

IMPACT OF CULTURALLY-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY ON PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN'S SOCIAL AND COGNITIVE COMPETENCES IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract:

Every society of the world has a process of imparting knowledge, values and skills that are peculiar to its cultural practice into the future generation. The process in Africa includes the use of method, medium and materials that are culturally responsive such as indigenous storytelling, rhymes, games and games-songs, language of the immediate environment, materials (beads, sea cowries) in teaching learning activities. This type of education could be referred to as culturally-based education. No meaningful teaching can be culture-free because culture is central to learning. Unfortunately, the practices in most pre-primary and lower primary school classrooms in Nigeria do not give preference to the culture of children because of the preference to the use of foreign stories, songs, rhymes, language, and materials during the teaching and learning processes. These are resulting into schooling without making meaningful impact in the environment.

This study was carried out to establish the impact of culturally-based instructional strategy on pre-primary school children's social and cognitive competences. Social competence in this study refers to pre-primary school children's skills of stating and maintaining relationship through tolerance and respect. And the cognitive competence means pre-primary school children's ability to perform basic problem-solving activities, through culturally-based hands-on activities that involve sorting, grouping, matching and counting of indigenous materials.

Two pre-primary schools (one public and one private) were purposively selected from each of the LGAs based on their willingness to participate in the study. An intact class of Nursery III children was selected per school, and randomized into CIBS and conventional groups respectively. A total of 74 pre-primary school children (44 males and 30 females) with mean age of 5.61 participated in the study. The study lasted eleven weeks.

Those in experimental group were engaged in culture-related activities, such as singing and demonstration of indigenous songs, rhymes and games. They were also exposed to some of the

practices that were socially acceptable in their immediate environment, such as ways of showing respect, including culturally appropriate verbal greetings with physical gestures. The treatment provided opportunities for children to relate better and closer than the conventional classroom practices. Children were engaged in group work as individual class work was reduced to the barest minimum, and this gave room for close interaction among them in the classroom. Relevant indigenous stories, rhymes and game-songs were used. Also, they were given indigenous materials, such as beads of different colours, dry seeds, cowries, posters that contained Yorùbá numbers and alphabet with relevant pictures, word-formation exercise books to facilitate the acquisition of the skill of problem-solving (counting, sorting, matching and grouping), listening and speaking skills.

The pre-primary school children in the control group were exposed to conventional instructional strategy. Conventional strategy in this context means the classroom situation where teaching and learning activities were carried out through the use of Western rhymes, songs and games. The medium of instruction was the Western language although teachers at the public schools use the mixed (bilingual) method of instruction. The findings also revealed the social competence scores of the two groups of children. Out of a maximum mark of 136, the mean score of children in the control group was 80.41 (59.13%) while that of the children in the experimental group was 107.14 (78.79%). This implies that those exposed to culturally-based instructional strategy had significantly better social competence than those exposed to the conventional strategy. This is in line with the submission of the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2007), that culturally appropriate content, method, medium and materials should be employed to engage pre-primary school children in teaching and learning activities, to develop in children societal acceptable values and harmless practices.