

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Appearance of good craftsmanship education in the development of Nigerian children

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The people of developing countries, taking Nigeria as a case in hand are more of consumers of foreign technology than producers. This is affecting their gross domestic product (GDP). Many remain in poverty as they continue to borrow from the developed countries. Technological development is a function of creativity. The developed countries are quite aware of this and they have vigorously taken creative activities as priority. Observed is the trend that the modern Nigeria has lost the institution of good craftsmanship with the disappearance of the master craftsmen in art and design who patiently paid infinite attention to detail and perfection in the execution of their works. Since the present generation of children is born into a design-conscious and tool-using age, there is the need for creativity to be encouraged to foster from the home. This paper then argues the vital need for parents to expose their wards to art and design education, which the children need for better discovery of themselves and the needs of the world around them.

**Key words:** Scientific, tell-and-show, clay, traditional craftsmanship, creative modeling.

## INTRODUCTION

A cursory look at the art education literature reveals that child centred learning with its focus on what the learner brings to artistry, to making and responding is out of fashion as a guiding principle of instruction (Burton, 2002). When a child is born, the parents start thinking about giving good education to the child (<http://www.saching.com>). Good education in this discourse implies and informs such education as craftsmanship education discussed in <http://www.yorubanation.org> (2006) as making the child a whole person and a contributory member in measure of community development. The days of rhetoric or humanities education appear to have been overtaken by the need for functional education demanded by the tidal wave of technological, economic, social and cultural challenges of the present time. It is envisaged that the child is exposed to art and design production to enable him appreciate the process and products of creative designs. This should be the starting point of being able to relate with relevant industry, society and culture from childhood. Little wonder, in Murray (2005) it is

argued that craft has the capacity to uplift people who have fallen to the bottom of society. The challenge is to enable talent to rise beyond welfare, and develop a mean of expression in its own right. But the real problem in current Nigerian society is that of how to identify the creative leanings of the child towards the needs of the society and lifelong actualization of craftsmanship education.

Being a pedestal for technological invention and growth, creativity in art and design craftsmanship is a necessity that helps the bearer to discover and be discovered if introduced very early in life. According to Mairi-Secnaid in Robertson Standfield (1976: 31), craftsmanship is needed in education in a machine age as more than ever, because it is a fundamental mode of education through which the child explores, discovers the qualities of, and comes to terms with the world in which he lives. Bernard Shaw in Standfield (1976: 224), acknowledging the essence of training the child in art and design craftsmanship very early in life succinctly put it that: If between the ages of five and fifteen we could give all our children a training of the senses through the constructive shaping of materials, if we could accustom their hands and eyes, indeed all their instruments of

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sensation, to a creative communion with sounds and colours, textures and consistencies, a communion with nature in all its substantial variety, then we need not fear the fate of children in a wholly mechanized world, p224.

In other words, Bernard Shaw is advocating a type of education that is "Tell-and-show". Tell and show education is the type that the beneficiary can convincingly demonstrate and defend its relevance to national needs and economic self-reliance and which one can fall back on in tough economic times. The cautions are expedient, as all too often parents appear to be concerned mainly about the material things of life for their children. But no other legacy tailored to develop a particular creative and lucrative enterprise surpasses education. Or else, a child may have the education "desired" but "not required" because of irrelevance to needs. This is a much apparent reason to support the fact that child upbringing is a highly complex issue that has to do with numerous underlying factors. Herberholz (1974: ix) has once noted concisely that early children years are formative ones, and the education programme is remiss if it is not rich in input and conducive to the development of the child's creative powers.

Given we are living in a world enlivened by a broad spectrum of designs, trends in resurgence of the global economic recession and the massive crusade against technological irrelevance reveal that today's educational imperatives warrant functional upbringing for the African child. Parents therefore have responsibility to observe, train and guide them in certain skills that will make them contribute to modern trends. Speaking particularly, this paper proposes the use of mixed media (clay, paper, stick, polystyrene, plastic and metals) as appropriate to prepare the child as a craftsman for a profitable future. And since children nowadays are born into a tool-using and 'design-crazy' world, impartation of creative education seems less problematic. The exposure and challenges of science and technical advances in our globalized world are catalyst for this type of functional education.

### Scope of study

The study examines Nigerian children and the craftsmanship process. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic society with over 144million population (including the children) as at the 2006 population head count (National Population Census, 2006). There are many cultural societies such as the Yorubas, Ibos, Ijaws, Akwa-Iboms, Calabar, Edos, Nupes, Igalas, Ebiras, Gwaris and the Jukuns to mention just a few. However, the three official languages are Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa. The country runs both formal and informal systems of education which are greatly influenced by a tripod of the indigenous, western missionary and quoranic educations.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### Concepts of design and education: seeking the meeting points

Design education otherwise referred to in this paper as craftsmanship training is a desirable enterprise for the actualization of modern technological skill. To understand and appreciate its meaning, it is necessary to explain separately what 'design' and 'education' mean with a view to seeking their meeting point.

Design, from the English grammar perspective can be a noun when it is used to denote a product or a verb when it is used as a doing thing or a process. But this remark is sparse and superficial when considering the complex and enormous nature of any creative process or end-product. None-the-less, design as challenged by creative ingenuity has meaning of many kinds. Its concepts are not only deep but also broad that many scholars and design consultants (Artists, Architects, Environmentalists, Advertisers, Marketers, product designers etc.) may not be able to explain it in all respects. Rather, they can only dwell on their own related views of the subject. Artists opine that design articulates a whole range of relationships, which draws extensively form art and form, into a definable plan and a hallmark of intellectually contrived intent, realizable in an articulate craftsmanship (Agberia, 2002). Advertisers consider design, in marketing as a generic term embracing all types of visual work, e.g. roughs, typography, graphics, finished art, for all kinds of application - advertising, product promotion, exhibition, print work and interior decoration (Hart and Stapleton, 1992). The process of designing is a tripod of imaginative thinking, skill and function. Design has to do with the wisdom of knowing what to do, having the skill of doing it and doing it functionally to solve an existing problem or a potential one.

Debates and brainstorming that came up in the International Design Congress held in Glasgow, Scotland in 1993, entitled "Design Renaissance" and organized on behalf of the International Council of Graphic Design Associations (ICOGRADA), the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (ICSID) and the International Federation of Interior Architects/Interior Designers (IFI) gave much food for thought. Of the many submissions, one cannot but believe that design is a tool for solving problems of how to make the human environment liable (Myerson, 1994, Marzano, 1994, Manzini, 1994, Kalman, 1994, Hills, 1994, and Kerckhove, 1994).

Considering the ways by which the power of modern technology has made the human race producers and consumers of simple and complex designs, it is important to remark that design has become wholesome, a functional form of work that opens up one's senses of lasting utilitarian enrichment. It is enriching and omnifarious so much that most human endeavours and professional

disciplines have an attachment of the word “design” to help make their meanings and what they stand for understandable and accomplished. Some of the disciplines are fashion design, computer design, furniture design, food design, industrial design, engineering design, packaging design, architectural design and automobile design. One characteristic factor common to all designs is that none can be considered successful without purpose. This essentially means to say that a particular problem of needs will have to suggest to a designer what to design, how to design it and possibly, when to design it.

Education, like the word ‘design’ has many angles of view. It may be viewed as certain activity, which can be said to be a process of continuous learning. It may as well be seen from the angle of methods and techniques. Education may even mean the content contained in a curriculum of studies or vocation. Or even be described in terms of product. Which ever way it is viewed, it is generally easier to see education as a process of teaching and learning which adopts schooling, instruction, training, initiation and adaptation as method of inculcating the right type of knowledge, developing moral excellence and manipulative skills that are adaptable to the needs of the society in which a citizen finds him/herself. Thus, the opinion that education is a process through which a group member of the society is grinded and nourished to become useful to him/herself and the society (Olonade 2004:113), clearly summarizes the rationale behind giving young children the type of education that would make them weather through imminent economic hardships in their adult life.

Design education therefore is the teaching and learning of creative diligence to draw, plan, arrange and build forms. Since relevant designs are aftermaths of purpose, function and satisfaction, it can be said that design education is the education that teaches how to create to satisfy some utilitarian interests. Similarly, if design is regarded as format, plan, organization, order and schedule, then, design education is teaching or training individuals in the art of using order, format, and plan to create for aesthetics or to invent for prototypical models.

### **Conceptual meaning of ‘Nigerian children’**

The concept of Nigerian Child as used in this study depicts that child who is born and nurtured in African environment where multifarious problems of poverty, low level technology and limited opportunities pose challenges to his optima performance. An average child in Nigeria lives in the rural area, or the overcrowded urban slum, majority of the children attends school with limited resources or deprived of formal education. Therefore, he or she is largely disadvantaged when compared with his likes in the developed world. African children seem to have limited exposures in many subjects. Many of them are exposed to different social vices early in life because

they lack adequate parental care and supervision. The truth of the matter is that children from broken homes are badly affected. It is still a commonplace to see many Nigerian children hawking goods when they should be in school or after school. Although the children of the elites are well taken care of and adequately protected, some do not even attend Nigerian schools. Those in this category are of small percentage. Already there is class segregation among the children of the rich and the children of the poor. However, it is worthy of note that many factors such as African cultures and religious tenet are responsible for disparity in the kind of exposures available for the Nigerian child.

Traditionally, most west African cultures believe in divinity and destiny, the Yorubas in particular believed that before a child comes into the world, he or she had already been understudied and assigned what to become in life by *Olodumare* (the Supreme deity), ably assisted by *Orunmila* (Arch divinity) who are the determiners of human destiny. The process of doing this is for the child to, in heaven; prior to being born into the world kneel down before *Olodumare* to receive its own *ipin* (chosen lot or portion), otherwise known as *Ayanmo* (destiny) (Awolalu and Dopamu, 1979). Any lot apportioned to the child in heaven is unalterable throughout its life span on earth (Awolalu et al., 1979). This is an aggressive belief in divine predestination. Except of recent, African superstitious mythology seemed, in a way to conflict with modern concepts of child development and career guidance. By far, a keen psychological exploration of residual craftsmanship in the child should be a priority concern of parents in this technological dispensation. But sure, not metaphysical probe into the future of the child through oracular consultations or fetish means would help the present generation of African children.

One fact is however sure, that every child no matter the race and religion has the tendency to be curious about the world around him and to replicate or reflect the world. Thus the Nigerian child can be nurtured, inspired and motivated. Careful observations show that childhood is a naturally receptive, absorbent stage for moulding character and skills. So, the most appropriate starting point for giving fundamentals of any education is the home into which a child is born. Pointedly, a careful study of an average Nigerian child and how he or she manipulates playthings within his/her immediate reach, and the freehand scribbling on virtually anything could be very educative. Every child is a potential artist or designer judging from his interaction and fascination with objects of unlike shapes, sizes, and weights and colours in a way that makes sense to them. Orifa (2003:83) opined that children enjoy art and that this reflects in their interest in colour and outlines which is obvious as soon as babies grab bright toys or delight at the liveliness of a familiar animal or animation of a domestic object. He further says that all children need the opportunity to express themselves. In their enthusiasm; they decorate bedroom walls,

kitchen, cabinets, books and anything with flat, inviting surface. Certainly, designer's traits in the Nigerian child need to be discovered and developed to full blossoming from the tender age. Abraham Maslow, one of the leading exponents in a school of thought known as humanistic psychology propounded the theory that every child is unique and that whatever potential skill discovered in a child must be nurtured and developed with humanistic concerns. The opinion that when children show special aptitudes, such as an ability to generate many questions, a keen memory, advanced reading or pre-reading skills, artistic skills or other above-average-abilities, adults should encourage them to build on and expand their skills (Tijani, 2003:27) is closely associated with Abraham Maslow's assertion.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

The research instrument adopted in this study is studio experimentation. This is an experimental study which was conducted in the arts and crafts studio of a nursery and primary school, in Abeokuta, the capital city of Ogun State, Nigeria. It employed observation methods to record the performances of the different ages of pupils concerning the use of the 3Hs (hand head and heart) to achieve good craftsmanship education. The observational tests were recorded pictorially and discussed theoretically.

### The scientific study of the child's intellectual growth rate

Global focus on the scientific study of the child is only of recent times. This was when on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1976 the United Nations General Assembly passed a Resolution, declaring 1979 as the International year of the child (IYC). By this Resolution, the world's attention was drawn to the present condition and to the future of its children with particular reference to general child development. The focus also included in particular, cross-pollinating children's education, on a more globally expressive and progressively consistent manner. Such scientific study also reiterated that children learn faster as they grow at the tender age. A careful study of an average child in the home has revealed that childhood art can be classified into certain growth stages, which will enable us to understand the developmental stages that occur in children in relation to their perceptual ability and creative expressions. Piaget, for instance, spent many years studying children's intellectual development, and became convinced that children undergo a series of developmental steps from birth to age eighteen (Onwueghu, 1979). Based on findings, this paper hereby makes a proposal for classification of the child art into four intellectual growth stages, namely: the stage of linear amusement, the stage of media acquaintance, the stage of imaginative skills and the stage of realistic circumstances as recorded during simple observations. Based on precedents, this section therefore draws energy from the intellectual works of some progenitors of child intellectual study, like Piaget and Lowenfield to make the following proposals.

## FINDINGS

### The stage of nursery and linear art (Age 6 months - 3 years)

The stage comprises of the crawling and the infant

amusement age. Observations show that, unknown to the child, scribbling is made on the sand as the he crawls up and down. His fingers, knees and toes render varied lines in a non-conscious manner but are directionally expressive of his crawling movement. If explored further, an adult designer can make some sense out of such sand impressions. As the child advances the age of two he can interact with any available mark-rendering media like pencil, pen, crayon, chalk and charcoal, and can dexterously be taught to produce fine marks, lines and textures. So if parents spot design gift, no matter how little in their children, they should make bold to encourage it without prejudice. From close observations, healthy and playful children have pleasure in holding writing medium (pencil or crayon) to roll impressions in a garbled, non-directional, freehand manner. This can be referred to as random scribbling (Figure 1). But it must be pointed out at this age range also, that little appreciable can be taught to the child's conscious mind, rather, the child behaves from sheer sub consciousness, and do things impulsively. Before children master the art of writing and spelling of alphabets properly they first engage in rendering random scribbling in disorganized concentric circles, running rigidly over and under sometimes with intuitions. This can be considered to be the first attempt of the child so ever to show drawing skill in the home, and a predictably sure foundation for being a designer/artist. Looking at the child scribbles and its personality and psychology, one cannot but say that it represents the emotion of the child's personal and free-and-easy character. It also portrays original art as opposed to reprographic art, which pulls edition or replicate copies.

A child gets amused each time it comes in contact with scribbling materials and exerts the use of shoulder, arm, wrist and fingers to handle them. The results of handling mark-rendering media or any designing material could seem meaningless to an adult or even to the child itself, but it is expressive of the child's subconscious perception and art craftsmanship in the abstract.

### Primary 1: The stage of media acquaintance (Age 4 - 5)

It is of note that the child is more media-friendly at this stage. He can distinguish between the mark-rendering media like pencil, biro, crayon, and chalk and sometimes, charcoal, a little more consciously than the previous (linear amusement) stage. The child can be able to cherish writing, drawing, and moulding materials and handle them with some level of appreciation. Children in this group claim all things within their reach to themselves saying "my own;" "my own". This trait in children is helpful to them in media acquaintance and design appreciation. At this stage also, the child can watch the adult moulding traditional objects like pot, house, plate and other simple household things with medium like clay or paper and



**Figure 1.** A 3 year old child busy with the art of scribbling.

would be ready to follow on with excitements. Simple paper craft like cap, boat, hand fan and the national flag designing could as well be inculcated into the child's learning experiences as in plates 4 and 5. While watching the adult designing, the child also wants to touch all the materials and wanting to imitate what the adult is doing. Though, may initially muddle up things, the child could be doing something at its own pace if given a chance. And characteristically, children at this stage are ready to show anger or resist any attempt directed at hindering them from handling materials that excite them most.

### **Primary 3: The stage of imaginative skills (Age 6 - 8)**

This is beginning of gift or skill display. Though still impulsive, most of their concepts are generated with imagination and can truly reflect the nature of gift they have. It is easy to predict the career bias of the child at this stage, be it artistic, dancing, singing, or drama.

Through design education at this age range, parents could predict which profession a child would choose in the world of Engineering, Architecture, Fashion, Textile, Ceramic or Graphic Designs or any of the Visual Arts. The world around the child is free to evaluate the child at this stage but his or her memory for image creations and renditions is real.

### **Primary 6: The stage of realistic circumstances (Age 9 - 12)**

This is the age range of the primary school leaving pupils in Nigerian. It is a transition period into the secondary school and the adolescent stage. The child is enthusiastic in showing his immediate skills by drawing and designing things within the environment (sometimes members and the things of its household) and displaying them on the wall. Simple materials like chalk, colours, brushes, ink, cardboard paper, plastecine, crayon, adhesives and clay

can be handled by the child more expressively than in the previous stages. No doubt, the child is confronted with tasks and realistic circumstances. He becomes a little more matured with developed sensual perception which is needed to render creativity to impress the beholder of his work. But most times the child art at this stage has neither commercial audience nor commission; it expresses its unsolicited skills in a self-pleasing way. The artist/designer in the child begins to come up as previous experience crops into the new challenges.

### **Project: Moulding a pot with decorative designs**

#### **Materials**

Clay, water, plastic bowl, modeling tools and cellophane

#### **Methods**

Any of pinching, slab or coiling methods was introduced to the pupils. In the case of pinching method, a lump of clay was given to them to pinch from the center and form into a desired shape. Pupils joined clay slabs together with clay slip to design simple geometric objects such as a house, vase, flat receptacles, box, cube, cylinder or pyramid. The coil method required rolling of coils of plastic clay and arranging them on top of one another to form shapes. The pupils were made to produce decorative designs by using sharp objects to make line incisions. By now the pupils have been sensitized to get familiar with Nigerian cultural motifs and reflect such on its designs.

Regard this particular craft as a representation of the haulage industry and automobile technology. Children in Nursery and Primary Schools in Nigeria are delighted in creating moving and animated forms. These occupy their time, keen interest and also their concept of vehicle or material possession. They are guided in doing this in the school and they continue the craft at home in a playful way (Figures 2 - 5).

## **DISCUSSIONS**

### **Three-dimensional design lessons**

It is truly observed, as noted in Casson (1977) that one of the most available and cheapest local materials a child could use for creative modeling is clay. Paper could also be used. This is the reason pottery design and paper craft have been proposed in this paper. Observations proved that the three-dimensional clay moulding assignments given to the pupil under study were exciting to them presumably because of the 'play ways' methods of handling the simple materials - clay and paper. This went in line with the position of Standfield (1976) that things that appear to the child as playthings are always





**Figure 2.** Lumps of working clay - processed ready for moulding.



**Figure 5.** Paper craft: child designing utility objects with paper.



**Figure 3.** School children of age 6 - 9 years learning how to knead clay with hands.



**Figure 4.** A parent guiding his children to cut paper for designing.

interesting to them. The methodology of the teacher was very useful in the teaching of skills of dexterity. It was also discovered that the fun in the art of moulding with the hand as shown in plates 3, 4 and 5 really kept the pupils' hand, head and heart busy and concentrated. Above are the projects the pupils were exposed to in order to further stimulate their creative potentials as suggested in Herberholz (1974).

Specifically, the child should be involved in traditional craftsmanship serving as a basis in the first instance, as a cultural order for organising a physical pattern, preparatory for a future world of work, and a lifelong design education. Traditional design training and skill-driven engagements in the new craftsmanship education of the Nigerian child could be largely meaningful in the face of a rapidly changing social and cultural pattern.

Among the factors that seem to dominate the changes that have occurred in ideas about creative activity of the Nigerian child, which inevitably affect ideas of modern craftsmanship training, is the acceptance of modern convention of forms and functions of objects and the rejection of abstract information and ideas. This position also justifies Herbert Reed's vision whose ideas have finally found response in educational theories expanded by Schonau (2002) to the split between daily reality and school practice, between logic and life. Engagement of the child in craftsmanship activities arising from the appreciation of physical nature of the materials and their informal and spatial functioning also combine to reconstruct advancement of blending the traditional craftsmanship with new. Little wonder Hampton (2002) believes that the history, culture and creativity of the West Africans (Nigerians inclusive) are very rich, varied in content and ancient.

It is noteworthy to state that compositional adventures of creative craft and their modifications to suit modern society can only be fruitful when the classroom

orientations are accentuated by the home work. In order to bring a renewed vigour into the aspect of creativity of the child that suggests constructions, formal lessons in basic design is also expedient to bridge some docile gaps between the home and the classroom. Nevertheless, the approach to a creative craftsmanship skill that would instigate a new appearance of formative and formulative principles in the Nigerian child is envisaged by group activities. In these lie the interactive and 'intra-relative romance of design decisions with results, commitment to collective responsibility, and providing prototypes of collective oriented goals (Fatuyi, 1996).

Craftsmanship training of the child through group activities engenders collective methods of character education and the zeal to forge solutions to common problems under strict adult supervision. These interactions are combined with opportunities created so that the youth could also reciprocate it through the younger children and their parents as to continue to have an opportunity to express their interpretations to and relationships with works of art (Sims, 2002). The perceptual, physical, emotional and psychological involvement of peer-groups in a craft training programme could assist to provide a novel discovery.

## Conclusion

Increased emphasis on child development through creative education, using the principle of "catching them young" is of the essence. It would ignite considerable foundational interest and development of the African child's creative instinct and abilities. Though the scribbling of the child may be garbled and mutilated, it is of interesting intentions, being original work in its own right. And if meticulously studied by the mind's eye, can produce a thousand and one evocative interpretations for further realities. Really, children are not afraid to grab any writing medium (pencil, crayon, charcoal, chalk etc) for any writing surface (wall, paper, doors, plank, slate, floor, carpet etc.).

Home-given education is pre-primarily important and helpful in discovering the child and determining which other schools or career education the child should pursue. The time has therefore come when institutional settings, ever than before should clamour for support from the home in the business of impartation of economically viable knowledge in a child. Knowing the enormity of danger in leaving whole bulk of the every day education to the institutional systems alone, it is of candid view that there should be a collaborative backup from the home end to the school. Besides, for obvious reasons that Nigerian children use a greater part of each day indoors, more of the inculcation of general education including moral rights and cultural values are received from the home than in the school. Children need to be exposed to as many different artists and their artwork (Figures 1 - 5). Story telling, history and events will help

in teaching the children how things are done in the past in relation to the present. This certainly will help predict the future developments. They should be encouraged to think and talk about what they see and feel as well as record them expressively in methods and materials, which correspond with their age and experiential capabilities. An Internet document, (Jimenez, 2002) also notes succinctly that parents of the supporting community need to provide the resources and materials they need as well as a place where they can do their work.

In the country at present, a few governmental programmes are on ground that cares for acquisition of vocational skills for children. One of such children programmes is the Ondo State Handicapped Children Education Foundation (HANDEF) that gives design education, in the form of handicraft to the handicapped children in order to make them productive, integrative and a more relevant in the society. The Foundation strongly believes in principle and practice that a child's disability is not inability and as a result, designed for the disabled children handcrafted education. With some of these programmes in place, awareness for interest in home training and child-care (including education, health, love and general welfare) is increasing from home to home. Also, through the various public campaigns and solicitations from different quarters such as religious and non-religious organizations, the mass media, cultural, governmental and non-governmental organizations, crusades against child abuse, child trafficking, and gender segregations are massively proliferating.

That design education should be a cradle type of experience should be acknowledged. Automatically, parents have become teachers who may not necessarily have deep pedagogical skills but a rudimentary, or even, peripheral measure of designing spark. If therefore, we must build inventive powers in our children, then, parents must successfully devise a means of inculcating art and design education in their wards. Successful art and design education is a joy to children and young people as it opens up their sense to ongoing globalized technological enrichments (an internet document on Art Education Progress and problems htm, 2004). Then, as a basis for reasoning, cognizance must be taken of the statement of Herberholz (Jimenez, 2002: 11 - 13), which has the opinion that children need childhood encounter with the basics of aesthetics (design) education right from the home because it is a dynamic and growth-promoting breakthrough, designed to enrich a child's life by increasing his capability to use his sense joyfully in experiencing his environment. Nevertheless, the government, community and the home are concerned with the responsibility for this civilized and life-supporting type of education. But the home will always be the first school of the child.

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