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## *Full Length Research Paper*

# **Development of mental, social and motor skills through some local Nigerian games and toys**

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**Play to the child is large assortment of activity that promotes his or her total development. When a child is allowed free play these results in total adjustment, character training, satisfaction, problem solving skills and education among many others. Nigerian children generally practice local games that enable them to socialize with their peers. This paper is an attempt to investigate the local games played by children and the developmental skills associated with the same games. Two hundred and thirty children were involved in the research from four public and four private schools. Ten local games were described and the children's awareness of the games and impact were discussed. The paper was able to show the local games and the effect on the development of skills in children**

**Keywords:** Games, Skills, Children, Socialize, Peers, Schools, Character training, Adjustment, Satisfaction, Education

## **INTRODUCTION**

Outdoor activities for Children are play and game based activities that are carried out, outside the classroom walls, or within the four walls of the house. It could take place in the surroundings of the home, the garden, school playground, community centres, and so on.

Outdoor activities afford children the opportunity of play and since play is an integral learning component in a child's life, outdoor activities can be seen as very central to a child's sensory development. Play according to Tee (2004) is generally accepted as the universal and foundational language of all children, also Levin (1996) explains that play is integral to children's construction of knowledge. Play activities too has been seen to help children understand the world around them and also to

discover themselves and others. They learn through play to accept challenges and be spirited (Beaven 2000).

NAEYC (1997) gives a number of benefits of outdoor play particularly and they are:

Play is an active form of learning that unites the mind, body and spirit. Until at least the age of nine, children's learning occurs best when the whole self is involved.

Play reduces the tension that often comes with having to achieve or needing to learn. In play, adults do not interfere and children relax.

Children express and work out emotional aspects of everyday experiences through unstructured play.

Children permitted to play freely with peers develop skills for seeing things through another person's point of view --- co-operating, helping, sharing and solving problems.

The development of children's perceptual abilities may suffer when so much of their experience is through

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television, computers, books, worksheets and media that require only two senses. The senses of smell, touch and taste and the sense of motion through space are powerful modes of learning.

Children who are less restricted in their access to outdoors, gain competence in moving through the larger world .....

Other researchers over the years also articulated the value of outdoor play, beginning from its effect on bodily growth and development, of fundamental nervous systems, improvement in appetite (Jenson 2000, Gobbard (1998), to social and emotional development (Singer and Singer 2000) and also development of skills necessary for adult life (Rivkin 2000). Infact Clements (2004) has expressed that children have great and diverse opportunities to enjoy their community, enjoy sensory experiences; find or create their own places of play; collect objects and develop hobbies; and increase their liking for physical activity. It is quite clear that allthese aforementioned activities are critical to a child's development. Thus the value of outdoor play cannot be overemphasized.

Outdoor play can be either free play, through game activities, through the use of equipment, (like swings and slides) and/or through interaction with toys. One thing however to note is that play (while a universal activity), is also culture specific. According to Tee (2004) play and learning become more meaningful when children are familiar with and able to relate to the play equipment. Children may not get the stimulation necessary for their overall development if they cannot relate culturally to the play activity or equipment.

This is why it is not only important to emphasis outdoor play but also very necessary that local play activities, toys and games should be re-discovered and reintroduced for such play both in school (as recess) and outside of school (in community play grounds etc.) This is more so especially when such games have mental, social and intellectual benefits for the children. This is the basis for this paper.

This research is considered significant in that it show cases local outdoor play activities that can stimulate the development of the Nigerian child in various facets. Furthermore, the play or non-play of these games gives the researchers and other childhood educators the status of local play activities of the children which will help in mounting intervention strategies to re-introduce these games to children so as to further enhance the development of the various skills that these games bring about

## Statement of the problem

This paper looked at some local Nigerian games and toys describing how and when they are played. It also highlights the type/nature of skills that could be

developed through such games and toys.

The paper further investigated whether children in the South Western part of Nigeria are familiar with the games, considering if location and type of school has anything to do with such familiarity.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A survey research methodology was used with the use of structured questionnaires and close observation/recording of children at play.

This research was in three parts viz:

Part 1: local games- description,

Part 2: description of the skills the game can develop and application areas.

Part 3: An analysis of the familiarity of children about the local games.

For part 1, groups of children were asked to demonstrate the games and photographs were taken. Each game was then presented, described and discussed)

Part 2 shows some of the skills that are developed by playing the games and some areas where such skills are applicable in the development of school age children.

Part 3, involved using awareness inventory (AI). The question asked were very simple and the children were to indicate out of the games listed, which they are familiar with, (know how to play, know the rules guiding it and how to determine the winner).

The inventory was adjudged suitable for the level of children used by two early childhood educators. Two hundred and thirty children's opinions where surveyed. This sample of children was drawn from 4 public (government owned) and 4 privately owned schools. Two schools each from each stratum were located in the urban areas and two in the rural areas. Percentages, frequency counts, charts were used to analyzed the findings.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Part 1

This depicts the description of the local games.

### Game 1 BokoBoko

Children sit down in a circle (holding their two palms in front of them in a tight clasp) and one of them is chosen as the leader. The leader holds an object in his hand and moves round the inner part of the circle. He discretely hides the object in somebody's hand. If the person is sensitive enough, she would get up and run in the other direction and the first person to get back to the empty

space, takes the space, the other, now has the duty of trying to hide the object. However, the person in whose hands the object is hidden must be fast enough. If he is not and the leader runs round back to her space, she is out of the game. The game continues till children get tired or it only remains two people.

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 1 | 2  |
| 3 | 4  |
| 5 | 6  |
| 7 | 8  |
| 9 | 10 |

**Figure 1.** the SUWE rectangle.

### **Game 2 Mo ni ni Mo ni ni**

Children sit down with legs stretched out and one of the children pats all the legs one at a time while the others sing the song/rhyme. The person whose leg her hand is on at the end of the song is asked to fold the leg and the same process is repeated till there remains only one leg out stretched. The person with that leg is either the winner or the looser.

### **Game 3 Okoto**

A game played mainly by boys. Snail shells are cut into a thimble form and then spun on the ground.

### **Game 4 Suwe**

A rectangle is drawn on the ground and divided into ten sections as shown with number one (1) to ten (10) written in the sections. A stone is thrown on each section one at a time, starting from number one (1). The player will hop round from one number to the other on one leg.

### **Game 5: Ten Ten**

This is usually played by girls facing each other; they move their legs in a rhythm and they count in tens.

### **Game 6: Boju Boju O (Hide and seek)**

Children cover the face of a player with cloth. The others hide themselves and the player will remove the cloth and try and pick any of the co players from their hiding places.

### **Game 7: Ekun meran**

A circle is made by joining hands. One person is chosen as the Goat and he stays inside the circle while another is the lion that stays outside the circle. The lion goes in and out under the locked hands trying to catch the goat the goat also runs in and out of the circle dodging the lion.

### **Game 8: Ta lo wa ninu ogba naa?**

This is the local version of who is in the garden? A player is chosen to stay in the middle of a circle made by other players. Another player moves around the outside of the circle as everyone sings the song. At the end of the song the player outside chooses the person he is standing behind to either replace him outside or join him as they move around the circle.

### **Game 9: E ma weyin o**

Children sit down in a circle. A player stands and goes round their back trying to drop an object at the back of any of the players who must know when the object is dropped. The others must not tell or spy.

### **Game 10: Ayo**

A game of numbers that also has to do with logic. The elderly usually play it. There is a box with twelve holes. Each hole containing 4 seeds. Two players play it. They move the seeds round in a particular order trying to capture each other's seeds.

## **Part 2**

This section discusses the skills that are/could be developed by the games.

## **Part 3**

This section discusses the findings of the survey

Table 2 shows (out of the 230 students surveyed), how many pupils are familiar with the games. The table reveals a high level of familiarity with all the games except 'Okoto', which records a rather low percentage. The game that has the highest frequency is 'BojuBoju'. This may not be too unexpected. This is because out of

**Table 1.** Areas of Skill Development of Games and their applications

| S/No. | Games                 | Skills                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Application                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.    | Bokoboko              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listening skill</li> <li>Ability to act quickly</li> <li>Being able to watch out for any discrete actions made by the leader</li> </ul>                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Useful for scientific investigations</li> <li>Helping children to concentrate and not be distracted</li> </ul>                    |
| 2.    | Moni ni Moni ni       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social Interaction skills</li> <li>Pronunciation of words in local language/Rhymes in local languages</li> </ul>                                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops relationships, friendships</li> <li>Develops a game spirit</li> <li>Exercises legs</li> </ul>                            |
| 3.    | Okoto                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small muscle development</li> <li>Hand/eye coordination,</li> <li>Wrist exercise- twisting.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps in fine motor skills, for writing</li> <li>Promotes scientific concepts of balance, rotation e.t.c.</li> </ul>              |
| 4.    | Suwe                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large muscle development</li> <li>Balancing skills</li> <li>Counting,</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops body co-ordination</li> <li>Exercises whole body</li> </ul>                                                              |
| 5.    | Ten Ten               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Counting in tens</li> <li>Physical development</li> <li>Ability to keep track of numbers</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Mathematics</li> <li>Exercises the whole body</li> <li>Memorisation</li> </ul>                                                 |
| 6.    | Boju Boju             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listening skills</li> <li>Sound discrimination</li> <li>Thinking skills</li> <li>Perception</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps in judging direction of sound.</li> <li>Develops ability to think (thinking of where friends can hide)</li> </ul>           |
| 7.    | Ekun Meran            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Psychomotor skills</li> <li>Pronunciation of words in local languages</li> <li>Ability to react quickly to changes</li> <li>Co-ordination of visual skills with body movement</li> <li>speed.</li> <li>accuracy in judgment</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical development</li> <li>Phonetics</li> <li>Ability to react quickly to life situations.</li> </ul>                          |
| 8.    | Ta lo wa ninu ogba na | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social interaction skills</li> <li>Phonetics</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to relate and interact, friendliness</li> <li>Life adaptation skills</li> <li>Language</li> </ul>                             |
| 9.    | E ma weyin o          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listening</li> <li>Auditory discrimination</li> <li>Affective – evils of gossiping</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In development of science process skills</li> <li>Listening to instructions</li> <li>Life skills- discipline</li> </ul>           |
| 10.   | Ayo                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High cognitive skills of application, synthesis, evaluation</li> <li>Strategy development</li> <li>Social interaction</li> </ul>                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Critical thinking in various areas of learning</li> <li>Develops game spirit</li> <li>Logical reasoning in mathematics</li> </ul> |

**Table 2.** Level of Familiarity of students with games

|     | Games                 | Frequency | Percentages (%) |
|-----|-----------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| 1.  | Bokoboko              | 196       | 85.2            |
| 2.  | Moni ni Moni ni       | 163       | 70.9            |
| 3.  | Okoto                 | 98        | 42.6            |
| 4.  | Suwe                  | 146       | 63.5            |
| 5.  | Ten Ten               | 192       | 83.5            |
| 6.  | Boju Boju             | 220       | 95.7            |
| 7.  | Ekun Meran            | 166       | 72.2            |
| 8.  | Ta lo wa ninu ogba na | 208       | 90.4            |
| 9.  | E ma weyin o          | 197       | 85.7            |
| 10. | Ayo                   | 142       | 61.7            |

**Table 3.** Familiarity with games based on school location

| Games |                       | Location  |      |            |      |
|-------|-----------------------|-----------|------|------------|------|
|       |                       | Urban     |      | Semi-Urban |      |
|       |                       | Frequency | %    | Frequency  | %    |
| 1.    | Bokoboko              | 103       | 52.5 | 93         | 47.4 |
| 2.    | Moni ni Moni ni       | 83        | 50.9 | 80         | 49.1 |
| 3.    | Okoto                 | 39        | 39.8 | 59         | 60.2 |
| 4.    | Suwe                  | 85        | 58.2 | 61         | 41.8 |
| 5.    | Ten Ten               | 99        | 51.6 | 93         | 48.4 |
| 6.    | Boju Boju             | 111       | 50.5 | 109        | 49.5 |
| 7.    | Ekun Meran            | 78        | 46.9 | 88         | 53.1 |
| 8.    | Ta lo wa ninu ogba na | 103       | 49.5 | 105        | 50.5 |
| 9.    | E ma weyin o          | 107       | 54.3 | 90         | 45.7 |
| 10.   | Ayo                   | 77        | 54.2 | 65         | 45.8 |

**Table 4.** Familiarity with games based on school type

| Games |                       | Type of School |      |           |      |
|-------|-----------------------|----------------|------|-----------|------|
|       |                       | Public         |      | Private   |      |
|       |                       | Frequency      | %    | Frequency | %    |
| 1.    | Bokoboko              | 129            | 65.8 | 67        | 34.2 |
| 2.    | Moni ni Moni ni       | 119            | 73.0 | 44        | 26.9 |
| 3.    | Okoto                 | 74             | 75.5 | 24        | 24.4 |
| 4.    | Suwe                  | 103            | 70.5 | 43        | 29.5 |
| 5.    | Ten Ten               | 122            | 63.5 | 70        | 36.4 |
| 6.    | Boju Boju             | 133            | 60.5 | 87        | 39.5 |
| 7.    | Ekun Meran            | 127            | 76.5 | 39        | 23.5 |
| 8.    | Ta lo wa ninu ogba na | 130            | 62.5 | 78        | 37.5 |
| 9.    | E ma weyin o          | 125            | 63.5 | 72        | 36.5 |
| 10.   | Ayo                   | 90             | 63.4 | 52        | 36.6 |

all the games, 'Bojuboju' seems the simplest; children do not need any specialized training or skill to be able to play the game. 'Okoto' is a special toy material locally produced. It is not commonly found nowadays. This may be a reason why the children were unfamiliar with the game.

The results of a further investigation to find out whether location or type of school had any effect on the familiarity of pupils with the games is presented in tables 3 and 4 respectively.

Table 3 shows comparable levels of familiarity with most games by pupils in the semi-urban and urban areas. The only game that showed a great difference based on location is the 'Okoto' with a higher percentage in semi-urban. The reason could be that, the 'okoto' itself would most likely be found in a semi-urban area rather than an urban area. Therefore more children from the semi-urban may have come in contact with the 'okoto' than the children from the urban area. Furthermore, many children from the urban areas would have more sophisticated toys thus making 'okoto' not too attractive to them.

Table 4 reveals that the level of familiarity with most of

the games were much lower with the pupils in private schools. This could be adduced to the fact that most private schools emphasize the western culture over the local culture; this may however not be deliberate. In such private schools it would not be uncommon to find pupils playing more of board games (like Ludo, scrabble etc.), video games and westernized local games (such as "I sent a letter to my friend" – which is an adaptation of e ma weyin o).

## SUMMARY

In this paper, ten games that are played by Nigerian children (in the southwestern part) are described. The skills that these games develop or could develop in the pupils were also discussed, highlighting an inexhaustible list of areas of application of these skills. Furthermore, a survey to find out from two hundred and thirty (230) pupils (from urban and semi-urban areas and from public and private schools) their familiarity with the games was carried out. The results showed that there was a high

level of familiarity generally of pupils with most games the only exception being 'okoto'. The results further showed that more pupils from public schools are familiar with the games than those from private schools, however whether the pupils were from urban or semi-urban areas did not really matter in the level of familiarity with almost all of the games listed.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the issues raised and discussed in this paper, it can be concluded that generally, pupils surveyed were familiar with most games except 'okoto'. Furthermore, pupils from public schools are more familiar with the games than pupils from private schools. It is therefore recommended that for all Nigerian children to gain the values and develop the skills associated with the games, they (the games) should be re-introduced into the schools. This could be done through physical education classes/lessons and also through special programmes of play organized by early childhood educators, children play advocacy groups and so on.

It would also be advisable that such organizations mount interventions that would educate parents, teachers and child workers on the effects of outdoor play on the overall development of the child and more especially on the values of the local games and activities on various areas of skill development of children. It is believed that if the awareness of these groups of people is raised, then the children in their care would be given the opportunities to play and thus develop in more areas of learning and skill.

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