
Educational Implication of Folktales on Nigerian Children

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Abstract

Teaching and learning have been undertaken sometimes in the absences of visual materials. Teaching of morals, values and virtues in children can best be achieved with printmaking illustrations while using folktales as sources of influence. Folktales have been described in this paper as veritable tool for teaching sociological and cosmological issues. The paper suggests some educational implication of folktales as it specifically affects children.

Keywords: Folktales, folklore, Educational Implication, Nigerian Children.

Introduction

Folktales are rooted in tradition and culture of a particular people and were originally passed on by the words of mouth from one generation to another. Kondi (2019) declares Kershenblatt-Gimblette refers to folklore as the study of a cultural production with focus on oral tradition. This has existed with man as oral literature. Fayose (1995) explains that social anthropologists can see folktales as “Cement of society” and psychoanalysts say, “folk stories are symbols of emotional fantasies which all people experience”. Kathleen Kagan (2023) postulates that every individual in every culture has the ability to tell tales and understand them without any formality. The functional role of tales was of great importance as described by Noss (1987). Whether for revealing sociological and cosmological aspects of a culture or for providing a practical means of pedagogy. Folklore like folktales is the study of the traditional beliefs of the society, the two are knotted since they contain stories that can reshape and transform the life of the children. It is the accumulated wisdom of simple everyday folk or a society’s common knowledge. Fayose (1995). While no strong line of demarcation can be drawn on the differences in folktales and folklore, Ogundipe (1972) attempts to distinguish the terms for different verbal forms in folklore and other related terms when he wrote:

1. “Folktales” (Stories that require chorus from listeners)
2. “Myth and Legends”(Stories about cosmology and cosmogony)
3. “Proverbs”
4. “Songs”
5. “Curses”

Ogundipe’s analysis clearly corroborates Abimbola (1977) that folklore and folktales connote the same interpretations.

The period when folktales are narrated to children is noteworthy in their development and growth in Nigeria. This is what makes stories and narratives accepted without questioning or investigating the sources. The grown-ups, usually parents and elderly people seize the opportunity of the naivety and innocence of the child to illustrate educative tales which embody societal values and satisfy the needs of security and social values. Children listened to stories, riddles and jokes, parables, and proverbs, which develop them socially and

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morally to live a full contented life, stories of achievement and success give self-confidence and encouragement to the children.

Educational Implications of Folktale

Folktale is an instrument of traditional education because some of them reveal the true source of tradition and superstitious beliefs and indeed explains some religious background to certain prevailing customs. The activities that happen in folktales indicate human values. In most times, families are constituted to show father, mother, child (ren), sometimes stewards and servants. Fayose (1995) declares that even the animals operate within a physical or supernatural world including a home. She said further that this home and family are naturally essential to the security and the well-being of the children. Oratory power is needed and valued in the folktale as one of the art of narrations also give panacea to problem of speech making.

Most of these stories teach children what the society requires of them. It serves as an eye opener for future occurrences. Yo & Sato (2019) argued that folktales have pedagogical function of disseminating information about the environs. Folktales are relevant to everyday living as the moral of the stories are attached to the lives of every individual.

To extol virtues and condemn vices, folktales also function as wisdom-lore of the elders. Nwoga (1981) suggests that most of the lessons a person learns are based on how he lives and interacts successfully and meaningfully with other individuals. It was based on this assertion that Hoffman (1957) posited that folktales are expressions of “popularly sanctioned attitudes towards human character, class structure and man’s reaction to nature”.

Folktales transcend the non-literate societies. Just as the rural area urbanizes, folktales have been maintained as effective devices for passing on the knowledge and wisdom of ancestors. Tsuji, Yu & Manidoc (2022) remark that folktales purposely develop, sustain, and preserve indigenous culture for improved future.

The satiric function of folktales in human society transcends mere story illustration. Apart from the fact morals are positively drawn from the tales and lores, confident judgements are made, excepts for the assertion of Ebewo (1987) which postulates that the African trickster tales are responsible for the vices in the economic, social, and political activities in Africa. Although Ebewo (1987) assert that folktales are also meant for entertainment and for educating the child, however, he agrees with Arohunmolase (1988) who states that folktales are a useful tool for socialisation, although children and adults may not be able to accept them as scientific truths, they are satires that serve as weapon used for reforms in African societies.

Apart from the tales of valour and lesson from knowledge of life and mundane experiences, folktales also provide stylistic forms for fun and amusement. The leisure is spent usefully at any given time when there is readiness on the part of the audience. Folktales are made under the shade of trees, at bonfires in starry nights and moonlights (Akinrujomu, 2004). Folktales cannot be ignored in the society. They served as psychological release from tension and problems arising from socio-human existence.

Folktale as a Veritable tool in Children’s Preparation Teaching

The use of various techniques in printmaking arts such as serigraphy, relief e.g. wood or linocut to visualize folktale would help to activate the memory of the child towards the

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lesson learnt in a particular folktale. In the age where foreign movies and imported visual works for the documentation of folktales become exigent.

Rendering folktale in visual forms would improve moral standard in schools, Valdez & Moyano (2021) opines that there is always an overt lesson in every folktale to learn. There is tendency for children to remember physical object that would remain permanent in their memory and the lessons taught would not be forgotten.

They are important educational tools used in non-literate and literate societies of the preparatory and the primary schools as well as supplement for informal and formal education. For example, the following story illustration best describes folktale as an instrument of learning and teaching:

Folktale Illustration

A Yoruba folktale once asserted that long ago all animals in the bush lived happily together. Sometimes after all the day's work, they gathered to amuse themselves. At one of these gatherings "Lolo" the elephant invited the tortoise for a race, all the animals were astonished and laughed. Lolo laughed loudest of all boasting he was the strongest animal. They later settled for the race after much amusement. "Let us do the race now," said Lolo. No, "Tomorrow" said the tortoise. As they all dispersed, the tortoise sought the opinion of some older animals on what to do to win the race. Some suggestions were made which the tortoise followed strictly.

Later that night, the tortoise went to the arena of the race. He knotted some grasses from right and left of the road as a trap for "Lolo" and then covered it with sand to make it hidden, near a resting pole. On the following morning, all animals came to watch, the tortoise had hardly moved a few yards, but Lolo was so far ahead. Soon Lolo could not be seen any longer. Disaster struck as he got near the resting pole, Lolo fell and was unable to get up immediately.

As he was struggling to get up, a cool breeze blew on him, this made him fall into a deep and peaceful slumber. Tortoise saw Lolo on the way sleeping, he ran past Lolo straight to the winning pole where other animals were waiting without having a rest at the pole. He told other animals to permit him rest on a nearby tree. When Lolo woke up, he managed to get up and ran like a mad dog to the winning pole. Lolo thought he had won at last despite the sleepover, but other animals quickly pointed to tortoise on the tree as a winner of the race. Lolo was ashamed and henceforth stopped boasting as the strongest of all animals.

Lesson and Morals from Folktales

This story is full of suspense and actions that is finally satisfying. The elephant was confident of his racing ability especially against the tortoise who was small and slow in action. Lolo boasted because of its size and power to put tortoise to shame but the humiliation fell back to him. In real sense, this story reveals that the society frowns on the use of might which is not always right but cherishes humility, obedience, and virtues. Econ (2021) opines that communities that punish offenders and have low tolerance towards anti-social behaviours that also give punishment to tricksters are trustworthy and prosperous. Lolo trusted in his powers and might, but the tortoise humbled himself by seeking advice from elders. It taught the lesson that the small, the weak and the poor can as well get the best out of their opponent, the big, the strong, and the wealthy. The story gives succour to children who are small, weak, and poor in the society.

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Conclusion

The paper concludes that teachers should make use of folktales to teach morals, obedience, humility, virtues, etc in their lessons bearing in mind of its educational implication that have been discussed so far. It would help in solving psychological and emotional problems encountered by the child when growing up, such problems as jealousy and rivalry, fear and uncertainties, peer recognition and acceptance, threat, and other social predicaments. Stories of competence and successful heroes and heroines who refuse to accept defeat help children when growing up.

Teachers should also apply the method of “learning by seeing” which seems to have gained recognition by Nigerian children. They remember what they see than the abstract. There is no doubt that positive implication of folktales would help researchers and learners achieve a better result in educational goals and aspiration.

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