

Storytelling as an Effective Educational Tool in Primary Education in Rural Areas of Bangladesh: Teachers' Perspective

Durdana Chowdhury² & Dr. Taposh Kumar Biswas¹

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the effectiveness of storytelling as a strategy to improve the teaching-learning process for primary school students in Bangladesh's rural areas. The goal of this research is to examine the teachers' perceptions of the use of storytelling as an educational technique, the degree to which storytelling is employed in educating students, and the impact of storytelling on the teaching-learning process. The qualitative technique is used to acquire information from the respondents in this study. A group of primary school teachers from government primary schools in Ukhiya is interviewed by the researcher s. A number of interview questions were used in order to get information on the perception of the teachers on storytelling and the importance of storytelling from their perspective. The results of the interview session are used to determine how storytelling affects the teaching process in the eyes of the teachers. The finding section of this study includes the major findings of this study. The results indicate that most of the primary teachers in remote areas of Bangladesh prefer to use storytelling as an alternative to textbook content. Moreover, the teachers incorporate storytelling to enhance the learner's language skills and motivation. It is suggested that the teachers should use a variety of stories to increase the students' creative and linguistic skills. It is also suggested that the teachers are positive about getting training on storytelling in order to improve their speech, accent, and storytelling delivery.

Key Words: Storytelling, language skills, teaching primary,

Corresponding Email taposh.biswas@du.ac.bd

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Introduction

Stories have been used as a form of instruction from the beginning of time. Stories are a natural method of thinking and learning. From our childhood, we are learning through Aesop's fables, fairy stories, and family history even before we begin formal schooling. Some academics have stated that tales are the source of all knowledge (Schank & Abelson, 1995). Stories can help the students visualize the contents easily and make the learning process comfortable for the learners.

Listening to a story and learning from it is a skill that learners gain at a young age. People continue to learn through stories throughout their lives. Stories support us in knowing who we are, why we are here, what aims we should outline, and the roles we play in our lives throughout our whole lifetime. In today's world, stories are frequently utilized as a means of education, empowerment, and recreation. Stories may also be seen as the windows into the human experience, offering alternate truths or teaching people how to look at reality in new ways. Political and religious leaders have used storytelling throughout recorded history to pass their wisdom and experiences to their followers.

Stories keep a long-lasting effect on human minds. Students successfully reflect on the materials that have been communicated in an engaging manner, and the knowledge gained as a result stays in their minds and hearts for a long time thereafter. As stated by Boud and colleagues (1985), as referenced by McDrury and Alterio (2001), reflection is "a general word for those intellectual and emotional processes in which people engage to analyze their experiences with the goal of bringing about new knowledge and appreciation." Because some instructors have expressed difficulty in conveying material in an engaging manner that is reflective of their student's learning, this solution has been proposed. It is the primary purpose of this study to address the use of storytelling to enhance the teaching and learning process in general. In order to enhance teaching techniques and offer student's effective learning, it is necessary to investigate the use of storytelling. Among the issues examined in this research are the perception of storytelling itself in relation to the teaching and learning process, the duties of teachers as storytellers, and the process in which the information is conveyed. Recently, there has been a revival of interest in the use of storytelling in the classroom (Dailey, 1994). It is anticipated that the research of using storytelling to educate children would have a range of effects and results, which will be discussed more below. It is the goal of this study to contribute to the field of knowledge management as well as other relevant areas of knowledge by exploring and studying the impact of using storytelling to educate students in the classroom. The findings of this paper will provide feedback to teachers. It will also provide them with some important information on whether the use of storytelling will promote the success of knowledge management tools in the classroom. Teachers will benefit from this information. . Moreover, the results may support the teachers in improving their strategy for helping their learners better understand the material that they have been given throughout the class.

It will not only help to improve the implementation of knowledge management, but it will also help to identify the present practices or status of knowledge management in the area of education.

The teachers who have some previous knowledge of using storytelling as an instructional technique are the participants of the study. The available primary school teachers were selected as participants of the interview. There is a possibility that the subject's perspective will vary as everyone's experiences are different. As a consequence, the goal of this study is not to generalize findings, but rather to give extensive descriptions and interpretations of data acquired during the classroom integration of storytelling. The research was done in a rural location. So, there's also a possibility that the participants' experiences may differ from those of other remote region teachers, as well as urban teachers. The findings might vary according to the number of participants as well.

Problem Statement

Stories can be used as an instructional aid because they are easy to remember and interesting to listen to and read. Stories help us recall information more easily and retain it for longer periods of time because they can include people in a particular incident with different incidents and characters. The aim of this research is to find out the teachers' perception of reading or telling relevant stories on students' learning in primary education in rural areas of Bangladesh. This study also works on the effectiveness of storytelling as an educational tool. The first criterion of this study is to understand the teachers' perceptions as well as know about their experience of working with storytelling. The second criterion is to analyze whether storytelling has any effects on the learning of primary students. The Research Questions include

- What are the teachers' perceptions about storytelling as an educational tool?
- How effective storytelling is as an educational tool in the classrooms of primary education in remote areas of Bangladesh?

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework has been developed relating to the use of storytelling in the process of teaching and learning, which has been identified through a literature review. There are many factors that are associated with storytelling and how it may be used to better the teaching and learning process. There have been certain issues rose that are worth considering. The issues are as follows:

1. The teaching-learning process can be improved when the teachers act as storytellers.
2. Learners learn effectively when storytelling is incorporated into their lessons.
3. Storytelling helps learners to improve their language skills.
4. Storytelling as a teaching strategy makes knowledge sharing easier and helps the students to understand better.



Methodology

• Research Instrument: Interview

A semi-structured interview questionnaire was developed to collect the information from the participants. This type of interview is usually open in nature and some predefined questions are asked to the participants. The rest of the questions were not planned before. This questionnaire is effective for gaining detailed information from the participants. According to Barnerd (2011), a Semi-structured Questionnaire gives the researchers the freedom to get detailed information from the participants considering the need of the research. It also gives freedom to both the interviewees and the interviewee to discuss openly the relevant topic. The questionnaire contained 18 questions including teachers' perceptions of storytelling, classroom practice, storytelling strategies as well as teachers' perception of students' development through storytelling. The feedback from the participants about these questions might lead to extra information about the mindset of the participants about storytelling.

• Population and Sampling

The research population is 8 teachers from 2 different Government Primary Schools located in Ukhiya, Bangladesh. These teachers were selected because of their teaching experiences with storytelling in classrooms. Their experiences might be different from each other; however, their viewpoints will be different from each other as well. A purposeful sampling technique was used to select the participants of the study. Purposeful sampling (sometimes referred to as judgment sampling, selected sampling, or subjective sampling) is one in which the researchers

relies on his or her own judgment when selecting individuals of a community to participate in a study. The teachers who tell stories in their classes are purposefully selected for the data collection process.

- **Data Collection Process**

For collecting data, each teacher was interviewed by the researchers. All 8 teachers were interviewed over the phone because of the Covid-19 restrictions. An in-detailed phone interview was conducted to collect the data from the teachers. To ensure the confidentiality of the participants, the participants are indicated as Participant-1, Participant-2, Participant- 3, etc., instead of their names.

All the questions in the Interview Questionnaire were open-ended so that the researchers get as much in-detail information as possible about storytelling practices and perceptions about the teachers. Apart from these questions, some questions about teachers' backgrounds were also asked like their educational background, teaching experience, etc.

- **Data Recording**

To analyze and develop the theme for the result, the interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants. The recorded audios of each of the participants were transcribed into word files. In this case, the researchers skipped the parts of the participants mentioned something irrelevant to the interviews while talking. Separate themes were developed from these transcriptions to get the findings of the research. Consent was taken from each participant before the interview recording.

- **Data Analysis**

The information participants shared according to their experiences, was analyzed by using a thematic data analysis process. Several themes were developed from the information. To answer the two research questions of this study, 6 themes were developed about the storytelling strategies, practice, and storytelling as motivational, language development, and pedagogical tools.

Findings

This research actually examined how teachers in rural regions see storytelling as an educational tool and its influence on their students. This section is organized around two units, which have six themes that have arisen from them. In order to progress the current study, a qualitative method has been used. Thematic analysis was utilized to analyze qualitative data that was gathered from teachers of primary level education from rural areas conducting interviews with the participants. In-depth interviews with eight individuals yielded the data that was gathered for this study. All of the participants were chosen on an equal basis from two government elementary schools in the community. They are both from Ukhiya, Bangladesh. Teachers' perceptions of storytelling as an instructional tool are explored in detail in the first unit. Two themes arose from this lesson, both of which emphasized the importance of storytelling in the classroom and the practice of telling stories in the classroom. The first unit discusses the

teachers' perceptions of storytelling in the classroom. The second unit attempts to determine the effectiveness of storytelling by examining four themes: storytelling as an educational tool, storytelling as a method of classroom management, storytelling as a method of motivation, and storytelling as a tool for language development.

Unit 01: Perception

This Unit discusses the teachers' perceptions about storytelling in a classroom for primary education learners.

Theme 1: Classroom strategies

Alternate to Textbook Contents

6 out of 8 teachers agreed that they use storytelling in their classroom because they think stories can be an alternative to textbook content.

"Whenever I can relate any content to a story, I take the class by storytelling. Because I think when I tell a story students can grasp the content easily. Textbook assistance is not very necessary to conduct these types of classes." - Participant 4

Effective Knowledge Sharing Strategy

From the interview, it is found that most of the participants use storytelling to convey the message of the lessons to the students. In their opinion, storytelling can make the lessons clear for the students as well as helps in the delivery process. For participant 5, Storytelling is not only helpful for the students to learn their lessons but also helps him to make the delivery of the lesson easier.

Theme 2: Classroom Practice

Types of Storytelling for Primary Students

5 out of 8 participants mentioned that they try to incorporate historical incidents, or fairytales while teaching Bangla.

"When I talk about our country, I try to tell them about our liberation war. These real-life incidents help me to grab my students' attention when I teach." - Participant 2

2 participants use educational fables while incorporating storytelling in the classroom. One participant mentioned, he tries to make stories by relating to the lessons.

"Even if I don't know any story to deliver my lessons, I sometimes make stories by myself because I've noticed my students love to listen to stories." -Participant 8

Reasons behind Storytelling Classroom

All the participants are clear about their perception to conduct a storytelling classroom. All of them use storytelling as a strategy to grab students' attention.

"When I tell my class "Once upon a time." my students look at me with curiosity and give me their full attention." - Participant 1

"If my students are not concentrating on their lessons, I tell them relevant stories to the lessons. Storytelling helps me a lot to grab my students' attention." - Participant 5

Subjects to incorporate Storytelling

The study's initial goal is to investigate lecturer perceptions and interpretations of storytelling as an instructional technique. According to the findings, all of the participants use storytelling in their classrooms as a teaching strategy. However, subject-wise they only use storytelling when teaching Bangla or English, as incorporating storytelling in these subjects is comparatively easier.

According to participant 6 of X GPS *“Incorporating storytelling in science or mathematics is difficult for me as there are no supporting books for these subjects. However, I tell the students the stories given in their Bangla or English books.”*

Participant 3 from Y GPS has given a similar opinion about incorporating storytelling in the classroom, *“I find it easier to tell stories that are given in the textbooks, e.g Bangla or English. However, once in a while I tell stories from outside books like Fairy tales, Fables, or life stories of famous people.”*

Unit 2: Effectiveness

Theme 1: Pedagogical Strategy

Storytelling as a teaching strategy

Despite their various teaching backgrounds, the participants have employed storytelling as one of their teaching approaches in the classroom. According to the interview, their perspectives on storytelling are not very different from each other. The research shows that most of the teachers use storytelling to engage their students, particularly when they sense their pupils are becoming bored or tired in class. All of the participants agreed on using storytelling in their classroom to draw the students' attention.

According to participant 4, *“Telling stories in class makes my lesson delivery easier. When I tell stories my students can visualize the story. This helps them to understand the lesson effectively.”*

“I tell stories to make the classes interesting and joyful for the students.” Participant 2 implied.

Storytelling to develop students learning

As all the participants told stories in their class, they all agreed that storytelling can be an effective learning development tool for students of primary education.

“My students appear to be attracted to the lessons when I deliver the lessons with stories. It enables the students to have a direct and open conversation with me right away. Through the entire process, they are actively engaged, whether by chiming in or simply listening intently. The use of storytelling as an educational tool, on the other side, allows me to connect my learners fully in the learning process.” - **Participant 3**

“As an instructional tool, storytelling allows me to involve my pupils more fully in the learning process. Stories are both educational and amusing, and they encourage students to engage in class.” -Participant 6

Theme 2: Classroom Management

Each and every participant has agreed on using storytelling as an effective classroom management strategy. Therefore, the learners tend to give their complete attention instead of

doing other work during the class whenever the teacher tells a story.

“When my students do not listen to me, I start telling stories. This distracts them from their monotony and disruptive behaviors.” - Participant 5

Theme 3: Storytelling and motivation

According to the results of the investigation, all participants believe that storytelling helps to encourage learners. Participants also claimed that they would like to improve and expand their classes with storytelling methods. Aside from that, storytelling has been proved to be a fantastic approach to excite the learners and actively engage them in their studies.

“The most positive side of storytelling in the classroom is the students' motivation to participate in the classroom activities. In general, they might not respond to a certain question but when I ask anything in the middle of telling a story, they seem to be more eager to give their opinion.”

Theme 4: Storytelling and language development

Storytelling is said to inspire students to engage with one another by listening to and telling stories to each other, along with reading each other's stories, as well as with their teachers. Such interactions allow students to obtain assistance from their teachers as well as peers who may have a little better level of understanding. According to the study, as the students are from rural areas, they have a different accent. The teachers use storytelling as one of the mediums of language learning.

“As I am a village teacher, almost all of my students speak in the local language. But when I tell a story, I speak in colloquial language and explain in local words if they do not understand something. In this process, the students start to learn colloquial words. Then I tell them to repeat the stories. I do not allow any local words when they do that.” stated participant 2.

All of the participants had a similar opinion on the impact of storytelling on language development. Participant 7 added, *“I often instruct my students to make stories on their own and tell in class. This is how they adopt a good speaking skill as well as learn to use new words and sentences.”*

Discussion

This research has been conducted to explore the perception of rural teachers about storytelling in a primary classroom which also includes the effectiveness the teachers get by telling stories in the classes. The findings of this research are discussed according to the research questions. The first research question explores the perception of rural primary teachers about storytelling. The replies to the teacher interviews were analyzed according to this research question. The purpose of doing so was to allow the researchers to collect specific information for the study through one-on-one interviews, which would otherwise be impossible. The replies to the teacher interviews were analyzed, and the results revealed several interesting important findings, which are discussed further below.

The majority of the teachers who took part in this survey had a satisfactory opinion of storytelling as a teaching and learning resource. They all agreed that storytelling is a beneficial

technique for educators in the classroom. All eight teachers who took part in the study had a good attitude about storytelling, and all of them employed storytelling in their classrooms at some point. Participant 1 and Participant 5 used storytelling to engage students' attention or to help them tune in to the lesson. It is assumed that the teachers who incorporate storytelling in classes have a definite objective for their activities. When asked if they tell stories in class, many of them mentioned storytelling as a regular activity in their class. They mentioned the types and formats of stories they prefer to draw the attention of the students. They also shared the subjects and classes they got the opportunity to incorporate stories. The primary teachers of rural areas usually take the classes of all the subjects. They use storytelling as an alternative to the textbook contents. When asked about their perception, they mentioned the involvement of the learners in the learning process. Teachers' planning and selection of instructional materials, tactics, and approaches are influenced by their perceptions of a collection of instructional tools or materials. Teachers' perspectives on storytelling as a teaching and learning tool are important because their theoretical views about storytelling as a teaching and learning tool might affect their instructional methods. Because the teacher, "driven by his/her theoretical views, determines the content which meets the requirements of the learners and their perspectives will determine whether storytelling will be emphasized in their classrooms." (Lee and Bathmaker, 2007, p. 351).

Another factor related to teachers' perception of storytelling is, that the teachers tend to use storytelling as a knowledge-sharing instrument for the students. The students are usually more attentive in classes because of stories so the required knowledge delivery becomes easier for the teachers. According to the findings of the data analysis, participants always share their stories or experiences in the style of storytelling in class. Teachers, according to the participants, succeed by being able to relate their own stories based on their own experiences. Students function as knowledge receivers, while teachers operate as knowledge presenters in the teaching and learning process. Depending on the sort of students, a teacher provides the information in a variety of ways. When the lesson is delivered in the form of stories, it becomes a part of the self-learning process for the students. It's essential to demonstrate that storytelling is a strong tool to share knowledge and those stories can still be used to communicate with learners with all of their complexities (Davenport et al. 1998).

The second objective of this research is to explore the effectiveness of storytelling in classes of primary education. According to the findings of this study, storytelling is an effective educational method. The educational value of using storytelling as an instructional technique became clear when teachers reported that their students were more focused in class than when they were simply taught by storytelling rather than the lecture method. The stories that are delivered and the exercises that follow become highly engaging for the students. With storytelling, students are encouraged to use their imaginations and think metaphorically about the content/concept they are working on. Furthermore, the teachers are also positive about their talents as storytellers and their ability to incorporate storytelling into their classroom

curriculum. The teachers are consistently enthusiastic about the stories/lessons they were teaching. While talking to the researchers, the teachers shared their students' excitement for the stories delivered and were impressed at how quickly they got to work on the task given to them after the storytelling.

This research found that storytelling is a valuable instructional technique that teachers may employ in their classes. More documentation and content resources may be required to encourage educators to consider this approach of teaching as a successful and worthwhile teaching methodology. Many educational groups encourage the use of storytelling in the classroom. It is clear from the participants' responses that teachers are enthusiastic about utilizing stories to educate. It has also been shown that if the stories are delivered effectively, it encourages the learners. From the research, it is observed that all participants agreed in sharing tales with their students and seeing how they get engaged with the process. Participants also claimed that they would strengthen their abilities, and add more tales to their classroom. They also want to make sure to take time and add tales to the curriculum that will encourage or just simply entertain the students. It is established that storytelling has been a motivating tool, an information conduit, and a writing catalyst in the classroom. (Kowalski, 2015) Using storytelling as opposed to lecture method is more motivating and it brings about more active participants of the learners. It may be argued that employing narrative motivation can be produced among students themselves. Storytelling helps boost students' learning abilities in remembering. (Chubko, Morris, McKinnon, Slater & Lummis, 2020) The participants indicated in their interviews, that they also noted how the children recalled the knowledge from the tales as well as skills or subject material throughout the exercises. Stories are the way we store knowledge in the brain. A list of facts will be forgotten, but stories will be remembered for a lifetime. Stories assist us in organizing information and connecting disparate pieces of facts. (Tarmizi, 2014) It may be concluded that storytelling, as an educational technique, can assist students in improving their learning abilities by helping them to retain information that they have learned throughout the course. In several studies (e.g., Wajnryb, 2003; Wright, 1995), storytelling has been shown to be an effective tool for improving learners' enthusiasm, as shown by their increased active engagement in the learning process. The content and meaning of stories, according to Wajnryb (2003), are strong enough to engage learners in the learning process while simultaneously helping their development of communication abilities.

Recommendation

According to the findings of the research, it is recommended that teachers listen thoughtfully to students' stories and design instruction around those stories in order to allow students' diverse experiences to become meaningful for both the students who are presenting stories and the listeners. Aside from that, it is also recommended that teachers use a variety of stories to help meet the linguistic, social, and academic needs of a student population that is becoming increasingly multicultural. Following that, the researchers would like to suggest that teachers investigate the use of storytelling as a means for students to learn about themselves and others

while also developing an understanding of themselves and others through their life stories. The findings also suggest that teachers should work to improve students' reading and writing skills by focusing on their ability to orally articulate personal experiences, which is based on the findings.

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that storytelling is a valuable and worthwhile educational tool that is beneficial to both teachers and students alike. It may take additional documentation and content materials to encourage teachers that this method of teaching is effective and that it is a teaching technique that should be explored. The use of storytelling in the classroom is supported by many educational organizations, such as library services and knowledge management departments, and these organizations demonstrate their support by offering storytelling sessions during conferences and seminars. A growing number of teachers are including storytelling classes as part of their course curriculum. Students who enroll in storytelling classes will gain the knowledge and skills necessary to apply the art of storytelling in the classroom, as well as the benefits that participants in this research experienced.

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