

**TRANSMISSION OF CULTURAL NORMS AND VALUES FOR NATION BUILDING
THROUGH STORYTELLING: AN ANALYSIS OF ANAMBRA BROADCASTING
SERVICE TELEVISION PROGRAMME, *EGWUONWA***

By

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Abstract

Culture as the totality of a people's (Africans) way of life is transmitted from generation to generation through the storytelling method. It was one of the major methods used by our forefathers to teach. Teaching is a transaction between the teacher and the learner. There are many methods of teaching. No matter the method adopted, it should be a give and take situation, where the teacher imparts his ideas to the learner and the learner receives such impartation, interprets and stores it for future use. Storytelling is a teaching method. Therefore, the need to expose the relevance of the storytelling method as an agent for the transmission of cultural norms and value necessitated this work. The work is an analysis of Anambra Broadcasting Service (ABS) Children's Storytelling Television Programme: *Egwuonwa*. The research is hinged on the socio-cultural theories of Barbara Rogoff and Albert Bandura. According to Rogoff, children are social beings who need to make sense of the world, so they develop through activities within their cultural situation. This means that what they learn, and how they learn it, depends on what is happening around them- that is, their culture. She acknowledges that early childhood setting is also a part of children's culture. On the other hand, Bandura's socio cultural theory stresses that learning occurs within a social context and that people learn from one another through observation, imitation, and modeling. The content analysis of the qualitative research methodology for the data collection and analysis. This will be achieved through the review and critical examination of three episodes of

Egwuonwa, as well as a review of other related literature. The study concludes that children learn and retain subject matter when they are relaxed and are taught in a friendly and stress free environment which is the fulcrum of the storytelling method. The study recommends the need to vary the methods of teaching and further advocates for the use of informal methods of teaching like drama and storytelling by teachers for the overall wellbeing of students in the nursery and primary school.

Keywords: Transmission, Teaching, Learning, Cultural norms and values, Storytelling,

Introduction

Storytelling is an ancient art practice as old as man mankind. It has been used in the transmission of cultural norms and values from generation to generation. Its main function is “to entertain, inform and pass down cultural traditions and values” (<https://newsela.com>. np). Before the advent of writing, historical, political, social and economic facts of the people were transmitted and preserved through story telling. Emmanuel Iroh observes that “in traditional African societies, our forefathers used storytelling to teach children the norms and values of society. At the night, during moonlight, the storytelling mode was used, as children gathered under trees to hear stories from elders” (<https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ujah.v23i1.10.263>).

Storytelling is a transaction between the storyteller and children. The storyteller is like a teacher who imparts his ideas to the learner and the learner receives such impartation, interprets and stores it for his future use as the need arises. It should be done in a conducive, relaxed and stress free atmosphere and should be a give and take situation. This practice has been endangered by technology and advancement of society. In the world in general and Nigeria in particular, technology has so encroached into our communal lives that people stay indoors, glued to their social media, television. This has resulted in most people minding their business and thinking more of themselves that they no longer participate or care to send their children to the playground to listen to stories.

Storytelling is the art of telling story. According to Adichie, C. N. as quoted by Simeon Edosomwan and Claudette M. Peterson, “through storytelling, people and societies around the

world learn, develop the codes of behavior, and formulate meaning-making in their lives” (www.files.eric.ed.gov. 91). Story telling is “telling a story through voice and gestures. The oral tradition can take many forms, like poems, chants, rhymes, songs, and more. It can include myths, legends, fables, religion, prayers, and instructions” (<https://newsela.com>. np).

Storytelling facilitates learning, holds attention and engages the student. It is participant oriented and interactive as it allows the audience (children, students) to interact with the story teller (the teacher). Silk Ugwu Ogbu, submits that:

in learning, stories can play a vital role in shaping the consciousness of students through vehicles such as; holding attention of participants, engaging in subject matter discussions, igniting subject interest, solving puzzles created in scenarios narrated (case studies) and diffusing participant/student anxiety” (www.journals.scholarpublishing.org (148).

Storytelling in the classroom will not only entertain children by making the class work lively and attractive but will also enable the teacher to inculcate all the intended lessons in his set objectives as well as help to mould the child’s character

It has encompassed most professions and used in medical treatment, conflict resolution, crime detectives, family and community arbitrations. Medical doctors rely on the oral narratives of their patients to understand the medical history of such patient for proper diagnosis of the ailment; during family and community arbitrations, stories of how families and communities had lived peacefully are told to the younger generation by the elderly to inculcate unity and shun divisive tendencies. Investigations about crime cannot be properly conducted if oral narratives of suspects are not done

African writers especially Chinua Achebe variously used the storytelling method to debunk some Eurocentric notions that Africa has no history, asserting that Africa has a way of life and existence before the arrival of the Europeans to destroy African culture and imposed theirs on us. Hence, the titles of some of Achebe’s books like “Things Fall Apart” and “No Longer At Ease” when literally interpreted, simply mean that things (our ways of life) fell apart with the introduction of western culture and things were no longer at ease for African people.

The way of life of a people is their culture. The National Cultural Policy of Nigeria describes culture as the:

totality of the way of life, endowed by a people in their attempts to meet the challenge of living in their environment which gives order and meaning to the social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organization, thus distinguishing a people from their neighbours” (5).

Culture is transmissible from generation to generation and it aids development which is the basis of human development. The Encarta dictionary simply defines transmission as the “act of transmitting: the act or process of transmitting something” (np). To transmit is to communicate, to send a message, to pass something on.

Culture has evolved and assumed different dimensions like technology culture, hygiene culture, farming culture, reading culture. According to Kenny Smith, Michael Kalish, Thomas Griffiths and Stephen Lewandosky, who quoted Tomasello M.,

sophisticated technologies, highly developed sciences and elaborate social and religious rituals are products of a cumulative process of cultural evolution, whereby each generation builds on the achievement of their predecessors in a gradual, approximately monotonic retching up of complexity and functionality” (3471).

The above statement clearly authenticates the assertion that culture is transmitted from generation to generation and each generation learns from the older generation and modifies what they have learnt to suit their time. Again, this aligns with the submission of Chris S. Orngu “that culture is a social inheritance that gives structure to people’s lives” (1). It is in the light of the foregoing, that this work strives to expose the importance of the storytelling technique as an agent of cultural transmission through the analysis of some episodes of Egwuonwa, an ABS programmes.

Literature Review

Olivier Serrat defines storytelling as the use of stories or narratives as a communication tool to value, share, and capitalize on the knowledge of individuals... the vivid description of ideas, beliefs, personal experiences, and life-lessons through stories or narratives that evoke powerful emotions and insights”(www.researchgate.net np). He further avers that “it enables articulation of emotional aspects as well as factual content, allowing expression of tacit knowledge (that is always difficult to convey” (np).

Storytelling has great impact on children of Young Ages. Muhammed Ali Isik submits that Storytelling “guide us in our lifetime experiences as they help young aged school children to develop a better psychological and physical well-beings and individuals that can be part of the society they live in”. This is because the method of “storytelling help in memorizing new phrases through repetitions, raising interest, enjoyable pastime. Language acquisition becomes much easier as children absorb the new material in a quicker and smoother way. The usage of e-learning methodologies would also help students` involvement, comprehension through the means they are familiar with as in internet, movies etc. Ryan Hidayat Rafiola, Dian Anggraini and Vivi Nila Sari quoted Lestari T. who asserts that “storytelling are used to improve language development in children... enrich children's language and storytelling skills...contains real or fictitious actions, experiences or events” (463).

In a related study, Denise E. Agosto submits that storytelling aids story sequencing which is an important skill for literacy development. According to him,

story sequencing is the ability to identify different events in a story and place them in chronological order...Live storytelling can bring joy to children and encourage them to view libraries and literacy in a positive light, helping to advance the core mission of libraries. That outcome alone is reason to continue providing storytelling for children in public and school libraries for many years to come.(www.journal.ala.org. 25)

The psychological developments of children are also worth to mention as their cognitive skills are much more enhanced through storytelling activities. Imitational learning, impersonating, determining the differences between good and evil and such other factors help children for their

personality developments as well as fostering their developments that goes through different stages as mentioned earlier.

The usefulness of storytelling as a means of supporting children with language has been emphasized. According to Sinead-John, storytelling not only improves children's language and literacy skills but can also improve children's mental health and well-being as it allows children to feel valued and interact with others. "Reading with children is an enjoyable activity for all involved, which helps them to stimulate their imagination and expands their knowledge of the world, by telling them true stories about their family can make them feel involved and gain a better understanding of their heritage" (www.ecsdn.org, np).

Storytelling is not only one of the traditional methods but also one of today's modern devices in teaching as they not only help us learn a language or have good time. Story telling is engaging and participant oriented. It assists children in information processing. According to Erickson and Rossias cited by Jill Eck:

the virtues of storytelling in terms of its' ability to create a trance-like state or state of learner openness that promotes processing new information on a deeper, more meaningful level.. Most theorists tend to agree that storytelling offers the opportunity for improved learner engagement, information processing, and information retention over other more traditional forms of teaching and learning.

Values and morals are invariably instilled through listening to stories. This is because most stories contain themes of good triumphing over evil, good manners, common standards of justice and fair play, decency and honesty as well as showing appreciation and greetings to elders. Bertram F. Malle and Eric Edmondson agree that "values exert a powerful force on social and political decisions, moral judgments, and self-regulation".

The Microsoft Encarta Dictionary gave a detailed meaning of value as "**involving right and wrong**: relating to issues of right and wrong and to how individual people should behave"; "**able to tell right from wrong**: able to distinguish right from wrong and to make decisions based on that knowledge"; "**good by accepted standards**: good or right, when judged by the standards of the average person or society at large". The above meanings when applied to storytelling can be said to mean that values in stories enables the child to know what is good from bad, and understand

and tell what is right from wrong as well as accept and practice good manners and behaviours to societal expectations.

Again, Trostle, S. and Hicks, S.J opine that “storytelling on a regular basis builds on children’s early childhood strengths by stimulating their language acquisition, building on their vocabulary range and helping them to successfully develop linguistic competencies”(np). This is further accentuated by Speaker, K. M who submit that “children who are read to on a regular basis, often exhibit enhanced listening skills, increased sequencing abilities and a better understanding of how to organize their own writing as opposed to children who are less exposed to storytelling”

Rahayu in Yulsyofriend notes that storytelling provides an opportunity for discussion between the storyteller and the children, allowing the children to participate in conversation, which is also important for their vocabulary growth and oracy skills. According to him

the benefits of storytelling activities is that children can develop vocabulary, speaking skills, express stories conveyed in accordance with the characteristics of the characters told in a fun situation for children and can train the courage of children to appear in public (111).

Theoretical Framework

The research is hinged on the social cultural theories of Barbara Rogoff and Albert Bandura. According to Rogoff, children are social beings who need to make sense of the world, so they develop through activities within their cultural situation. This means that what they learn, and how they learn it, depends on what is happening around them- that is, their environment which translates to their culture. Moreso, it means that early childhood setting and environment is also a part of children’s culture, hence children needs to develop understandings and skills in a social context as well as learn through observing and imitating adults. She submits that since children are active, involved and competent learners; adults have a role in guiding children’s learning.

Again, Bandura, a foremost socio-cultural theorist stresses that learning occurs within a social context and that people learn from one another through observation, imitation, and modeling. Sondang Manik, Milisi Sembiring, Immanuel Padang and Lastris Manurung agree that Social learning theory considers how environmental and cognitive factors interact to influence human

learning and behavior. While expatiating on the importance of Bandura's theory, they enthused that:

Social Learning emphasizes the importance of the learner develop their own knowledge or information gained from model observations... After observing the behavior of others, people assimilate and mimic the behavior, especially when their observational experience is positive or include rewards associated with observed behaviors. (<https://ejournal.uhn.ac.id/index.php/pengabdian> 85-86).

What the above is saying is that environment influences learning as behavior is an outcome of the interaction the learner had with the environment which he exhibits. It therefore means that children learn new behaviours after interacting with the social setting where they find themselves. Storytelling occurs in a social setting (environment) and children observe and interact with the storyteller to learn from his stories. The themes and lessons of the stories are from the child's environment, hence the suitability of the theories for the work.

Therefore, when a child participates in an activity (storytelling session), it stimulates him intrinsically. This stimulation deepens their understanding of the subject matter such that the story sinks intrinsically with them to be applied positively in life.

Data Presentation and Analyses

ABS Egwuonwa

What is today known as Anambra Broadcasting Corporation, Radio & Television started in March, 1992 after the creation of Anambra and Imo States from the old Enugu state. After the disengagement of staff of Anambra Origin and their subsequent relocation to the new Anambra State. The station first started at 4 park road GRA Onitsha, before it moved to Paul University college, Awka and Party house, Okpuno before it moved to her permanent site along Enugu/Onitsha Express way close to the popular Aroma Junction.

Egwuonwa is one of the many programmes of the station. It is specially dedicated to children. It is a variety programme that is made up of different segments like educative games, dramatizations and storytelling. The producer/presenter is Uche.... Three stories from the storytelling segment of

Egwuonwa, were reviewed in the course of this work to extricate the norms and values (lessons) embedded in the stories.

Story 1: Why the Lizard Nods Its Head

Once upon a time, there was famine in the land of the animals. Lion, the king of animals directed all animals to bring any food while coming for the meeting. The animals prepared and each brought good food. As they gathered waiting for the commencement of the meeting, the tortoise went and hid itself in a nearby bush and started beating the evil drum. On hearing the sound, the animals ran for safety, leaving the food. When the tortoise saw that they have run away, he crawled out from his hiding and ate the food to his satisfaction and took the remainder home.

The king summoned another meeting and instructed that the ceremony be repeated and that the animals should come with their best food. When they gathered again, the tortoise went inside the nearby bush and started beating the evil drum again. This sent fears into the minds of the animals as they thought that messengers of the devil are coming to catch them. They again, ran away, leaving their food. When they were gone, the tortoise came out from his hiding, ate their food and took the rest home. This happened when they gathered again for the third time.

Surprised and confused at what has been happening to them, the king summoned another meeting of the animals. Determined to get to the root of matter, the king instructed the lizard to climb a tree and hide so that it can detect what happens, peradventure they run away again during the rescheduled meeting. The lizard agreed and a date for another meeting was fixed.

When they gathered and was about settling down for the ceremony, the tortoise started beating the evil drum again and as usual, they all ran away leaving their food. As the tortoise came out to eat the food, the lizard jumped down from the tree to confront the tortoise. The tortoise enticed him to join him in eating and assured him that his interest will be protected. The lizard agreed to his offer and joined him. As they were eating, the tortoise suggested that they feed each other. Again the lizard acquiesced. The tortoise allowed the lizard to feed him first while the tortoise reciprocated. They continued to feed each other. Unknowingly to lizard, tortoise hid a big bone (Nnukwu okpukpu) in the fufu ball he molded and gave to lizard. The bone got stocked in his throat and could no longer come out.

When the animals came together to hear from the lizard, he could no longer speak but was only nodding his head (O na ekwe n'isi). All efforts to make the lizard talk proved abortive. After being frustrated, the animals went home disappointed and lizard has never spoken again till this day.

Lessons

At the end of the story, the children were asked the lessons they learnt from the story. The following answers were given by some of the children.

- a. It is not good to be greedy- the tortoise was greedy and schemed to outsmart all other animals to covet their meals.
- b. We must not compromise our stand. The whole community selected the lizard to help them investigate who has been responsible for their plight, however, when he connived with the culprit and compromised his position against his people. It is not good to join a bad person or group as the lizard betrayed the trust the whole animal kingdom reposed in him and joined the tortoise to eat the food

The result of such connivance may be disastrous as the lizard could no longer speak because the tortoise hid a big bone in the ball of garri which got stuck in lizard's throat thus preventing him from speaking.

It is not good to be cunning and crafty as well as to tell lies. Children are reminded to always say the truth.

Story 2: The Pregnant Woman and the Snake

Once upon a time, a pregnant woman went to gather wood in the forest to enable her cook. As she was gathering the firewood bush, she saw a nest full of eggs (akwa) collected all of them and left for home with her firewood. She cooked them and ate. Unknown to her, the eggs belonged to the snake (Akwa eke).

When the snake came back, and did not see her eggs, it started singing a particular song that connected her with the eggs.

Onye chiri akwam... Onye chiri akwam... Who took my eggs, who took my eggs

Chihachirim akwam... Chihachirim akwam.. Bring back my eggs, bring back my eggs

As the cobra was singing, the eggs who have now turned into snakes in the woman's stomach were responding to the song. Thus the cobra traced the eggs to the woman's house. Each time he

misses the way, her sings and is reconnected to the path to the woman's house. As she was going, people were running away to avert the wrath of the cobra.

The woman has now become very uncomfortable with the rumblings in her stomach that she almost fainted. Now in front of her house, the cobra started singing again

Onye chiri akwam... Onye chiri akwam... Who took my eggs... who took my eggs
Chihachirim akwam... Chihachirim akwam.. Bring back my eggs... bring back my eggs

When the eggs replied,

Nne anyi no nime afo nwanyi riri anyi.... We are in the stomach of the woman who ate us
Nne anyi no nime afo nwanyi riri anyi.... We are in the stomach of the woman who ate us

The snake became happy and angry at the same time. Happy because she has finally found where her eggs were taken to but very annoyed because of the pains the woman has caused her by stealing her eggs.

She started singing again and they replied. The woman got so uncomfortable that as she stepped out of her house to catch some fresh air, the cobra hit her on her stomach and all the eggs she ate busted out as snakes and followed their mother home. The woman fell down and died.

Lessons

At the end of the story, the children were asked the lessons they learnt from the story. The following answers were given by some of the children.

- a. That we should be good children and that we should not take anything that does not belong to us and that it is not every egg that is edible.

Another child said that it is not good to steal or pick anything on the road.

The presenter now amplified the lessons by telling the children of the dangers of picking money on the road, which may lead to their disappearance and possibly being used for rituals. She related it to the woman who saw the eggs and took it home, cooked and ate without asking questions or even showing them to other people, thus causing her death. She further advised them not to take any meat that does not belong to them in the house, rather they should seek the permission of their parents.

Story 3: Igba Ndu

Ada's mother wanted her daughter, Ada to get married against her wish. After some unsuccessful attempts to persuade her to marry the son of a rich man, she goes to tell her husband who warned her of the dangers of her action, but nevertheless joined in urging their daughter to get married. When the pressure became too much, she entered into a secret blood covenant (Igba ndu) with Chimaobi her preferred lover where they promised to get married in the future and that none of them will leave each other.

Ada: Chimaobi, aracham obara gi, kwe nkwa na agaghi arapu gi lua di ozo

Chimaobi: Ada nhuru anya, aracham obara gi, kwe nkwa na agaghi arapu gi lua di ozo

Ada: Chimaobi, I suck your blood and promise that I will not leave you for another man

Chimaobi: ada my love, I suck your blood and promise that I will not leave you for another man

But as the pressure continued on Ada with so many threats from her parents, she gave in and agreed to marry their Ekene.

In the meantime, Arinze, Chimaobi's friend, who has been following the events in Ada's house informs Chimaobi that Ada has accepted to marry Ekene. Chimaobi became very depressed and sick and refused to eat for days because Ada has married another man.

Ada is also not happy as Ekene's wife and plans to kill him so she can go back to Chimaobi her love. She goes to the native doctor to assist her in killing her husband. The native doctor gave her charms which she added to her husband's food and he dies after eating the food. After the burial of her husband, Ada ran back to Chimaobi and they lived together afterwards.

Lessons

The followings were the lessons the children learnt from the lesson.

Blood covenant is not good

Don't rush into any agreement.

Gossips brings disorder in families

Again, the presenter enumerated other dangers of blood covenant to include, death, sickness, running mad, depression. She further advised them not to gossip as the result may have multiple consequences.

Discussion and findings

Storytelling is participatory oriented as the child is actively engaged throughout the process. The themes and setting for the stories are from the social settings (Environment) of the children. This supports the theoretical frameworks adopted for the study. Rogoff, submits that children are social beings who need to make sense of the environment and that childhood setting and environment is also a part of children's culture while Bandura stresses that learning occurs within a social context and that people learn from one another through observation, imitation, and modeling

The stories were transmitted from generation to generation, from preliterate to literate age when writing has been invented. Again, it is worthy of note that the stories were handed/transmitted through the spoken medium and memorized (intellectual development) to be transmitted later. This aligns with the submission of Yulsoyfriend that lessons from stories are stored for future usage by the receivers of such information. He concludes that children should "be able for tell his story well from his own experience and retell the story in an easily understandable sequence" (111).

The children in the ABS programme were alert, attentive and answered their questions in clear and unambiguous manner. This is line with the submission of Yulsoyfriend who observes that "Young children love stories. Stories teach them many concepts about life. Because by telling a story, ...in pouring his thoughts, mental readiness, courage, clear words so that can be understood by others"(111).

Showing appreciation through greetings is a very important virtue in Igbo land. The Igbos believe that a well brought up child never fails to greet other people especially elders. It is to fully realize this objective that the presenter of Egwuonwa will ask the children to thank the storyteller each time a storyteller finishes telling them a story. When she is signing off, she goes further, to ask the children at the studio, to greet fellow children at home who are or will be watching the programme from home. This instills the culture of greeting not only to the children at in the studio but also those at home (viewers)

Again, to make sure that lessons from the stories are fully digested by the children, the presenter amplifies the lessons by giving the lifelike examples. For instance, the presenter enumerates effect

of greediness and the need for people to maintain their integrity, other dangers of blood covenant to include, death, sickness, running mad, depression. She further advised them not to gossip as the result may have multiple consequences, the dangers of picking money on the road, which may lead to their disappearance and possibly being used for rituals, She related it to the woman who saw the eggs and took it home, cooked and ate without asking questions or even showing them to other people, thus causing her death. She further advised them not to take any meat that does not belong to them in the house, rather they should seek the permission of their parents.

Conclusion

The paper which set out to expose the importance of storytelling in the transmission of cultural norms and values examined the three stories from ABS programme *Egwuonwa*. The work concludes that storytelling is a veritable tool in the transmission of cultural norms and values. These norms and values are embedded in the stories told by the storyteller. According to Silk Ugwu Ogbu who quoted Achebe, stories “communicates meaning, principles, standards and various other expressions in oral societies” (148).

From the analysis of the case studies, it is evident that storytelling is a good avenue to create cultural awareness and for the transmission of cultural norms and value. This is evident from the lessons embedded in the stories. This is in line with the submission of Mary McCullum, Nancy Maldonado and Beate Baltes, who concluded that story telling creates a receptive attitude and is engaging and therefore “used to convey teachings that would traditionally have been told as story (authentic) with a view to better retention of information” Lindsay M Brown agrees that storytelling is uniquely able to record and report socio-historical circumstances.

Recommendations

The study recommends that there is need to incorporate the digital system in our quest to preserve our customs, norms and values through the recording of these stories to be replicated and transmitted through the social media for wider spread. This will further endear our younger generation to our culture.

Again, government should insist on the production and airing of more local programmes by our broadcast houses instead of flooding our airwaves with foreign contents with foreign background and invariably showcasing foreign culture, norms and values.

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