Beyond the Courtyard: Exploring Storytelling as an Instructional Method in Ghanaian Classrooms

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Abstract

This paper is based on a research and a paper[1] both of which explored the feasibility of using stories for teaching Natural Science in Ghanaian public basic schools and Ghanaian perspective of drama. The research, conducted in 2012 and 2013, was to complement steps being taken to improve instruction in response to criticism of teaching and to demystify science at the early stages for pupils to nurture interest in the subject. Using interviews, observation, participant observation and content analysis, the paper looks at the various avenues for storytelling and its efficacy as a mode of instruction. Constructivist, ecological and performance theories are adopted to demonstrate the place of storytelling in the classroom, especially at the basic level to improve instruction and nurture innovation, creativity and critical thinking in young minds.

Key Words: Storytelling, Instruction, Courtyard, Classroom, Education.

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[1] This paper is based on an original research carried out for my MPhil thesis and an article (See Kuusangyele, M. 2013*). Stories as a Mode of Instruction: A Module for Teaching Natural Science in Basic 3* (Unpublished M.Phil Thesis, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana) and Ismaila, M. (2018). The Identity and Function of Drama: The Ghanaian Situation. In Quartey, P. Agyei-Mensah, S., Codjoe, S., Aziz Bamba, A. (eds), *Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Transformation in Africa*. Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers.

Introduction

This paper examines how storytelling, an informal instructional method, enhances teaching and learning when incorporated into formal modes of instruction in primary schools. The view of the paper is that storytelling was the primary mode of instruction in traditional societies in Africa for the transmission of skills and knowledge, nurturing of imagination, development of language and communication skills, socialisation and knowledge of audiences' environment. Based on the pedagogical functions of storytelling, the paper reveals the potency of the technique when applied in formal teaching strategies in basic schools.

In order to validate the effectiveness of storytelling as an instructional method beyond the courtyard, a workshop was organised for target teachers at a basic school who were trained on how to use stories to instruct. These teachers were then tasked, using the syllabus, to create stories out of topics they are to teach as a way of incorporating the traditional method of instruction to the formal instruction mode to make their lessons exciting, activity-based and interesting in order to sustain the attention and interest, as well as a means of memory reinforcement of pupils. Science was used in the research for two reasons; to refute the general impression that storytelling is possible as an instructional method only with reading subjects and to nurture the interest of science in the lower classes to demystify the impression that it is a difficult subject. From the workshop, a treatment teacher was selected who created a story from the topic "Water Pollution" in Natural Science to teach a Basic 3 class. Some pupils took up characters in the story as agents of pollution and enacted just as is done in traditional storytelling sessions. The lesson was to let pupils learn the causes of water pollution so the enactment focused on characters defecating in an imaginary river while others swam, fetched water for household use, washed clothes and poured the soapy water and dumped refuse in the river.

During an interactive session at the end of the lesson, an excited pupil said he enjoyed swimming in the river, suggesting that he used imagination and actualised what he did during the role play. One feels that even if this pupil forgets everything about causes of water pollution, he will certainly remember swimming in rivers since learners usually remember their contribution in the learning process. Thus, this paper posits that storytelling, which in the Ghanaian context initially moved from orality to literacy (*The Story Ananse Told, Anowa, The Dilemma of a Ghost, The Marriage of Anansewa*) should now go into the classroom as an instructional method due to its potential to surmount some of the challenges confronting teaching and learning at the basic level over the years.

Reports in the Ghanaian media, education committee reports and research findings reveal deteriorating situations in learning. For instance, in 1994, the Education Review Committee which reviewed the New Education Reform Programme of 1987 reported, among other findings, that the curriculum was overloaded in content and too rigid, thus reducing the effectiveness of teaching and learning (EPA,2010). Writing in favour of inclusive education in Ghana emphasis was made that the "current pedagogical practices are prescriptive, mechanistic and do not value student diversity and different learning styles" (Agbenyega and Deku, 2011:2). The authors' conclusion and the various reports sum up the situation in the Ghanaian classrooms: instructional methodologies in the Ghanaian classrooms are rigid and therefore make little room for learners to explore their potentials. This situation goes against aims to democratise processes of learning (Nicholson, 2009).

Historical Background of Education Instruction in Ghana

Agbenyega and Deku (2011) theorised that instructional methods in Ghana emanate from colonialism and traditional cultures. Borrowing from (Freire, 1973) they used the term "oppressive pedagogy" to explain what pertains in the classroom. According to them, Ghanaians in the colonial period were marginalised by the British in terms of attaining in literacy. Literacy was a tool of supremacy. For this reason when western education was instituted in the then Gold Coast, the purpose was to give 'enough' education to citizens to make it easier for the colonial administration to consolidate their hegemony (Hagan, 2005). The contemporary instructional method, the hierarchical method, in Ghanaian classrooms may be seen as a carry-over from the colonial period when literacy equaled supremacy (Agbenyega & Deku, 2011). Hence the teacher who 'owns' the knowledge 'dishes' out just enough in order to uphold the supremacy. With regard to traditional cultures, Agbenyega and Deku used the kinship system to explain the perpetuation of oppressive pedagogy. They stated that there is a master-subject ideology in the traditional set up which is synonymous with the master-servant concept of the colonial period. They further argued that, in exercising his authority, the king or chief displays his power over his subjects. The subjects obey the kings' directives without questioning and those who violate them are punished. They, however, overlooked the consensus building that existed in the traditional councils, where kings or chiefs consulted with the council of elders before taking a decision.

In support of the above theory of carry-over of instruction methods, a survey revealed that teachers teach the way they were taught (Owu-Ewie,

2008). According to Owu-Ewie, teachers mostly used the lecture method which denotes ownership of the knowledge provided and power over the learner with occasional blending of discussion, demonstration and role play methods. He therefore called on the authorities concerned to take a look at the teacher training institutions. His call is synonymous with an earlier concern about teacher training in Ghana. It was revealed that pre-service teachers are taught with the lecture method so when they also come out to teach, no matter the level at which they find themselves, they use the lecture method (Acheampong, 2001). Owu-Ewie, a trainer of teachers at the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana, in an interview revealed that most teachers have content knowledge but lack methodo-logical knowledge; since they were simply prepared to pass examination to become teachers, less emphasis was on the practical situation in the classroom. Trainers of teachers do agree with their shortfalls but are also constrained. In an interview with Mr. K. Abibro, an Educational Psychol-ogy tutor at the Accra College of Education in June 2012, he explained that the curriculum does not make room for innovations; teachers have a lot to teach within a short time, and if they taught differently, they will not complete their syllabus. He however agreed that does not excuse their teaching strategies as they have long term effect, especially on learn-ers not the teachers.

Concepts of Storytelling

As may be found in other cultures, storytelling in Africa is a process of nurturing life. In this process, listeners are able to appreciate life through experiencing and experience. In the research, as the teacher was doing the narration, some pupils enacted behaviours and actions that lead to water pollution, like urinating and washing of clothes in rivers while the rest of the class observed and listened. The lesson would have been very abstract to the pupils without the activity-based instruction; however, the enact-ment allowed pupils to go through (experiencing) life with pollution and this will impact their future actions around water bodies. The knowledge and skills (experience) pupils acquired from the storytelling session - like language and communication skills, team work and socialisation - showed in answers they provided to questions that were asked after the lesson. Learning through experience during storytelling occurs when lis-teners are made to participate in the activities, such as role playing, sing-ing, dancing and use of proverbs and wise sayings. In addition, the content of the stories may have educational value. Typically, storytelling in Africa is done in the evening or twilight (Kehinde, 2010:3) because apart from the serenity, this is the time when daily chores are over and a

time for relaxation, entertainment and education. Adults tell stories to children; however, in the absence of adults, children usually tell stories to their peers.

In a study of Limba stories in Sierra Leone, Finnegan reveals that "story-telling session could be regarded in a sense as a kind of an 'act of sociability' rather than an organised artistic ceremony" (Finnegan, 1967:65). This means that the storytelling session among the Limba is part of their social orientation, it is a routine activity not a carefully planned artistic ceremony. This submission by Finnegan however failed to take into account the aesthetics in performance, such as the formula of narration which involves trading of riddles by the youth to usher in the narration by an adult. From another perspective, storytelling is seen as an act of narrating a folktale (Quinn, 2006:169). His view is that storytelling is the narration but the content could differ depending on the focus of the narrator. It means when a narrator wishes to recount the exploits of a hero or heroine of a society, the narration would be a legend not a fable. Storytelling could more narrowly be defined as a means of transmitting folktales (Kehinde, 2010:2). He emphasises that folktales are categorised depending on the function they perform in the society and the views of the narrator and audience during the time of performance.

Storytelling is further described as "a broad church and is constantly developing and reinventing itself. It manifests itself in many ways…so when we are talking about storytelling it is often better to talk about tendencies rather than absolutes" (Wilson, 2006:7). What can be deduced from Wilson is that storytelling cannot be restrained to a definition since it is expressed differently depending on the cultural background, motive, location and circumstance under which the rendition takes place. Thus storytelling can be done with a sense of professionalism by people who have been trained in the art, like the griots and griottes in West Africa (Hale, 1998) or as a social activity where people meet at the end of a tiring day to playfully compete in the telling of stories to entertain and educate each other (Finnegan,1967). The treatment teacher, equipped with her training in teaching and the skills from the workshop on storytelling, professionally created a story from the topic *Water Pollution* to educate pupils in Basic 3 on what constitutes pollution. The platform also offered an opportunity for the pupils to experience the art of storytelling, a social activity that unfortunately is losing its place in Ghana.

Theoretical Frame

The paper explores three theories that support storytelling beyond the courtyard. Constructivists advocate for platforms to be created for

learners to experience things for themselves since such experiences help them to build their own understanding. Advocates of constructivism (such as Thakur, 2014, Yilmas, 2008, Schunk, 2003), state that such opportunities foster the inventive and critical instinct of learners. The application of storytelling techniques by the treatment teacher in the classroom meant the movement of the session beyond the traditional Ghanaian courtyards - thus, creating opportunities for pupils to construct their own understanding of what water pollution is through experiencing as advocated by constructivists. When the storytelling went beyond the courtyard to the classroom, the teacher created an enabling environment, making the pupils partners in the learning process and contributors to the end product, that is, knowledge and skills. The opportunity given to the pupils to be partners in the production of knowledge and skills through their enactment nurtured their innovation and creativity. The pupil who demonstrated water pollution through swimming imagined a river and mimed swimming in it to the admiration of his classmates.

Ecological theory reveals that systems of relationship that form a learner's environment have effects on learning (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). According to Bronfenbrenner, systems of relationship such as the exhibition of friendliness, patience and tolerance from teachers aid learning. These relationships take away fear and timidity from learners and instil confidence to enable them acquire knowledge and skills. Storytelling is a collective activity and its success requires collaborative work between the narrator and the listeners who are usually performers of the story. Such a collaborative exercise requires cordial systems of relationship for execution, thus an application of non-hierarchical method. The treatment teacher would not have gotten good responses and participation from the pupils if she had exhibited an aggressive or superior pattern of relationship towards the pupils. Storytelling sessions provide a fertile ground to develop and improve on positive systems of relationship to enhance learning. Pupils were not intimidated in the delivery of their roles and this was due to the relationship the teacher had with them. When systems of relationship are cordial in a learning environment, they break barriers to the acquisition of knowledge and skills.

Anansegoro (Sutherland, 1979) which is grounded in performance theory explores the movement of oral stories from the courtyard to the conventional stage as a way of bringing these traditional stories to life, thereby making them relevant for contemporary society. The introduction of western education diminished storytelling sessions at home, with storytelling having lost its position as the primary mode of instruction. Sutherland's exploration with *Anansegoro* was to preserve and broaden the landscape of oral stories. Scripting an oral story, *The Marriage of*

Anansewa, moved the narration of this story from courtyards of Ghanaian homes to the theatres as a play and into the classrooms as a reading text. Performance theory therefore supports storytelling beyond the courtyard into the classrooms since *Anansegoro* allows innovation and creativity. The treatment teacher was innovative in creating a story from the content of the lesson she taught. The pupils had also exhibited creativity to make their enactment of the story believable.

Storytelling as a Mode of Instruction

The creation of a conducive atmosphere for learning derives from the type of instructional methods employed. Storytelling provides an accommodating arena for learning as pupils are given a platform to explore. As has been established earlier, storytelling has been an old form of instruction before formal education was instituted in Ghana and its effectiveness in the traditional setting has informed some educationists to adopt it in formal institutions. For instance, psychologists have found stories useful in instruction because they assist in generating interest in learners and aid in recalling events (Green, 2004). Nursing education also makes use of storytelling as a mode of instruction to emphasise student-centred method of teaching and also to personalise patient care (Cangelosi & Whitt, 2006). Educational research has revealed that the military, medical schools, law and business schools incorporate storytelling to aid in illustrative teaching (Andrews, Hull & DeMeester, 2010). All these research motivated the study, but the most inspiring were concepts designed by Mathematics teachers to make the teaching and learning of mathematics interesting and easier (Schiro, 2004, Mastin, 2005). The successes with Mathematics showed the possibility with Science, another subject that students shy away from. If pupils through instruction develope interest in Science in an early stage of their education, it would go a long way to demystify the subject.

Schiro, a storyteller, provided The *Wizard Tale* for a Mathematics teacher who employed a strategy of thematic narration in teaching algorithms in fourth grade. Even though *The Wizard Tale* is a long story which without ingenuity would be said to be inappropriate to be used in the classroom, by adopting thematic narration, the teacher used nine days to finish it. It meant that each day she ended her lesson on a theme to use to continue the next lesson with; that is to say that she mapped the story. Mapping is a useful strategy for recalling chronological sequence of events for retelling (Jennings, 1980). There is the circular and linear mapping; the circular is used when the narrative involves a situation where events in the story begin at a location and end at the same location. The

illustration below is an example of a circular mapping.

"The Hungry Lion"

A linear map is used when a series of events are built on from previous ones, below is an illustration.

"Who Has the Greatest Love" (Berry, 1991:62)

On a bush path. A man is travelling with his three wives. The man gets a snake bite and dies. A wife also makes the snake bite her and dies.

Another wife decides to guard the bodies from wild animals. The last wife searches for means to bring them back to life. An old woman provides her with an enchanted cow tail swish. Using the enchanted cow tail swish, the third wife touches the bodies three times as instructed by the old woman.

They are all brought back to life.

The choice of map therefore depends on the type of narrative to be done and the objective of the lesson. The thematic narration influenced the adoption of a linear map to suit conditions in the classroom. The school runs the double-shift system and teachers sometimes do not finish a lesson. The linear map narration enables thematic narration so a lesson can be stopped on a theme to be continued in the next lesson. Using the teaching syllabus for Natural Science for Basic 3 and textbooks, content of lessons were used to create thematic narration for lessons. Below is an

example of a thematic narration on the topic "Soil"

> Two neighbours; Tree and Soil, are arguing over who plays the most important role in the community.

> As each one insists on being better than the other, Rock intervenes. To satisfy both parties, Rock asks Tree and Soil to enumerate their roles in the community.

> Tree says she is used for wood, provides shade and bears fruit for people to eat when they are hungry.

> Soil insists that he is the most important among the two since he provides support base for Tree. According to Soil, Tree gets food through him. Soil continues that he also provides shelter for ants, worms and rodents. Soil argues further that all the buildings in the community are made from him.

> When Soil realises that he has other audiences apart from Tree and Rock, he takes the opportunity to educate his audience about himself. Tree, feeling that Soil is showing off walks away.

> Soil explains to his audience that they are three siblings; Sand, Clay and Loam. Sand is mostly used for building, Clay for moulding things like pots and statues and Loam for planting.

> Soil reiterates that he and his siblings accommodate ants, worm, rodents and water.

Each row above represents a thematic narration, thus, if a teacher runs out of time, the narration can end on a theme to be continued in the next lesson.

Mastin designed the concept of *storigamy*, a combination of stories and the Japanese game origami. The concept was to assist students generate an interest in Mathematics which is generally considered a difficult subject. Mastin marketed the concept by organising workshops for Mathematics teachers to train them in the use of the concept to make it widespread in the United States. Thus moving storytelling and culturally based games to wider listeners and participants. During interviews with teachers, it was discovered that storytelling as an art is in danger of extinction in Ghanaian societies because a majority of the teachers in their late 20s and early 30s had not experienced the art before. This discovery

can largely be attributed to urbanisation and technology. The workshop on storytelling was organised for the teachers to share the skills with them to enhance teaching and learning.

In the traditional storytelling session, the narrator depends on the audience's contribution and participation for the success of his/her performance. It is therefore participatory. In the classroom when storytelling is used as an instructional method, the teacher could become the narrator and depend on the audience, that is, the pupils for the success of his/her "performance" which is the teaching. The nature of storytelling is such that in one moment a person is a narrator and in another a listener so the teacher can also become a listener to pupils and together provide improvisation and interjections to complement the narrations. These improvisation and interjections provide the freedom the pupils have to contribute to the teaching as partners of the process. It is therefore impossible for the teacher to exhibit the "master-servant" attitude, thereby creating an improved learning environment for pupils to explore their abilities. Teaching plays a very crucial role in imparting knowledge and skills to learners hence the development of procedures to guide the teacher. These procedures, referred to as instructional methods, provide a frame within which the teacher instructs learners to acquire knowledge and skills (Siedentop, 1991). This requires the teacher to be imaginative in the selection of instructional methods to educate his/her learners. The inability of a teacher to select suitable instructional methods leads to ineffective learning, consequently resulting in learners' failure to make their own discoveries in the learning environment.

Storytelling throughout African traditional societies teaches, admonishes and entertains (Utoh-Ezeajugh, 2010). In addition to its functions of educating, transmitting information and instructing, storytelling also functions as pedagogy. In indigenous societies, "storytelling is a very important part of the educational process. It is through stories that customs and values are taught and shared" (Bear 2000:81). The implication is that storytelling had been a primary pedagogical tool used by the elderly to instruct the younger generation, preserve culture and instill values before western education was introduced. First and foremost, storytelling serves as a means for the transmission of skills for survival. In oral societies, building of houses, hunting, fishing, cooking, making of tools, making of clothes, molding, weaving, medicine and religious practices are transmitted orally through storytelling (UNESCO, 2008). As there are no written manuals to instruct people on how to acquire and impart such skills, storytelling is one of the means through which skills are transmitted in oral societies. Also stories are a repository of wisdom from the elderly because "'story-telling'… is a public and not a private activity, and through these

public occasions the tales are not only jointly enjoyed and performed but also 'bring wisdom' to the members of the group and publicly carry the story forward so that others too may know it" (Finnegan, 1967:66). She re-iterates further that:

> a story is told to 'give someone sense', (thi funuŋ) showing him in a par-able either that he had acted wrongly himself or that he, and others, should try to act in a certain way in the future. Instead of telling the of-fender directly and immediately where he had gone wrong, a good speaker should 'go round long in parables' first (a silɔkɔ haaŋ ka thabɔrɔ tha) and in this way find his way more surely to the man's heart (Finne-gan, 1967:30).

Therefore during storytelling sessions, the audience is taught wisdom through parables, wise sayings, riddles and proverbs. In addition to this, language and public speaking skills are also acquired. The way and man-ner in which the storyteller selects words and narrates events in the story instruct his/her audience on how to communicate properly. Among the Akans of Ghana, when a person communicates well in a public gathering, there is usually a comment like "*waano hwam*" literally meaning "your mouth smells sweet" or "*wonim kasa*", also in Akan, which is literally translated as "you know how to talk". "Good speaking" is a well sought after attribute and is usually learnt through such gatherings as storytell-ing sessions (Yirenkyi, 1991). In addition, the audience is instructed about its environment, the fauna and flora, as stories are mostly set within a ge-ographical location that depicts these features. Those who are not familiar with such settings through the description in the narration are duly in-structed about their environment. The mimicry of the characteristics of animals employed by a storyteller, for instance, gives a fair idea to an au-dience who has never been exposed to wildlife the opportunity to visual-ise.

Among the Xhosa of South Africa and the Limba of Sierra Leone, sto-rytelling cannot be complete without the role of the "repeater". This per-son assists the storyteller to make the audience live the story. The "repeater" also serves a vital purpose in instruction by repeating what the storyteller says for emphasis to make sure that the point made is heard by the audience. The Limba refers to this person as "the answerer" who is appointed by the storyteller before the narration begins: he often

> …repeats the important points or proper names of the characters in an undertone to emphasise them, or interpolates clarifying words such as the name of the character speaking or acting at the time, especially if the

audience seems at all confused, with reiterations of key phrases at dramatic moments, brief questions when the point is a little obscure, or prompting if the teller appears to hesitate for a name or sequence (Finnegan, 1967:68)

Although the primary role of the repeater or answerer is to emphasise points and also move the plot (Scheub, 1975), the role instructs the audience on how to speak well in public. In some cultures in Africa, in Ghana for instance, people who speak well are made linguists. The linguist is a very important personality in the courts in some traditional African societies as well as during contraction of marriages. A good linguist can negotiate well so a family with a good linguist will always excel in negotiation. Although there is specific training for linguists, but exposure to good speaking during storytelling sessions make the training a revision for the trainer and the trainee. It is possible that certain basic skills required for public speaking, like language skills and confidence, would have been acquired during storytelling sessions by a trainee hence a revision for the trainee and minimal work for the trainer. Furthermore, storytelling instructs the audience to be analytical. Before a storytelling session begins, the audience are put through mental exercise with riddles as is the case among the Limba (Finnegan, 1967). A participant therefore has to be intelligent in order to decode a riddle. Among the Limba the younger ones learn from the elderly as they provide answers to riddles. Those who are not literate in the art through the storytelling session get instructed. Dilemma tales also offer the opportunity for instruction for the audience to be analytical. Such stories give members of the audience the opportunity to explore and develop their mental faculties.

It is discouraging, however, to note that in spite of the numerous pedagogical functions of storytelling in informal settings, studies have shown that it is yet to be fully utilised in formal institutions in most African countries (Duveskog, Tedre, Sedano, & Sutinen, 2012; Abatan, 2011). According to Duveskog *et al*, formal institutions in Tanzania have shown less inclination to incorporating storytelling into their curriculum. In their effort to let pupils learn through storytelling, the researchers organised workshops for selected schools on how to use stories to learn. However, the study would have been very comprehensive if teachers had rather been the focus of the workshop. Since the study was advocating for the inclusion of storytelling in the curriculum, who should be drawn into the advocacy campaign if not teachers. If teachers are trained to use storytelling as pedagogy, even if it is in the curriculum or not, there is the possibility of using it. This is because the curriculum gives the content of the subjects to be taught, but it is the teacher who selects appropriate

instructional methods to teach the subjects. Therefore training pupils instead of teachers on the pedagogical functions of storytelling was a misplaced priority. Abatan also complains about inadequate opportunities for the use of stories in the classrooms in Nigeria because there is no provision for it in the curriculum. Information Abatan gathered from teachers through questionnaire indicated that most teachers are not familiar with appropriate stories. Abatan's finding is not limited to Nigeria. It was discovered during the research that most teachers below the age of thirty-five (35) have not experienced traditional storytelling sessions before and therefore did not know stories due to urbanisation and technology. The workshop which was organised for the teachers was therefore very insightful. Knowledge and skills acquired from the training empowered the treatment teacher to develop a lesson note based on storytelling techniques.

Table 1: A section of basic 3 natural science syllabus

Unit	Specific objectives	Content	Teaching and Learning Activities	Evaluation
Unit 2 Water Pollution	The pupils will be able to: 5.2.1 identify ways water is made unsafe for use	Causes of water pollution: Dumping of waste Sewage Washing Swimming Chemicals for fishing etc.	Let pupils discuss different ways by which water is made unsafe for use through dumping of waste, sewage, washing, swimming, chemicals for fishing etc.	Why is it not good to use another person's towel, sponge, toothbrush and blade?

Table 1 is a replica of the Basic 3 syllabus for Natural Science on the topic, *Water Pollution.* It is from this that the teacher in Basic 3 modeled her instruction using a story for her lesson notes. It can be deduced from the syllabus that provision is made for teachers to engage pupils in activities that will enhance thinking and creativity, making teaching and learning enjoyable rather than something to be endured. In the fourth column of the table, teachers are supposed to engage pupils in some activities; this is the opportunity for creative teaching where storytelling was used to make the pupils understand the topic better, indicating the treatment teacher had put the training she received from the workshop to use.

Table 2 on the next page is the lesson note the treatment teacher prepared on *Water Pollution* using a story. It can be observed from the teacher's lesson note that the frame provided by GES to teach was used alright but the teacher used her own skills acquired from the training to develop the lesson. A discovery that shows that the teacher has the room to manoeuver in the preparation of his/her lesson notes to teach. This discovery revealed that it was possible for stories to be designed based on the syllabus as a module for teaching Natural Science in Basic 3.

Week Ending: 20/07/2012
Subject: Natural Science
Reference: Natural Science Syllabus Pg. 33 Pu BK 4 p. 71

The two tables represent two different templates for teaching lesson and strategies. Table 1 is a teaching lesson plan which the Ministry of Education in Ghana provides for teachers to use in teaching. Though there is room for creative teaching such as storytelling as depicted in column 5 of the table, creative teaching strategy is not common in most Ghanaian classrooms. The regular teaching style in most Ghanaian classrooms is either lecture or question and answer method. This regular teaching strategy, the lecture method, is what was employed by the Basic 5 teacher who was the control subject in the study. In this teaching on *HIV/AIDS*, the teacher explained to the class how the HIV virus is contracted, then wrote these systematically on the board for pupils to copy into their notebooks, followed by questions on how HIV/AIDS is transmitted to do as class work. The pupils simply repeated what the teacher wrote on the board in answering the questions. This style of teaching is what Freire (1973) criticised, in his 'banking theory' of education, which he argued that teachers simply deposit knowledge into the 'accounts' (learners) for increase in the account.

Table 2: The treatment teacher's lesson note based on storytelling

Day/ Duration	Topic/Subtopic/ Aspect	Objectives/ R.P.K	Teacher-Learner Activities	Teaching Learning Materials	Core Points	Evaluation/ Remarks
DAY Monday DURATION 60 Minutes	TOPIC Water Pollution	R.P.K Pupils know of some sources of water. OBJECTIVE By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to: Identify ways in/through which water can be made unsafe to drink	INTRODUCTION Let pupils do a warm up exercise ACTIVITY ONE Tell pupils a story based on the topic to be treated Guide pupils to role-play the story in the course of telling the story	Storytelling and role-play	Once there was a village called Ashaley Botwe. In this village they had no pipes; their only source of water was a river. It was from this river that the community got water for everything. However in this same river the community members swim, dump refuse, and defecate. One day Esi, Adzo and Naa went to fetch water and met their friends Joe swimming and Nii dumping refuse downstream and urinating.	Mention 3 ways of polluting water

Thus the "account" plays no role than just receiving. The control teacher did not create room for the pupils to participate in the creation or construction of knowledge on how HIV/AIDS is transmitted. This style of teaching failed to create the needed environment for the pupils to explore and contribute to the learning process; the pupils simply sat and listened to the teacher who is traditionally perceived as the owner of the knowledge.

Table 2, on the other hand, represents a teaching lesson plan prepared with the use of storytelling which was done by the treatment teacher. In contrast with what the control teacher did, the treatment teacher for Basic 3 used a story she created to prepare her lesson notes to teach a lesson on *Water Pollution* as illustrated in Table 2. In the training workshop on how storytelling could be used in teaching, the resource person Ms Mary Yirenkyi emphasised the importance of warm-up exercises or ice-breakers before the beginning of lessons. According to her, these activities help to calm nerves, break inhibitions, and anything that could obstruct attention. Relying on this knowledge, the treatment teacher introduced a simple but effective warm-up exercise for the pupils to do. This exercise involved stretching of arms, legs and shaking their bodies. The brief nature of the exercise notwithstanding, it was useful; the pupils were relaxed, started laughing and were actively involved in the instructions that the teacher was giving. This scenario is similar to the traditional storytelling session where songs, riddles and dances are performed to break shyness and create an enabling environment for knowledge transmission.

Figure 1: Pupils and Treatment Teacher Warming Up

Figure 2: Pupils and Treatment Teacher doing warm-up exercise

The warm-up exercise was followed by the narration of the story the treatment teacher created with the content on *Water Pollution*. The class was made to understand that they were in a storytelling session which required their participation. The treatment teacher concretised the content of the topic by encouraging the pupils to demonstrate how water gets polluted. Thus characters were created in the class to enact how water gets polluted. The space in front of the class, which is usually the territory of the teacher, was demarcated as a river. Excited volunteer actors took up roles such as people fetching water from the river, dumping refuse in the river, urinating in the river, washing clothes in the river and swimming. It was evident that some of the pupils had never been to the river side to fetch water as such could not demonstrate the fetching of the water from the river so their mates had to show them how to do it. It could be observed from the expressions on their faces that pupils who went through these activities at home as part of their house chores and way of living were surprised at their mates who could not. The lesson therefore offered an opportunity for pupils to know about other social realities in addition to the science lesson they learnt.

Figure 3: Treatment Teacher using storytelling as a mode of instruction
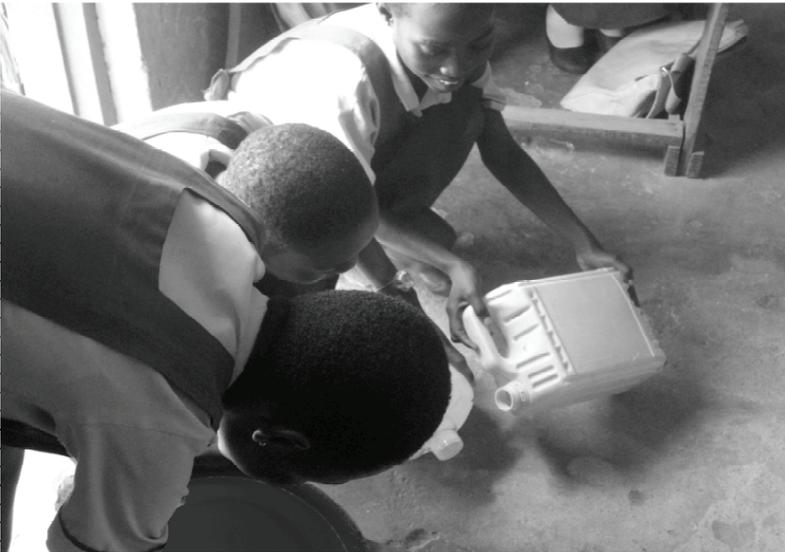
Figures 4 & 5: Enactment of the story - pupils swimming above and fetching water below in the same river.

The teacher then told the class that what they saw their mates do in the river are the causes of water pollution. The pupils were excited; it did not seem to them that they were in the classroom because the boundary between them and the teacher was broken due to the style of teaching which was employed – storytelling . There was participation in the teaching process from both pupils and teacher; knowledge was shared between the teacher and pupils because each party contributed to the lesson by either telling the story or acting out the story. Those who acted could easily mention what activity caused pollution of water and those who observed the enactment mentioned their mates' names and linked what they did in the enactment as causes of water pollution. With this, anytime they are asked to explain how water is polluted, it will be an effortless exercise since they contributed in the construction of the knowledge.

The above teaching styles from the control and treatment teachers had different immediate impact on the pupils. Because the control teacher constructed the knowledge on HIV/AIDS and passed it on to the pupils, they reproduced what was given to them, that is, using the same points enumerated on the board to answer questions. On the other hand, the treatment teacher involved the pupils in the process of constructing knowledge through the enactment of how water gets polluted. The pupils in answering questions on water pollution relied on the experience they gained from the role play and observing the activities of pollution. Thus, they used their own vocabulary to answer the questions, making them own the knowledge, which they will not forget because the owner of an item never forgets what it looks like.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that storytelling sessions have gone beyond the courtyards of traditional Ghanaian homes. The technique of storytelling which was adopted by a treatment teacher was used to create a story from a topic in Natural Science, *Water Pollution*, and got pupils to enact the story while she narrated. Sutherland's innovation with *Anansegoro* which produced *The Marriage of Anansewa* moved storytelling to the theatres as a play and to the classrooms as a reading text. Storytelling has also broken boundaries elsewhere and is being used by psychologists, nurses, mathematicians, the military and educationists to enhance teaching and learning. The paper reveals that storytelling has been a classic mode of instruction used to instruct audiences to be analytical, creative, to speak well in public, among other things. Basically, storytelling dwells on practical teaching and learning, and as such gives vivid explanation of issues to learners. When stories are created from topics to be taught in the class,

ideas are personified for the abstract to be concretised. It is not surprising therefore that research on education has found it still relevant and useful in formal learning settings. The innovation by one of the pioneer literary artists in Ghana and the exploration of storytelling as a source material for teaching by authorities in various disciplines indicate that it has moved beyond its traditional setting, the courtyard to the classrooms. The validity of its success in the classroom through various studies proves that it is possible for stories to be adopted as a mode of instruction in Ghanaian classrooms, especially as the syllabus makes provision for it. This transformation in knowledge delivery is necessary to make up for some of the challenges confronting teaching in Ghanaian public schools.

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