

FACILITATING LITERACY INSTRUCTION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract

This paper attempted to address the role of technology in facilitating literacy instruction in primary schools. One of the aim of primary education is the inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy. Children learn best when they can actively explore an environment rich in materials and gadgets for learning that is why the paper examined the different technological tools that teachers can use to promote children's literacy instruction and concluded that most primary school teachers are aware of the existence of these technological tools but, lack the skills and knowledge of how to use them to promote literacy instruction therefore, training of primary school teachers, provision of technological aids and internet facilities are recommended in all primary schools.

Key words: Literacy Instruction, Primary School, Technology

Primary school is that level of education which marks a transition from the home or nursery school. It is a level of education that starts normally at the age of six and lasts a duration of six years. It is a stage or period of both early and late childhood and is characteristically marked by both growth, development and psycho-social perspectives. It is a period when the attention of the child is not only fleeting itself but his mind is easily impressionable: that is, every bit of situation impresses the child. The Federal Government of Nigeria (2004)

in her National Policy on Education section 4. stated that the rest of the education system is built upon the primary level of education. As such, this level of education is the key to the success of the whole educational system.

Literacy instruction is therefore very important in primary schools, literacy instruction refers to the teaching of basic literacy skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing e.t.c.

Listening: This is the ability of the child to be able to direct his attention on an activity even though other activities are possible.

Speaking: Involves the ability of the child to name objects around him, progress to using sentences that consists of six to seven words or more, to having the language structure and vocabulary to tell original stories and being increasingly able to pantomime experiences that he has had plus the experiences he has observed in others.

Reading: Reading according to Ikoh (2004) is the method by which we communicate to ourselves and others the meaning of printed symbols.

Writing: Is the ability of the child to put down his taught, ideas for others to read.

Application of Technologies in Literacy Instruction

Technology according to Martin and Ofori-Attah (2005) is an area of the curriculum, as well as a tool for learning. The National Policy on Education (2004) in section 4 also recommended the use of technologies for instruction at the primary education level. Teachers must therefore, demonstrate their own awareness and capacity for instructing children in otherwords, for effective and meaningful teaching in the present information age at the primary education level, the demonstration of teachers awareness and competencies in the use of technologies for instruction cannot be underscored, If primary school teachers are aware of the use of technology in literacy instruction, children are likely to benefit from their knowledge.

Early stimulation of the child intellectually serves a better opportunity for later intellectual development (Okon, 2004). Research findings have also emphasized the importance of early start for young children. (Osayin 2002, Awoniyi 1991 and Maduwesi 1989). It is clearly evident that educating the child early in life gives children a better opportunity for grasping materials and learning faster than at the later stage. The earlier a child is introduced to the use of technologies for learning, the better will he be prepared for coping with the demands of work places later in life and the greater is the likelihood of a successful future besides, the National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (1996) position statement on technology and the young child noted that: “technology plays a significant role in all aspects of life and this role will only increase in the future. Bose (2009), also emphasized the need for rich learning experiences in childhood education institutions such as the primary schools to facilitate the development of cognitive, social, emotional, language, physical and motor aspect of the child, bearing in mind that whatever the child learns today is what he builds upon in future.

Writing on the importance of instructional materials, Adeogun (2001), asserts that; the popular method of converging ideas to learners is through the spoken word. There, however, is now a realization that “the use of words alone to communicate ideas is grossly

inadequate". He went further to say that there is a Chinese adage that 'what I hear I forget: what I see I remember, what I read I understand". This agrees with Baith's (2006: 99), opinion that:

Intellectual growth and development takes place through a sequence of concrete experiences followed by abstraction... if you want abstractive learning, then you have to provide something from which the child can abstract.

The simple message here is that the learner tends to forget easily what teachers say and also for abstractive learning to take place, there is need for a medium to abstract.

Children learn best when they can actively explore an environment rich in materials, when they are given the choice about what is learned. When they are able to interact informally with their teachers and with one another. Walberg and Thomas (2001): 75.

From the foregoing, it is evident that instructional materials increase the teaching learning effectiveness in the classroom by augmenting, complementing and supplementing learning activities.

A visit to most primary schools especially the government owned reveal that lack of technological aids for teaching a major problem facing primary education. The teachers here do not

make use of suitable and adequate teaching aids that will go a long way in making teaching interesting at that level.

Primary school teachers are therefore required to participate more in preparation and utilization of instructional materials towards current technical innovations and new techniques.

According to Holum and Gahala (2001), some of the technological network based tools that teachers can use to promote children's literacy instruction include:

1. **Audio Books:** Professionally recorded, unabridged versions of fiction or nonfiction books on tape which children can listen to and follow along silently with the printed version.
2. **Electronic Books:** are searchable, modifiable i.e font sizes can be increased to meet the (needs of the reader) and are available on CD ROM, the internet, or special disks.
3. **Online Text:** Children's texts materials are available on the worldwide web.
4. **Electronic Talking Books:** electronic texts that provide embedded speech.
5. **Programmed Reading Instruction:** Offer programmed reading instructions for pupils. These

skills based instruction range from letter recognition to phonics instruction to vocabulary building.

Other technologies for literacy instruction includes; projectors, videos, slides etc.

Benefits of Using technologies in literacy Instruction

The application of technologies in literacy instruction can upgrade literacy education to a new phase in Nigeria. The benefits of the application of technology to literacy instruction according to Bruce and Peyton (1999) are as follows:

1. It brings about improvement in the quality of literacy teaching through the diversification of contents, methods and as well as promoting experimentation, innovation and obtaining and sharing of information.
2. It brings about wide – range of literacy learning reforms, hence; increases access to teachers knowledge and development through interactive technology.
3. Increases flexibility in what to learn, how to learn and when to learn.
4. Train teacher to improve his competence in using the new technologies in his instructional activities.

Some Challenges of Using Technologies for Literacy Instruction

There are however certain challenges teachers may face in trying to

integrate technology into literacy classes. These includes:

1. Poor infrastructural Support: Adeosun (2010) concluded that the challenges to technological utilization in Nigerian primary school education involves the lack of training opportunities. Pelgrum and Anderson (1999) found out that training programmes among primary school teachers is low.
2. Lack of basic ICT knowledge: Acquiring ICT technical know-how is just the first level, beyond which many training programmes do not go. Gulbahar (2008) in his study found that although pre-service teachers are willing to use technology but this rarely occurred because of the inadequacy of lessons to facilitate them with necessary skills to be technology competent teachers.
3. Ignorance about it's importance.
4. Lack of governmental support in funding technology programmes in Nigeria Primary schools.

Conclusion

The paper addressed the role of technology in facilitating literacy instruction in primary schools. It examined some of the technological tools that can be used to promote literacy instruction in primary schools. It examined some of the benefits and challenges of technologies for promoting literacy instruction. It

recommended that primary school teachers be trained on how to manage and use technologies to promote literacy and that technological tools such as computers, audio-visual materials that are required for global education be provided in primary schools so that Nigerian children are not left out.

Recommendations

1. Technological training needs of primary school teachers be identified and trained on how to manage and use technologies to promote literacy.
2. The various state primary education boards and universal basic education commission provide fund to schools to procure the needed technological tools for pupils instruction in the primary schools.
3. Computers, audio-visual materials and other forms of gadgets required for global education be provided in all primary schools so that Nigerian children are not left behind.

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