



Audio-visual to textual account of the child nurturing and education practices of Mrs Janet Okocha

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Abstract

This study analysed the customary child nurturing and education system as practiced in the Ikwerre ethnic nation of Nigeria by Mrs Janet Okocha. The researcher adopted the ethnographic approach by generating a decade of video data captured during story based songs and dance oriented child education moments of Mrs Janet Okocha while living her normal life. An analysis of the video data indicates an emphasis on emotional facilitation of learning as well as the constructivist approach. This is evidenced in the use of songs that convey the content of the lesson as well as artistic dance steps and gestures that make the lesson memorable while retaining the attention of the learners. It is recommended that worthy traditional values and child nurturing practices be revived and integrated into the Nigerian educational system.

Keywords: account, Audio-visual, practices, education

Introduction

One popular statement of historians holds that “when a journey man forgets where he is coming from, he is most likely to miss his destination”. And discussing the importance of history, Crabtree (2001) ^[2] observed that “our view of history shapes the way we view the present, and therefore dictates what answers we offer existing problems”. No wonder the Chinese hold firm to a political philosophy that is hinged on their history. In the words of Peng, (2017) ^[4] “The state of contemporary Chinese politics is closely connected to Chinese history. The revolutionary movements, social restructuring and state -building that have occurred in China for over a century are linked to this specific history and reality” In truth, the experiences of the past guide a people in formulating enduring policies and procedures of task performance which form the practices that become acculturated into societal activities in order to achieve the expectations of the society. No wonder Peng (2017) ^[4] further stated that “there is no doubt of the importance of studying modern state-building in China from the dimensions of history and institutions, process and structure”. It therefore holds that when a society that thrives in the application of modern theories of development and perpetuation of cultural heritage fails to achieve expectations, there is the need for an assessment of the extent to which processes of development and their contemporary educational practices aligns with the historical heritage of the people. The inability of the Nigerian nation to imbue overall competence in task performance and attitudinal objectives in the citizens through her educational system has led educational planners and policy makers to adopt different forms of educational system. This was aptly captured by Olaniyan, (2012) ^[8] when he observed that “The major reason for the change of system is to produce graduates who will possess skills in information communication technology (ICT) and become less dependent on employers of labour after completing school. They would acquire sufficient skills to become self-employed and employers of labour” Reflections on the pre-

colonial era of the Nigerian society reveal that the nation enjoyed an enduring state of sanity, morality, stability and national consciousness that is incomparable with the high level of social decadence, restiveness and potential state failure that readily confront the Nigerian nation today. In the words of one social commentator, education can still be relied upon to salvage the nation. And a review of the traditional pre-colonial educational system in Nigeria reveals that the ancient kingdoms that made up the Nigerian nation had their customary educational practices before the advent of the western educational system. Our aged mothers and fathers in different communities who did not have the opportunity to obtain western education were duly trained in the customary educational system. They were able to live sustainably. They were duly equipped with the requisite knowledge and skills as well as the emotional and psycho social abilities to live successfully in the society. Though most of their children are schooled in western education, they were able to imbue their children with the customary norms and values of their respective ethnic nations. And their lifestyles remain learning objects and models of character, worthy of emulation as well as objects for the enthronement of sanity and the requisite decent attitudes that the Nigerian nation earnestly desires for her citizens It is therefore appropriate to reflect on the lifestyles of these elderly citizens with a view to identify virtues that stand out as monuments of the past, with the potential to address and reform the present in order to fashion a future of decent minded citizens and a stable nation. It is in this vein that this study attempts to reflectively identify the teaching and learning strategies that noble elderly citizens of our local communities utilised in the training and education of their children and wards. Actually, formal education is not the major yardstick for selection of the individual whose lifestyle is the object of this study. The major consideration is that the candidate must be a progressive and noble minded member of the society. He/she must have contributed to societal wellbeing, either at the family, community and local government level. He/she must have nurtured his

children/wards into maturity as noble minded members of the society.

The study shall analyse the child nurturing strategies utilised by these elderly citizens to ascertain the extent to which they:

- Promote positive affective orientations
- Possess the requisite learner engagement potentials
- Facilitate the application of knowledge into real life problem situations

Aim of the study

The study shall ascertain the learner engagement potentials of the teaching strategies adopted by Mrs Janet Okocha in her interaction with her children and relatives and the extent to which such strategies facilitate cognitive and affective learning outcomes.

Objectives of the study

The study shall achieve the following objectives

1. Identify the particular teaching strategies that Mrs Janet Okocha applies in her interaction with her children and wards and the attributes of the strategies.
2. Ascertain the learner engagement potentials of the strategies
3. Ascertain the extent to which the strategies can facilitate the achievement of cognitive and affective learning outcomes

Brief Educational biography of Mrs. Janet Okocha

The educational biography of Mrs. Janet Okocha reveals that her parents were strict disciplinarians. Her father, a wealthy yam farmer of his time and a traditional ruler, possessed both economic and political power. He and his beloved wife never exposed their precious daughter, Sunday, a princess of Rumuchukwunwanya lineage of Ozuoba, the



Fig 1: Mrs. Janet Nene Okocha

ancestral capital of Akpor kingdom to a strange educational system of the white man. She was duly nurtured in the norms of womanhood in accordance with the customs of the Ikweres. She was quite informed on the etiquettes of feminine roles in a royal household as well as the skills of farming, trading and the management of the domestic affairs

of the home. Nene, as she was fondly called, attended the Bible study sessions of the Anglican Church where she worshipped the almighty God, and she was duly tutored on the noble roles of family members using the family of Joseph, Mary and Jesus as a model. Nene was not lacking in knowledge of the role of the woman in home building and child upbringing as well as the customary roles of the woman in community leadership. Her regular association with her maternal kinsmen, the Rumumanyaikpokwus of Choba also exposed her to experiential knowledge gains and expanded her horizons of thoughts and skilfulness in problem solving such that she developed the confidence and ability to manage problematic situations

Critical virtues of Mrs Janet Okocha; Love for peaceful Neighbourliness

Nene's love for peaceful co-existence knows no bounds. She is ready to lose her rights and possessions just to ensure that she is at peace with her neighbours. This desire to live peacefully with every person led her to a philosophy of conflict avoidance which she sermonises in songs and dances whenever the opportunity of such admonitions presents itself. In her words

"whenever your relative, husband, mate or friend tries to cheat you, pretend that you do not know. It is better that you feign ignorance of your rights. If you try to claim your rights, then be ready for trouble". (See Utube link) Song and dance of Nwunye digi megide wo gi...

Nene further explained that the joy you derive by living peacefully with your neighbours even when they rub you your rights outweighs the hostility and emotional trauma you experience when you retain your rights but have to contend with ill-wills and conflict ridden relationship with your neighbours.

Mrs Janet Okocha's unique teaching strategies in child nurturing

Mrs Janet Okocha has very unique strategies for presenting insightful content and advice to her children and associates. Whenever an opportunity of merry and joyous interaction avails, Nene, as she was fondly called, would tactically present her philosophy of conflict avoidance through joyous songs and admirable

dance steps. Reasoning that the joy and merry of the moment is made possible because conflict and the associated acrimony are absent, she would then utilise the joyous mindset so created and her songs and dance steps to drive home



Fig 2

the message of peaceful cohabitation. Even when conflict seem to arise, Nene would assuage a conflict ridden scenario with her songs, dance steps and smiles by redirecting attention from the object of conflict to her blissful emotion-filled intervention. Indeed, the very unique dance steps are only associated with Mrs Janet Okocha.



Fig 3: Nene with grand children in songs/dance oriented teaching session



Fig 4: Nene in a dance session

Whenever she steps up to sing and dance, her wisdom, sense of artistry and the message content of her songs arouses positive emotions. Every person is poised to listen in admiration. By admiring her dancing style, listening to her songs and appreciating the message content, the individual inevitably internalises the message and cultivates value for peaceful neighbourliness. Truly, this is a unique teaching strategy. It is actually a meta teaching strategy because it incorporates the features of the constructivist's story based teaching approach and also appeals to psychomotor performance skills.



Fig 5: Nene dancing with friend

The aesthetics of dance, the joy of songs and rhythms of music, and a multitasking capability that combines all these features to communicate virtuous content aimed at equipping the learner with cognitive and affective understandings and capabilities can only be associated with individuals that bear the mark of a genius. No wonder everyone who encounters Mrs Janet Okocha perceives her as a learning object and the memories of such encounter, insightful understandings and learning gains remain indelibly etched in the person's memory.

Methods

Adopting an ethnographic approach, this study relied on video sceneries that the researcher captured from moments of interaction that Nene had with her children, wards, grandchildren, fellow women and associates. It particularly centred on the video clips of the moments that were imbued with teaching and learning interaction. The captured moments were not specifically set aside for Nene to teach. They are activities that naturally occurred while she lived her normal life.



Fig 6: Nene in story telling session with grand children



Fig 7: Nene with Daughter in law

These activities prompted her into reflections and she responded with songs and dances as well as explanatory comments and admonitions which she formally directed to her children or associates as she found appropriate. The video shots actually represent over a decade of interactions that Nene had with her children, grand children, wards, associates and relatives. These activities actually happened during celebrative moments and remarkable family activities which the researcher documented for the family of the subject as video records. Reflecting on her life experiences during such family activities, Nene was prompted into thoughts on her moments of sorrow as well as moments of joy. But more importantly she expressed the learning gains of such moments as insights and outcomes of her life experiences in the belief that her children and grand children would imbibe the lessons there-in and live harmoniously with neighbours.

Sampling Procedure

The study adopted a purposive sampling procedure to identify members of the public who possess the requisite qualities. One of such persons identified in Choba community of Obio/Akpor LGA of Rivers State is Mrs. Janet Sunday Wada Okocha (nee Ikegwuru), popularly known as Nene.

Video as data

Discussing the use of video for research, Jewitt (2012) [5] noted that “video is particularly productive for data collection when exploring the social organisation and unfolding of interaction over time, particularly where there is an interest in the use of gesture, bodily movement, interaction with objects and other forms of multimodal communication more generally” And in what McDermott and Goldman (2007) call data discovery, they noted that video provides avenue to expand the analysis of events such that, through the process, video becomes data rather than information. And discussing the ability of video to preserve the sequential structure of interactions, Knoblauch, Schnettler and Raab, (2006:19) [6], noted that “by providing detailed record of the gaze, expression, body posture, gesture of an event, video enables researchers using video data to rigorously and systematically examine resources and practices through which participants in interaction build their social activities and how their talk, facial expression, gaze, gesture, and body elaborate one another”

Analysis

A review of Nene’s interaction with her children, grand children, wards, daughters’ in-law, relatives and associates reveals the application of the following teaching and learning strategies.

- The Story based approach.

Nene utilised narratives to tell the experiences she had in life. This includes the presentation of learning insights in songs that summarize the gains of such experiences.

- Dance oriented teaching

Nene utilised songs and accompanying dance steps to capture and engage the attention of the listener on her demonstration.

- Non verbal communication

Other visual components of Nene’s demonstrations include gestures and the accompanying non verbal facial expressions that she used to enhance communication.

Testimonies

Nene’s children and daughters’ in law testify that by virtue of her admonitions, they have internalised the need to relate cordially with people such that whenever a challenge that tended to mar relationship with neighbours occurs, they remember Nene’s admonitions to stay out of trouble. They immediately recall the songs that encourage one to ignore the tendency to get angry and focus on the benefits of living peacefully with neighbours. Nene’s dance steps also come to mind as complimentary visuals that accompany her admonitions as well as the mindset of joy and peace that she desires in the family of her husband, late Mr. Gabriel Okocha

Conclusion

The analysis of video data reveals that Mrs. Janet Okocha was quite affaective oriented in her teaching approach. By the use of story based strategies, and songs, the burden of learning was no more perceived as a task to be performed but as a social event. And by the integration of dance steps, the event became more memorable and entertaining such that the content thereof could recall as the learners remember the songs and the visible memory of her dance steps. Her gestures, facial expressions and content of songs also enhance the joy of an entertaining social event, the memory of which remains a treasure to the learner. And when confronted with real life challenge that relates with the content, the learner would automatically recall the memories of Nene’ lessons as well as the content, and thus apply him/herself cogently in problem solving in accordance with the content of the lesson.

Recommendation

It is hereby recommended that worthy traditional values and customary child nurturing practices be revived and integrated into the Nigerian educational system.

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