Closing Report for 2005 Faculty Research and Development Grant

Project: By the Fireside: Story-based Instruction and Learning
Investigator: Dr. Kwadwo Asafo-Agyei Okrah

Description of Grant-Supported Activity:
With gratitude to the Faculty Research and Development Grant, I received funds during the summer of 2005 to enable me travel to Ghana to collect data for my research on “By the Fireside: Story-based Instruction and Learning” The research resulted into an article and a major addition to a multicultural education and global awareness course, which I teach. It also deepened my understanding of informal and traditional instructional strategies, which is a major part of my general research scheme in African philosophy of Education. My research proceeded as I laid out in my proposal. I spent six weeks in Ghana visiting villages, schools and story-tellers and, reading children’s stories written in the local language. I spent some time at the Bureau of Ghana Languages in Accra, Ghana, which houses the most comprehensive collections of books written in Ghanaian languages including out-of-print books, which were used during and immediately after the colonial period.

Were you able to complete the project?
Yes, I completed the project and came out with two documents – an article and a book format. As indicated in my proposal, I also used the result of the research to revise my curriculum in Global education. With the discovery of traditional pedagogical style of teaching and learning (the story-based), my course now challenges students to compare and contrast this new approach with the previous style of “constructivism”, which had hitherto been accepted in many literature as the best (if not the sole) method of teaching Global education.

Did the Project result in a specific product?
Yes. I submitted the manuscript for publication to Journal of Social Studies Research and African World Press to be published in article and book forms respectively. The Journal of Social Studies did not publish the article because they deemed the content to be more appropriate in Social Studies Education Journal. They however, gave positive feedback about additional studies that might make this publishable by them. Social Studies Education had a backlog of articles and could not publish my manuscript. The African World Press accepted to publish the manuscript but the company went down and is yet to resurrect. These mishaps notwithstanding, I have presented the findings at an international conference (The Historical Association Conference) and Global Education Workshop at an Indiana University wide meeting sponsored by The Center for the Study of Global Change where it has received scholastic and pedagogic acclaim.
References:
Abstract

Folklore as we know it today is part of traditional literature that has no known author but rather has been passed down from generation to generation through oral storytelling. At some point in time, someone wrote down the tale so it could be shared through the written word and disseminated beyond the boundaries of its creators.

Similarity of folktales across cultures abounds. For example, the Cinderella variant appears to exist in most cultures around the world. Many cultures have animal trickster tales such as the spider (Ananse) of West Africa, the raven of the Inuit, and the Coyote of the Native Americans. However, very little has been done to incorporate this interesting discourse into our teaching.

In story based instruction and learning, the attempt is made to explore the methods of forging stories into Social Studies as another form of instructional style that will mitigate the stress fears and boredom of students.

Introduction

This is a descriptive narrative intended to apply storytelling to the curriculum, especially social studies. In order to guide children to be creative, critical and collaborative, their knowledge needs to be constructed to suit real life situations. Children and students of all ages like to hear stories and analogies to solve problems rather than listening to stark facts and idealistic presentation of materials. Storytelling should be part of the curriculum throughout elementary school. In language arts, it provides opportunities to learn story structure, oral expression, and share variety of cultures. Storytelling can also be a vehicle for direct teaching in a variety of curriculum areas (Starko et al, 2003).

Not only should the teaching of mathematics include story problems, it should be illustrated with different cultural art forms. Physics, chemistry, biology need to be linked to indigenous knowledge so we can make authentic connections to the computations and modus operandi associated with these subjects. Different stories, analogies and proverbs could be used in concept formation while the social sciences could employ stories in the discussion of social issues.

Stories, told well, almost always hold students’ attention. They include vivid descriptions, interesting characters, and conflicts to be resolved. According to Starko et al, (2003) much of the information we want to share with students in the social studies curriculum can be viewed as story rather than lecture, epic tale rather than textbook requirements. Again, history told as a story can be as interesting as any television drama. Starko et al, (2003) have stated that to be a successful teller of history, you must have a sense of the big and small, an overall sense of the structure of the story you are telling, and an alertness to the details that make it interesting.

This study is intended to:

1. Construct story-based instructional strategies that will stimulate children’s interest to learn. Stories spark imagination, nurture curiosity, and delight the heart and the mind.
2. Use storytelling as a stepping-stone to introduce elementary children to different topics and disciplines. For example, global concepts could be included in the curriculum and taught through stories. This is especially significant in schools of education programs since global education has been identified as a national and state required course for our students majoring in social studies.

3. Augment the topics and themes of global and multicultural education in American schools through comparisons of different oral tradition schemes that are available and relevant to the development of the new curriculum.

4. Establish a discourse between other methods of teaching and story-based teaching/learning adding another dimension to the already existing literature on instructional models.

5. Examine the importance of introducing topics and concepts in different disciplines into our elementary school curriculum in a developmentally appropriate manner, through listening, reading and writing stories in different subject areas.

6. Benefit students by developing critical thinking through analysis and application of stories as a stepping-stone to education. Students would thus, be prepared to function primarily in their own environment, nation and the outside world. They would also acquire a deep sense of reasoned decision-making.

7. Properly develop story-based learning supplementing the other teaching and learning strategies including constructivism, problem-based and discovery learning.

8. Experiencing other cultures helping students reflect on their assumptions and actions in ways that would be impossible without a point of comparison.

Research indicates that critical thinking and problem solving skills are not typically addressed in the classroom. As Stepien and Gallagher (1993) have observed, studies indicate that in a typical classroom 85% of teacher questions are at the recall or simple comprehension level. Even though other instructional strategies including problem-based learning and constructivism address the critical thinking problem, story-based instruction and learning will take it further by encouraging questions that elicit synthesis and evaluative skills that are rarely asked in the classroom.

In her work, “You Can’t Say You Can’t Play, Vivian Palley (1992) opens the topic on conflict resolution with a quotation from the third book of Moses stating “The stranger that sojourneth with you shall be unto you as the homebound among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt (Leviticus 19:34).” This is an example of admonition from Biblical history and the author uses the quote to stimulate children to think about it. Then, she guides the children to connect it to the topic to be discussed. Similarly, parables could be used to introduce different topics. She succeeded in discussing conflict resolution procedures in her kindergarten through fifth grade classes using the above quote, parables and a fairy tale.

Students listen, retell, create and apply their own stories based upon their individual experiences. The stories assist students in succeeding within the classroom and beyond because they allow the learners to apply multiple intelligences.
In my own teaching experience, for the past twenty years, in elementary, high school and college levels, I have realized that students learn with interest, fun and less stress in a relaxed, informal atmosphere. This is especially true with a creative teacher who has the ability to weave relevant stories, analogies and experiences into the topic under discussion. This author uses a proverb or analogy as a set induction to organize and motivate students in every topic being taught. Therefore, in order to teach well we must understand the mental models that students use to perceive the world and the assumptions they make to support these models.

**Theoretical framework for story-telling in Social Studies**

It is widely believed that a child’s imagination ought to be stimulated and developed in education. Yet, few teachers understand the meaning of imagination the manner it lends itself to practical methods and techniques that can be used easily in classroom instruction (Egan 1992). Story-based instruction and learning seeks to investigate, examine and construct teaching strategies that employ stories to motivate students and stimulate them for less stressful and effective learning. It is an alternative to the dominant procedure recommended for planning lessons and units of study, and an alternative to some of the dominant principles recommended for selecting content for teaching. The dominant model and principles are derived from educational research and theorizing that has almost entirely ignored the power and educational uses of children’s imagination (Egan, 1989).

For this method of instruction and learning, stories may take the form of folktales, analogies, parables, personal experiences and histories of the teacher and/or students. To ensure general and global understanding, folklore and other international children’s literature and their educational implications have been examined. From this data the implications and beauty of stories in the development of creative and critical thinking through narration and sharing of experiences to arrive at concept formation in different disciplines were explored.

**The general principles of educational development and teaching strategy.**

The generally accepted principles in educational development teaching strategy are concrete to abstract; simple to complex; known to unknown; particular to general and active manipulation to symbolic conceptualization. This means that the traditionally held principle in teaching has been to follow Piaget’s theory of cognitive development. This supports both the claim that we should begin teaching with concrete material things and move from these toward abstract concepts, and also that in learning any subject we should work from particulars within the experience of the child in the direction of greater abstractions.

Counteracting these principles is the belief that imagination has the power to form mental images of what is a not actually present or creating a mental image of what has never been experienced. Egan (1992) has asked the following questions: “If we accept the principle that children’s learning progresses from the concrete to the abstract, how do we deal with fantasy stories? “ Can children learn best only from concrete, hands-on experiences? Are there things that are best learned from other kinds of experiences?”

In the author’s study of the Akan of Ghana, he found the following to be true about their folktales: That, the stories are structured on the relationship of various underlying concepts. For example in “How Nyankonsem became Anansesem,” which
will be told later in this paper, we can immediately see the conflicts of fear and hope; kindness and cruelty, and of course, good and bad. Even though these are abstract concepts, children must have them for the concrete story to make sense. Thus, the abstraction becomes a prerequisite to being able to understand the concrete story. Likewise, many other stories reveal that children’s understanding of abstract concepts like loyalty/betrayal, courage/cowardice, honor/selfishness are important prerequisites for making meaning of the actions in a story. However, one could argue that the abstract concepts – fear/hope, kindness/cruelty, good/bad, loyalty/betrayal, courage/cowardice, honor/selfishness- had been generated from earlier concrete experiences of the child. To assert that children’s educational development could equally proceed from abstract to concrete one needs to be careful not to swing to opposite extremes. Knowledge is composed not merely by experience, but the mind constructively makes its own contribution. In this view, all our knowledge and all our actions are governed by abstract rules, which we have and use even though we are not necessarily conscious of them (Egan, 1992).

**Uses of stories:**

- Stories serve as a communicative medium – increase oral interpretation skills, encourages composure before an audience (public speaking), learning elements of literature / language arts
- Stories serve as an advisory medium
- Stories serve as a directive /command medium
- Through story form in planning we can reinstate the important but neglected aspect of children’s thinking.

**Educational implications:**

The following educational implications in storytelling are worth mentioning:

Folktales are parables through which Africans give moral lessons to their children. They point out the bad habits in society and act as a deterrent to people who are engaged in such practices. It also serves as a source of entertainment. For example, in ‘The Magic Dish and the Magic Cane’ Ananse’s children stealthily ate from the magic dish he brought home, but later, the magic cane he took home whipped them when they secretly wanted to use it in the absence of their father.

Storytelling and oratory skills help children get over shyness and nervousness when speaking in public. The communal nature of storytelling also brings about a sense of unity in a community. Other aspects of the oral tradition, proverbs, figurative expressions (idioms) and metaphors are learned, to add flavor to the language used in the story. Most children who become musicians and drummers in their later years learned these arts at storytelling assemblies. Children also learn a lot about customs and institutions through storytelling.

In the past, elders used storytelling while keeping night vigil over their town or village, especially if they expected enemies to attack. They would sit around a fire all night telling stories. Women kept vigil during wartime, praying for the success of their men and waiting to hear developments. When a search party is out looking for a missing member of a community, the rest beguile the time by telling stories while waiting for news. While keeping wake on the death of a member of the community, elders may tell stories, especially at night when the wailing abates. Some stories are also used to settle
squabbles between members of the society and others relate historical events from generation to generation. Even though folktales are considered to be imaginary and parables to correct deviant habits, some are actual events that can be traced to historical dates and real characters. Such historical stories are normally told during the wake of a deceased elder.

**Storytelling.**

Stories generally have beginning, middle and ending. Some conflict or challenge forms the “backbone” of the story, and the resolution (even if temporarily) of the challenge provides a natural ending (Starko et al, 2003). A cursory look at the structure and nature of folktales may lead one to conclude that it is an exclusive children’s literature because it is normally an activity in which adults tell stories to children. In some cases, however, children spin the stories to each other.

The following provides the history and structure for storytelling by the Akan of Ghana:

Folktales depict a measure for a proper standard of exemplary life style bequeathed to them by their forefathers. These stories/parables have been woven into life’s fabric with their deep font of wisdom to guide every aspect of life. Designed to carry a particular moral lesson, each tale is entertaining as well as educational. Among Ghanaians (and in fact, Africans), talking is a popular pastime and story telling, like poetry, is an art. Stories, like poetry, are unlimited in the subjects they cover, humans and their relationships with each other and with animals, plants, all of nature here on earth and beyond, past, present and future alike and the dead. A broad historical and cultural knowledge of that community’s language is necessary to compose a story that speaks to the people of a particular place. For communities as well as families and individuals, the oral tradition is a way of maintaining and transmitting mores, values, traditions and significant events.

In times past, folktales were told only in the evening or night before bedtime when everyone has finished with the household chores. Storytelling serves as a great source of entertainment for both children and adults, for the teller and the audience. In the moonlight with everyone sitting around a campfire, the ambiance is perfect for listening to stories. However, with the introduction of Western education, folktales are now told in schools without restrictions of time. The ban having been lifted, people are free today to tell stories anytime, anywhere, on the way to the farm, by the riverside, during lunch, and in the school playground. Nonetheless, evenings, especially in the countryside, still remain the most favored time for storytelling.

There are different types of folktales. Some very short ones, children tell for fun. An example of a typical short story follows:

A mother was going to farm with her child. They came across a fallen tree in the middle of the footpath. The child asked, “Mother, where should I pass?” The mother replied, “Fa asee - Enne Afasee.” Fa asee literally translated means ‘pass under’, and Afasee is the Akan word for water yam hence the name, ‘water yam.’ The story is concluded, as “that is how we got a name for the water yam”.

Such short stories are meant to introduce children to phonemes and phonetics of their language, familiarizing them with words or phrases that sound the same but have different meanings.
Folktales and other short stories, which contain one or two moral or social lessons, are told to older children including adolescents, who are capable of translating and applying the lessons to their lives. Examples of such stories are “the ant’s secret”, “hanging in the middle”, “mice and kittens playing together”

Other long stories or folktales, although imaginary, describe and illuminate the realities of life. They may take the form of a person’s biography from infancy to death encompassing childhood, adolescence, marriage, employment, life style, successes and failures, fortunes and misfortunes, the time of death and sometimes the funeral celebration. Non-fiction stories, which today are published are included in the curriculum bibliography in Middle and High Schools or sold as books for adults. Besides teaching lessons related to life situations, these stories also depict most of the customary rites of passage and rituals that are associated with different stages of life i.e., birth, puberty, marriage and death.

Examples of Stories:

Stories may take different forms including fairy/folk tales (fictional stories), personal experiences and histories, analogies, parables. Whatever the case, stories are created and composed with hidden moral and social lessons that are told to further an understanding and appreciation of a given situation. Such stories are skillfully composed with pseudonyms and imaginary locations in order not to directly attack the personality of an offender. Sometimes, names of animals are used to construct stories with a strict observance of their nature and characteristics. The following are examples of folk/fictional stories. We can use them to form concepts and make generalizations in life:

**The Ant’s secret** *(My Secret Is Stored in My Head) (For a lesson on pomposity and pride)*

Ant and tsetse fly were good friends. One day they had to travel together to attend a funeral. On the way a conversation ensued between them and tsetse fly asked the ant, “Ant, we do not have any food with us. How are we going to eat when we get to the funeral? Then Ant replied, “That’s a good question. I have not thought about it, what do you think?” Tsetse fly answered, “I do not have a problem. Many people will be at the funeral and since I feed on human blood, I will have enough to eat.” To this the ant replied, “Good for you.”

Then tsetse fly inquired again, “So what will you eat, my friend?” ant said, “I don’t know, but my secret is stored in my head.” The friends got to the funeral and they started feeling hungry. Tsetse fly immediately flew over to a man’s arm and started sucking his blood. The man hit tsetse fly very hard and he fell down dead. Since ant feeds on dead insects, he immediately jumped onto the dead tsetse fly and fed on it happily.

**Hanging in the Middle** *(For a lesson on greediness)*

Once upon a time the Sky God was married to the Earth Goddess, but they lived in different kingdoms. The Sky God appointed the bat as his linguist. At the same time the bat accepted the position of linguist from the Earth Goddess. It happened one day that there were concurrent festivals taking place on earth and up in the sky.

As the linguist, the bat was supposed to be the opening speaker at both festivals. When the Sky God called on the bat, the bat said, “Oh, I’m on my way. Just look at my legs pointing to the Sky. I’ll be up in a second. Then the Earth Goddess called on the Bat to come and start the program. Quickly the bat replied, “Oh I’ll be there in a second. Look at my head pointing to your door.” They both waited for a long time, yet bat did not show up. From then on bat was banned from the Sky and the Earth and has been hanging in space ever since.
Mice and Kittens playing together (for a lesson on innocence of children in diversity)

One day mother cat left the kittens at home and went out to search for food. At the same time Mother Mouse left her children at home and went out to look for a meal. The little mice walked out of their holes and as they passed by cats’ house, the kittens called them to come and play. The mice went inside, jumped and ran helter skelter and played hide and seek and the stone passing game. When evening came, the mouse babies left for home. A little later mother cat came home without any food. She was already upset and was doubly so as she saw everything in the house a mess. She asked her children what had happened that everything was out of place. Her kittens replied, “We had a nice time with the mouse babies who came over to visit. mother cat said to them, “You stupid kittens! You let them go scot-free! Don’t you know that I spent the entire day looking for mice for food for you?” The kittens with their empty bellies mewed in disappointment.

Meanwhile, when mother mouse came home, everything to her surprise looked in order, neat and tidy. When she asked her children the reason for such unprecedented discipline, they replied that they spent the entire day playing with the kittens in cat’s house. mother mouse squeaked as she jumped up and down, furious that they had put themselves in harm’s way. She warned them, “Never go there again! Don’t you know that cats feed on mice?”

The following morning when the two parents were out again, the kittens ran over to the mouse babies to invite them to play with their new toys. To this the mouse babies replied, “We will never set foot in your house again. As your mother has advised you, our mother has advised us also."

Oral interpretation

In teaching conflict resolution, oral interpretation was found to be very appropriate for critical thinking and amicable settlement of cases. These types of stories are told in a riddle form and the audience (students) is allowed to provide an answer after a careful analysis of such stories and experiences. The following is an example:

Crossing a river with the hawk, chicken and maize

A man is traveling with a hawk, chicken and maize. They come to a river and the only way to cross over to the other side is to use a canoe. The only canoe available can take two of the travelers at a time. It is to be noted that if the hawk is left with the chick the hawk will eat up the chicken; if the chicken is left with the maize the chicken will eat up the maize. The maize can only be left with the hawk. Another rule is that once the man is around none of the travelers can eat up the other. What manner of trips can the man make with the other travelers in order to get all of them to the other side of the river safely without leaving two enemies unattended?

The Model for constructing story-based instruction

- Story versus lesson plan/Instruction:

A lesson plan should always have an anticipatory set and an activity sections where student’s interest is piqued, topic connected to their previous knowledge and be given the chance to participate in the lesson. An appropriately composed story should be shared with students to connect to the lesson. This does not only whet the appetite of the students to learn but also to connect the topic to real life situations.

- Story versus the teacher:

The teacher should be creative in his subject drawing from myriad of examples to support his/her topic. It is this creative part that makes the teacher an artist. It should be noted that teaching is an art and that knowledge of the subject alone does not make one a teacher. The pedagogical content knowledge is that most important quality of a teacher.

- Story versus the student:

Stories must be age appropriate. It is important that stories are composed according to the maturational development of students. Care must be taken about the content and language of the story.
Construction of methodology
The following must be taken into consideration when using stories as an instructional tool in the classroom:
Kinds of conceptual abilities children clearly have and use routinely
Kinds of stories children find engaging
Conceptual abilities to be in place for such stories to be meaningful
Identifying the features of stories that can become parts of model for planning teaching that uses children’s conceptual abilities
Drawing on the engaging and communicative powers of the story form
Making sure that the story instructions and the children’s characteristics jointly affect story.

The premise of this model is to counteract the present conventional teaching model whose objective-based style only attempts to technologize teaching. The model being proposed, however, asserts that teaching is about efficient organization and the communication of meaning. Thus, teachers should always find something affectively engaging and interesting in a topic. It should also be remembered that stories can be true as well as fictional, and that shaping material into a story form may involve simplification but need not at all involve falsification. Also, there is always room for detailed knowledge, inference and discovery process.

The Story Form Model introduced by Egan (1992) could be advanced to serve as the steps in any lesson or unit planning within the story –based instructional model. If used appropriately, we can apply it to different subjects even though the model lends itself easier with Social Studies and the other arts subjects. The acronym “IBOCE” (Importance Binary opposites, Organization, Conclusion and Evaluation) may serve as the template for planning a lesson:

**Identifying importance**
What is most important about the topic?
Why should it matter to children?
What is affectively engaging about it?

**Finding binary opposites**
What binary opposites best catch the importance of the topic?

**Organizing content into story form**
What content most dramatically embodies the binary opposites, in order to provide access to the topic?
What content best articulates the topic into a developing story form?

**Conclusion**
What is the best way of resolving the dramatic conflict inherent in the binary opposites?
What degree of mediation of those opposites is appropriate to seek?

**Evaluation**
How can one know whether the topic has been understood?
1. Identifying the importance of a topic includes a goal, purpose and the rationale behind the topic. Topics to be taught must immediately be related to real life situations. If that connection is not made at the onset students will stress out and get bored from the onset. The connection should also be connected to the dispositional development of students.

2. The next step deals with the identification of binary opposites or what is at stake. A binary opposite implies the idea of opposite situations or view to every issue or concept. For example, in the set up or the analysis of a story with a wicked character, there should be a counteracting noble character. We need to identify what will happen or not happen if we do or do not do something, learn or do not learn something. Binary opposites provide the main structural lines along which the story moves forward. It gathers the conflict at the beginning and monitor the development of the story through the incidents showing the conflict. Examples of binary opposites are, good and bad, survival and destruction, security and fear, bravery and cowardice, change/stability, security/danger, survival/destruction, competition/cooperation, dependence/independence, etc. We are best able to identify binary opposites depending on what we have identified as the importance of the topic. If the topic is about organization, the binary opposite would be confusion, harmony would be conflict, victory would be defeat, swiftness would be slow etc.

3. Organization of content into a story is the step that brings the creative ingenuity of the teacher to the fore. For a sermon to be interesting, preachers always look for an interesting story to guide their preaching. In textbooks, stories, especially historical events, which could be woven into dramatic stories, are often reduced to colorless recounting of facts. But once you have established the story outline you must find the details of sight and sound that can bring the story to life for your students. You can do this by helping the picture characters in the story. Sometimes you might have access to the actual words of those present at key moments. Teachers need a discourse that provides access to the topic to be taught. Teachers might come up with an interesting opener that gives dramatic point to the concept to be taught. Then further expressions and elaborations should be given in the conflict set up between the binary opposites to ensure the possibilities of the positive in the face of various threats of negatives.

4. Like other models, this model lends itself to find some way of bringing the unit to a close that is more like the way a story ends than simply stopping because we have run out of material or time. A conclusion may have to resolve in some way the dramatic conflict that is set between the binary opposites. This may take the form of mediation or as a confirmation of a particular perspective. Thus, the guiding principle is that we work out some way of bringing together the material dealt with in the body of the unit and showing clearly the relationship between the binary organizers.

5. An important educational task is to test the evidence of learning success. It is noted that test-driven teaching measures knowledge that is remembered some short time after the unit is completed. As Egan (1992) has stated, this kind of
measure accounts for a great deal of educational evaluation, and is taken as an
index of the more important lesson taught. However, because it is difficult to
work out how to measure the achievement of what is educationally important
achievement, we measure instead what seems an index of that achievement. An
effective evaluation of a story-based model is the ability to transfer the learning
onto other topics or disciplines. In groups, children should discuss the lessons
learned from the stories pertained to the topic and draw their own analogies and
the dispositional significance as well as the knowledge and skills they gained
from the story and the topic.

**Application of the model across subjects**

The model may be applied to all disciplines within the social studies curriculum
being historical perspective, geographical perspective, government and citizenship,
economics, psychology or sociology. Teachers need to be creative and constructive so
that children find meaningful and engaging what they are learning in the classroom in
their subject areas. Our pedagogical task is to work out how we can organize content
about the real world in such a way as to encourage ordinary children to use their
considerable intellectual abilities in learning. The following is an exemplified story-form
model that is true to the epistemological nature of the discipline and more accessible to
children.

**Social Studies:**

Applying the model to Social Studies content can help to make accessible and
meaningful topics that are usually considered too difficult for children, such as
“Colonialism and Independence” or “Capitalism and Communism”. This is important
because huge ranges of political and economic events are interpreted in terms of it. Also,
both conflicts are affectively engaging because they represent ongoing stories of battles
between prominent values. The powerful binary conflicts that catch the importance of the
topics are: Evil empires or imperialist aggressors versus equality and freedom.

In using the story-based model to teach these topics, one can create and compare the
description of a country where transportation is free, but in which you need official
permission to go anywhere, and consider that in contrast with a country where you are
free to go wherever you like, but transportation costs a lot of money. Other
developmentally appropriate stories could be created with similar concept and theme.

The content of Social Studies also involves events, values, places, intentions,
individual people and groups – all the material out of which fictional stories are
composed. The content of social studies already comes partly story-shaped. As a result it
is easy and obvious to be able to use the story-based model to organize such material.

It may be argued that this form of curriculum, if applied to other disciplines, will
eventually make the other subjects extension of social studies. But the argument is that
subject matter of education consists primarily of the meanings, which supply content of
existing social life. As Dewey, (1958) has stated, social studies are so important that they
should give direction and organization to all branches of study. Through story-based
method children are led to construct concepts and form generalizations. It should be
noted that concepts deal with meanings as well as abstract way of thinking, feeling and
behaving and, words are simply their labels. For example, an African traditional person’s
concept of village does not include only the land but everything therein is alive and forms part of the concept of village.

Teachers should have strategies that can help children to engage in the process needed to construct important social studies ideas. It is only through the possession of these strategies that teachers could be distinguished from others who work with children.

References:

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