



Print-rich classroom and children's literacy development: implication for early grade teachers in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study aimed at investigating the impact of print-rich classroom environment on children's literacy development. The paper was theoretical/conceptual in nature, scholarly articles, books, reports were used to source information. The conclusion was that, print-rich classroom environment is effective in helping and motivating learners to develop their literacy. The implication was that, for fostering and developing literacy, early grade teachers have the role of creating, displaying and making use of meaningful charts. They can also use co-created prints, functional prints, labels among others in order to make learning environments stimulating, warm and interactive. The paper recommends that, teachers should be provided with the knowledge and awareness about the significance of print-rich classroom environment in teaching and how to create meaningful prints to help children develop their literacy. For further study, the study suggested that a mixed method should be applied to further investigate the impact of print-rich classroom environment on children's literacy development.

Keywords: literacy development, print rich, children, early grade teachers.

1. Introduction

Literacy developed across lifespan right from womb to tomb (Kennedy, Dunphy, Dwyer, Hayes, McPhillips, Mash, Shiel, 2012; Alexander, 2006). Development of effective literacy skills serve as a yardstick of academic success or failure of primary age learners. From infancy, parents and family members speak to infants to enable the infants develop their listening skill and become speakers of their native language. Where parental literacy level is high, children benefit their pre-alphabetic phase as they interact with print at home. Some children started their primary education with poor literacy skills due to poor parental literacy level, lack of parental support, and disinterest in learning and large class size (Kennedy et al. 2012). About 56 percent of such children worldwide were said to lack basic literacy skills (Policy brief: Education during

COVID-19 and beyond, 2020). A World Bank report estimated about 80 percent of Nigerian children could not read, write or do basic mathematics (Udo, 2018). This issue affects children's progress in later learning.

One of the strategies for teaching literacy to such children is the development of classroom environment with large number of prints such as books, posters, calendars, maps, alphabet charts, to mention but few (Adams, 1990). In Nigeria, we are learning English as second language, as such many children come to school without understanding and speaking English. Therefore, a print-rich classroom can help these children to access general education curriculum (Chawla 2017). Creating literacy-rich environment in schools enriches literacy experiences of children who may have little or no literacy exposure. Literacy rich-environment



emphasizes the importance of speaking, reading, and writing in the learning of all children. This exposes children to letters, sound, numbers and words. Presently, primary schools are left without fence, windows. Doors are also perpetually open even after closing time and at night. This image in which the schools are left does not encourage security of teaching and learning materials in schools. The objective of this study is to investigate the impact of print-rich environment classroom on children's literacy development.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In a print rich classroom certain material such as books, magazines and toys are provided. In most classrooms in kindergarten today, materials carrying words and letters that supposed to have more impact on the learning of children are not put in place. Alfredo Bautista, Jimmy Yu and Kerry Lee (2021) investigated the variety of factors hindering the implementation of play in Asian preschools. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of policy borrowing, enactment and globalisation, we analysed three jurisdictions that illustrate distinctive problematic: India, Mainland China and Hong Kong (Chin Fatt, 2022).

Children are not well connected to plenty labels which are supposed to positively impact on the cognition process of the child. For instance, if a label says “door” on the door of preschool door, children can easily remember the meaning of “d-o-o-r” is “door.” (Amanda Rock, 2020). Prior to what is experienced today, Lack of print-rich classrooms is persistently diminishing the quality of educational achievement of children in Nigeria. This trend has caused a bitter experience among children and managers of education and as such causing stagnation in the lower education sector (Gusler, S., Carr, V., & Johnson, H., 2022;

Fafunwa, 1978, Marcos Delprato, Kwame Akyeampong, Ricardo Sabates, Jimena Hernandez-Fernandez, 2015).

The main problem of this study is the need for a scientific analysis of the contribution of print-rich classroom in the educational pursuit among children, pre-primary and primary institutions of learning. This is because, lack of print-rich classroom reduces the amount of knowledge a child stands to acquire in the class (Fatt, 2022).

This study emphatically focused specifically on the impact of print-rich classroom on children's literacy development and its implication for Early Grade Teachers in Nigeria, possible consequences on educational achievement among children in the North-east Nigeria and how to proffer solution to the challenges. Therefore, without providing the children with such essential prints, they are likely to be ignorant of the images that are very important for their academic development. Not only that, there is paucity of research on the contribution of print-rich classroom environment on children literacy development in Nigeria. None of the previous scholars investigated Print-Rich Classroom and Children's Literacy Development in relation with ‘Implication for Early Grade Teachers in Nigeria.’ At this point, it is imperative to investigate the impact of print-rich classroom on children's literacy development.

1.2 Significance of the Study

The Study of this nature is essential at this time and would benefit the policy makers, school administrators, teachers and learners. Developing literacy and literacy skills of early grade learners serve as a means of attaining the goals of primary education in Nigeria. The outcome of this study would provide policy makers, school administrators and teachers with insights of what a print-rich environment is, how to create a print-rich classroom environment

and its role in improving literacy and literacy skills of children, to enable the child grow up full of knowledge and skills. This will go a long way in solving the challenges of recognising certain political, educational and historical figures, especially traditional and cultural traits of the children's community or society.

2. Literature Review

Many scholars have contributed immensely in respect of rich-print learning and teaching environment for development of children in the course of their studies.

Literacy as a Bedrock for Human Development

Literacy refers to the ability to read, interpret and acknowledge written material, broadcast media, and digital media (Department of Education and Skills, DES, 2011). Literacy is defined as understanding, using, and reflecting on written materials for the purpose of attaining one's objectives, advancing one's knowledge and potential and to contribute in society as suggested by Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2010). Based on the above, literacy is the ability of an individual to obtain information through listening, reading critical thinking and technology and produce the information either verbally or in writing. Literacy enables individuals to get and share information, to interact with others and to make meaning. To get new knowledge and deeper understanding, literacy is built on prior knowledge, culture and experiences (Aubut & Taylor, 2004). Literacy is an important skill in the global world and a powerful tool for achieving academic, intellectual and personal growth (Sadr, Juhari, Mansor & Esmaili, 2015).

Print-Rich Classroom

Print-rich classroom is one full of printed materials such as books, magazines, charts and their likes, in which reading and writing are used for wide variety of

genuine everyday purpose (Hussein & Ahmed, 2013). A Print-rich classroom is the place where children interact with different kinds of print such as signs, labels, word walls, graphs and other age-appropriate materials (Maya Nabil El Khoury, 2011). A Print-rich environment is a place with variety of prints such as alphabetic charts, number charts, pictures, posters, labels, word wall and any other print that aid literacy development of children.

Goals of Print-Rich Classroom Environment

Certain goals of print-rich classroom environment involve developing interest and enjoyment in books and reading, provide opportunities for text and print interaction, fostering the connection of letter-sound, and letter-word within meaningful context, nurturing children's emergent reading and writing skills, expanding children's knowledge of book and language, facilitating reading and writing across the curriculum (Khoury, 2011).

Creating Print-Rich Classroom Environment

Chart: is a sheet of information in the form of table, graph or diagram. Charts that support literacy include: days of the week chart, months of the year chart, colour chart - with pictures and names of different colours, animal chart -with pictures and names of the animals, alphabet chart, sound chart, and number chart (Aminu, 2020).

Functional print: is an early literacy strategy in which children use print-rich classroom environment to develop print awareness, practice emergent reading and communication. It includes: daily schedule, list of classroom helpers, classroom rules, morning message and children's attendance chart (Hussein & Ahmed, 2013). Co-created print: it is a print made by teacher and learners which serves as

instructional materials. It includes: a chart used by teacher and learners to record story structure, work created during an interactive writing activity, learners retelling of a story recorded by the teacher, learners written responses to teachers' questions about a story, and a story created by learner but recorded by the teacher (Hussein et al., 2013).

Learner's writing: it is a writing, written independently by a learner. Displaying learner's writing motivate learners to write more since what they have written is displayed for all to see. Learners need to be published and displayed not just marked, graded and put away. This is made possible by reading learner's work aloud, displaying on the walls or compiling into book for classroom library. Learner's writing includes story written by learners, written learner's responses to open ended questions about a story they have read, worksheet that requires learner to include meaningful written contributions and independent learner's writing from other subjects such as math, science, social studies.

Organizing word walls: a word wall is a literacy tool consists of an organized collection of words - usually in alphabetical order - which are displayed in large visible letters on a wall, bulletin board, or other display surface in a classroom. The word wall is designed to be an interactive instrument for learning and contains an array of words that can be used during reading and writing. Word wall is now commonly used in classrooms for teaching phonemic awareness and on-set rimes (Aminu, 2020).

Environmental print: it is found in the everyday environment of the learners. This includes signs, labels and advertisement that learners come across on regular basis outside the school. Learners learn to recognize environmental print through their experiences with it. A child who

points to a bag of cheese and says I want cheese may be using the context rather than the letters to read the word. Teachers should include environmental print in the classroom as it is familiar and meaningful to the learners and assists to create an authentic context for them to learn about print.

Labels: this a process of writing the name of objects and things found in classroom to enable learners recognize that print has meaning. Labeling common object such as tables, chairs, blackboard and others, assist in developing print-rich classroom and helps learner to develop their literacy.

Print-Rich Classroom and Literacy Development

Gerde, Goetsch, and Bingham (2016) presented research-based ideas for how to create and engage children with meaningful print in the classroom environment. The paper outlined ways for creating print related to children's interest, print aligned with current classroom content and print co-created with children. The authors concluded that when teachers actively encourage children to create and engage with print in the classroom environment children have the opportunities to develop and understand that print has meaning and the engagement promote writing literacy in meaningful ways.

Singapore (2013) stated that a print-rich classroom with labels, signs, logos, and other meaningful visual displays enables children to construct meaning about print. Hence, print-rich classroom helps learners understand that print carries meaning and can be used in daily life. It makes them to be curious about the nature of written language, what written words means and motivate them to develop their literacy. Hussein and Ahmed (2013) examined the role of print-rich classroom environment in teaching and learning English language as foreign language effectively at Sudanese

basic schools. The study explained how a print-rich classroom environment can make a classroom a literate and attractive place.

The study hypothesized that print-rich classroom environment encourages learners to acquire literacy skills, increases their exposure to the language, expands teachers' and learners' creativity and make classroom motivating learning place. The population of the study was Sudanese English language teachers in basic schools. Thirty (30) English language teachers were sampled -15 males and 15 females. Questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. Simple percentage was used to analysed the data collected. The authors found that, print-rich classroom environment has great impacts on learning and teaching English language, it encourages and motivates learners to participate in learning and provide opportunity for learners to interact with language.

El Khoury (2011) examined the effect of rich literacy environment in kindergarten 11 class on learners' motivation and how literacy environment enhances learners' motivation. The questions asked were: does a literacy rich environment affect learners' motivation? How a literacy rich environment enhances learners' motivation? The design of the study was case study research design. The participants were private school teachers and learners in Beirut. They consisted of 1 kindergarten II class, 24 learners, aged 5-6, and 8 early childhood teachers. The teachers have taught English for one or more years. The learners were selected from same class but different academic level. The. Learners speak both Arabic and English languages. Nonrandom and convenient sampling were used to select the participants. The instruments for data collection were: participative observation, self-report and interview. The author found that, a

stimulating environment is one of the key elements in the successful development of literacy - talking, listening, reading and writing. Moreover, a rich literacy environment enhances learners' motivation.

3. Methodology

Theoretical/conceptual method was used in the study, and scholarly articles, books, reports were used to source data. The materials used were adequately directed towards investigating the impact of print-rich classroom environment on children's literacy development. However, the key words- literacy and print-rich were used in searching for relevant literatures.

4. Result and Discussion

The findings indicated that print-rich classroom environment is sufficiently effective in assisting and motivating learners to develop their knowledge. However, early grade teachers have the role of creating, displaying and making use of meaningful charts. They can also use co-created prints, functional prints, labels among others in order to make learning environments stimulating, warm and interactive.

Encouraging children to create and engage with print in the classroom environment develops their literacy skills - writing - in meaningful ways (Gerde, et al, 2016). A print-rich classroom helps children construct knowledge about print and motivate them to learn to recognize and read words (Singapore, 2013). Print-rich classroom environment has great impacts on learning and teaching English language, it encourages and motivates learners to participate in learning and provide opportunity for learners to interact with language (Hussein & Ahmed, 2013). Print-rich classroom environment is stimulating and one of the key elements in the successful development of literacy - talking, listening, reading and writing. Moreover, a rich literacy environment enhances learners' motivation (El Khoury,

2011). To achieve a rich- literacy classroom is not difficult but challenging. Due to its dynamic nature, the management must often effect changes in accordance with the needs of the students, especially hat they like, enjoy, and according to what is being taught, not according to what the manager likes or wants.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Early grade teachers as the program of instruction planners need to create necessary print-rich classroom environments for fostering and developing literacy through displaying and making use of meaningful charts, co-created prints, functional prints, labels among others. However, such materials motivate children to record great success in reading, spelling, and writing. Success in literacy development facilitates not only acquisition of knowledge and skills, but also ensure the application of same to solve problems and participate in societal development in future (Jour, Anyachebelu, Anyamene, Adebola, & Adebola, 2011). To achieve the aforementioned, teachers have the role of: ensuring that the classroom environments elicit stable predictable patterns of behavior in children, present and arrange literacy tools in the classroom environments to promote the engagement in literacy events and encouraging the children to participate and interact with the tools provided (Kinkead-Clark, 2012). Further research should empirically test the effectiveness of print-rich classroom environment on promoting children's literacy in early grade in Nigeria. Samuel (2021) noted that a child possesses numerous neurons experiences that of quality. Irrespective of gender divide, the child's future can be determined right from its early age. Therefore, that is with it has become paramount for child to be educated. The researcher used qualitative approach to source the perceptions of

some individuals to understand their views about such an influence and how prepared they were providing quality early life education to the children in Ghana.

Teachers should be provided with the knowledge and awareness about the significance of print-rich classroom environment in teaching. Teachers should be provided with training on how to create meaningful and stimulating print to develop the literacy of their learners. Scaffolding support should be provided to learners to enable them make meaningful connection between print and curriculum. Classroom schedules and activities has to be made in English language. Children should be expose to print in different external environments apart from classroom to enable them interact with environmental print (The Access Centre 2014).

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