and humor. Generally, folktales deals with legends, customs, superstitions and beliefs of people.

Adeyemi (1998) identified five categories of folktales (moral folktales, dilemma folktales, why, folktales, co-wife folktales and game poetry). Moral folktales discourages vices such as greed, treachery, ingratitude, aggression and overrating while dilemma folktales leaves you with alternatives from which to choose. 'Why' folktales are explanatory and meant to show why certain natural phenomena occur or why certain values are held among people. The theme of

rivalry between (or among) wives is prominent in co-wife tales. Game poetry helps to strengthen the participants physically, intellectually and emotionally.

### **The Values of Folktales in Early Childhood /Primary Education in Nigerian**

Folktales or oral literature is meant for entertainment or for pleasure or enjoyment intended to capture children's interest in reading, teaches good morals, good leadership qualities, teaches about warriors, great men and women e.g Queen Amina of Zaria was known to have fought wars and build walls around her kingdom while Maryslessor fought and stopped the killing of Twins babies in Calabar, Cross River State. Also, folktales teach how to live or adapt to other peoples culture. Apart of inculcating certain cultural values in the child, folktales offers him a variety of speech forms which he can imitate to greater communication efficiency.

The National policy on Education (2004) sees language as a means of "promoting social interaction and national cohesion and preserving of cultures". It emphasis that the first three years of primary school education mother tongue should be used for instruction. From the fourth year English should be taught as a subject and used progressively as medium of instruction and as language of immediate environment. The above statement explain why folktale should be taught at the primary school level of education in Nigeria.

### **How to use Folktales for Effective Teaching of Nigerian Languages in Primary School**

In order to enhance the teaching and learning of Nigerian languages and to make it effective at the primary school level is for the teachers' to employ folktales form of oral literature that have been largely neglected by Nigerian elite through the following:



Myths: find answers to some basic questions about the world e.g stories that are filled with fantasy adventures as they provide children insight into other cultures. Tongue twister and riddles are good aspects through which children learn language and culture of their people. They enhance the stimulation of children's cognition. Proverbs are words of wisdom and the love of every race. They are traditional virtues and thus, regarded as "oil" which lubricates native language, they are extensively used by Yoruba, Igbo and perhaps the Hausas. The teacher tells pupils' stories and the pupils also tell stories in their languages as a way of exposing them to their culture.

Poetry: is a powerful form of oral literature. Traditional poems are handed down from generation to generation. It is an act which uses both speech and songs to reveal the realities that the senses record, Songs at times are used as interlude or to punctuate sections of the story and to advance the plot in some cases (Mbunda, 2006). Nursery rhymes provides many children with first contact with singing and recitation of poems. The rhymes are usually short simple poems that are the oldest forms of children literature. Adults entertain children and children entertain themselves by reciting the rhymes. Children see and feel the world around them through descriptions in poetry.

Drama: is also an aspect of oral literature. They are usually traditional demonstrations that are often highly dramatic in form. These traditional performances take place during festivals and ritual celebrations. They are highly colorful and entertaining, such spectator show are for people to see and also learn. Oral literature is most indigenous way of educating children, they have significant influence on the life of children for instance, Babalola (2002) states that

folktales provide unique and valuable insight into the beliefs, customs, values and aspirations of the traditional society. Folktales serve as a means of expressing social approval and disapproval. It give pupils opportunity to act some roles or dramatize some common stories or plays that children enjoy at moonlight or traditional festivals as in marriages including the use of custom or traditional dresses during such occasions.eg "The gods are not to blame" written by Olarotim and "Things fall Apart" Chinua Achebe. Akinyemi (2003) opines that oral literature serves as the traditional form of educating children in the native society. It thus, employs oral literacy techniques such as riddles, puzzles, songs, games poetry to influence the thinking of children. From the foregoing, oral literature appears to be of significant value in the life of children.

#### **The Place of Folktales in Children Learning of Nigerian Languages at the Primary School Level.**

Folktales enhances children learning of language and expand their vocabularies through Songs, proverbs and riddles, it enhances children learning of their own cultural heritage and that of other people. Oral literatures broaden their horizon by getting them know other people and what happens in other places. It provides avenue for socialization and adaptation, development of desirable qualities such as honesty, emotional control, fair play, leadership and unselfishness. Recitation of poems indirectly trains children in the act of effective pronunciation of language sounds. It should be noted that the use of folktales for effective teaching is not limited to Nigerian languages alone, it could also be employed in teaching of the four English language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing). For instance, folktales could be used to develop spelling skills through listing. Area of wrong pronunciation could be used for remedial

teaching during the lesson. It is also appropriate for debate and role play of characters in a short drama thereby develop the ability to listen and speak.

### **Criticisms of Folktales**

Some people see folktales as crude and uninteresting form not worthy for children's literacy learning. Folktales is seen as consist of only childish stories while some people see it as premature, naive, mindless and verbatim repetition that were handed down from one generation to another. Other people show lack of interest that the stories are told by illiterate people. Some say the contents appear to challenge children belief in Almighty God. Story telling takes place in the evening, the bed time and twilight. It is believed that it a taboo to perform folktales during the day time or the story teller will turn into a hen if he/she performs during the day. The bed time or twilight is chosen because of the serenity of the evening and it is also the period when domestic drudgery ends. Such stories can be told in inside or outside the house by male or female, child or adult. However, adults perform for children and children performs for their peers in the absent of adults. Folktales are seasoned with proverbs, which are supposed to be exclusive domain of the (grand fathers and mothers). It is in line with the above criticisms that the paper seeks to educate listeners and readers on the importance of folktales in children's effective learning of Nigerian languages at the primary school level of education.



### **Summary:**

The paper discussed folktales in terms of oral literature and as effective tool for teaching of Nigerian languages through the use of Myths, poetry and drama. Scholars have defined folktales in various ways e.g some see it as story telling while others view it as cultural practices passed down from one generation to another. Five forms of folktales were identified and explained with examples e.g(moral, dilemma, why, co-wives and game folktale).The values and place of folktales in primary education are extensively discussed pointing out that its' use will expose children to their culture and that of other people including an all-round development of the child. Some school of thought criticized folktales as being naïve, mindless, premature and that the stories are told by illiterate people while the contents appear to challenge children belief in Almighty God.

### **Conclusion:**

It appears there is no provision made for folktale as a subject in the school system. This is largely responsible for the relative lack of interest in the use of oral literature in primary schools. Folktale as an important and crucial tool for the intellectual development of the child if appropriately employed by English language teachers during lesson particularly during vernacular periods, the learners' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills will be greatly enhanced and improved upon including correct pronunciation of words in English and Nigerian languages.



### **Recommendations:**

The government, curriculum planners and developers, stake holders in education and the larger society need to go back to the drawing board and take a stand for inclusion of folktales in primary school curriculum because of the important role it play for the all-round development of the child, i.e it provides avenue for socialization and adaption, develop desirable qualities such as honesty, emotional control, fair play, choice of good leadership styles and also learn to avoid selfishness through folktale stories they have listened to and watch such as "Tales by Moonlight" from of Nigeria Television Authority, (NTA) Lagos. Folktales when included in school curriculum, the knowledge acquired will help the child to adjust when he finds himself among people of other cultures or land.

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# **Stress Management among Primary School Teachers**

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## Abstract

*Couple of decades ago, Stress has been seen to be a topical phenomenon of discuss in only high executive professions excluding Teaching, but today stress is everywhere including primary schools . It is against this background that this paper focuses on management of stress among primary school teachers under subheadings: conceptual framework of stress, stress and teaching profession, stress and teachers, sources of stress among primary school teachers, symptoms of stress, and strategies for stress management were highlighted. Conclusion was made that the best way to manage stress is to prevent it and if it becomes unavoidable, then coping with or managing it becomes inevitable to prevent its degeneration into serious health challenges among teachers, which invariably would be counter-productive to the education sector. Recommendations were proffered, these include: the need for educational stakeholders particularly the school managers to do more by providing the basic infrastructure and engaging adequate competent teachers of various disciplines who are excellent managers of time to avoid unnecessary stressful situations. Less stressful teachers in the primary school will be efficient engineers of the future nation builders.*