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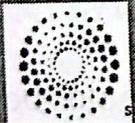
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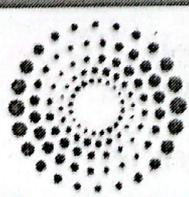
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Development of Soft Toy Patterns for Children in Anambra State.

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Abstract

This study focused on developed and validated soft toy patterns for children in Anambra State. The design of the study was Research and Development (R/D). A sample of 379 subjects was drawn from 1,514 teachers that are mothers in government approved private nursery schools in the state. Sampling techniques used were purposive sampling and simple random sampling. Instruments used to collect data are toiles sewn from patterns drafted and assessment criteria charts for safety and shape. Pattern pieces were drafted for five soft toys. The patterns were transferred to fresh paper and pattern instructions were marked on all the pattern pieces. These pattern pieces were used to cut the five soft toys. The toys were assembled and teachers assessed them for safety and shape. Teachers rated the different variables for the soft toys. Recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

Introduction

Toy is an object that is intended for play and whose main purpose is to provide fun and amusement. Toys play important roles in education of the child. They are fun and help children to learn about themselves, the environment and the people around them (National Literacy Trust 2005). Anyanwu (2004) observed that children have general tendency to play, therefore suggested that child-

care-givers should provide them with toys and other materials which they can manipulate and play with.

On the other hand, the national policy on education (Federal Govt. of Nigeria, 2004), recognized the importance of toys, hence one of the objectives of pre-primary education is to inculcate in the child the spirit of inquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature and the local environment. Toys come in different

forms, shapes and colours. They can also be categorized as hard and soft toys. According to Hornby (2003), soft toy is toy made into a shape, including the shape of an animal, using fabric and filled with a soft substance. Patterns are used in making soft toys. Igbo and Iloeje (2003), defined pattern as piece of paper drafted and cut to size and shape, used for cutting out fabric pieces for making dresses as well as other articles. Soft toy pattern is developed from basic pattern, which is the starting point for pattern drafting.

Safety, according to Hornby (2003) refers to the state of being safe and protected from danger and harm. Safe toys, therefore refer to toys children can use especially during play without the risk of injury. United States consumer Protection Safety Commission (1998), and Lichtenstein (2004) are in agreement that safe toys should have the following characteristics:

- Well constructed to withstand the use and abuses of children in the age range, for which the toy is appropriate.
- No shock of thermal hazards in electrical toys
- No toxic material in or on toys
- No sharp point on toys
- No small parts to be lodged in the throat, ear or nose
- No glass or brittle plastic
- No parts to entrap fingers, toes and hands.
- No long strings etc.

Common sense may be the most important preventive measures regarding the safety of toys. According to Dike (2007), parents and teachers should be knowledgeable about the toys and playthings children are playing with. If toys show signs of wear or have broken parts, they should be discarded.

Toys are intrinsically linked with play. In other words, they are the main materials for play and used for children. According to National Literacy Trust (2005), a child's development during the first five years is more dependent upon the available play materials than at any other age. Myoungson (2002), noted that most materials influence children's development positively. The use of toys in play helps children develop physically, socially, intellectually and creatively (Dike 2007). Davis (2001) observed that a young child uses objects in his or her physical environment as tools to accomplish activities, and the use of tools as mediators of activity is linked ultimately to the child's intellectual development and learning. He maintained that toys are the most common tools available during infancy and the early childhood period. Very early in development, toys dominate children's daily activities and play critical role in helping them construct meaning from their every day experiences.

Play is described by the Nation

Literacy Trust (2005), as the work of a child. Mgbodile and Iwuh (2000) saw play as a natural activity for every young child. Play provides many opportunities for children to learn and grow physically, mentally and socially. They stressed that if play is the child's work then toys are the child's tools. Play has an undeniable influence of every aspects of a child's development. Play is pleasurable activity that is engaged in for its own sake (Santrock 2003). It is one of those activities children engaged in as they grow and develop. It is essential to a child's health and contributes to the domain of development. Through play, the child's sense are stimulated and they learn how to use their muscles, coordinate sight with movement, gain mastery over their bodies and acquire new skills, (Feldman, 2000). Play increases affiliation with peers, releases tension, advances cognitive development, and stimulates exploration. Play develops individual's thinking and ability to take risk and it helps children to practice the roles they will assume later in life. Through play, children satisfy their exploratory drive by acting as a means whereby they can safely explore and seek out new information (Santrock, 2001). In play, children learn new roles, adapt to situations, cope with emotions, and understand other peoples' viewpoints better.

Drafted pattern is the type the dressmaker makes using the body

measurements for mass production or for specific individuals. There are different methods of different pattern drafting. The methods as identified by Igbo and Iloeje (2003) are:-

- The modeling or drafting method
- The knock-off design method
- Modifying from a set
- The computer-aided design method and
- The flat pattern method

Much equipment are necessary for carrying out soft toys pattern drafting. According to Peake (2000), such equipment includes: Pliers (snipe nosed or 'electricians' pliers, stuffing tools, paper, card, pencils, pins needles, glue, fabrics, fur fabrics, felt, fleece, velour, calico, stockinette, cotton and cotton lawn, interfacing, threafs and fillings.

If Nigerian children are to benefit from the use of soft toys, there is need for locally produced patterns so that parents, teachers, tailors/seamstress can utilize them for soft toy production. Based on these, there is need to develop patterns for making soft toys.

Purpose of the Study The major purpose of the study was to develop patterns for soft toys. Specifically, the study:

- developed different soft toy patterns for children.
- "true" the developed pattern pieces.
- validated the toy pattern pieces

produced relative to safety of the children and shape of the toys.

Methodology

Design of the study This is a research and development study (R & D). Research and Development is an industry-based development model in which the findings of research are used to design new products and procedures, which then are systematically field-tested, evaluated and refined until they meet specified criteria for effectiveness, quality, or similar standards (Gall, Gall, and Borg 2007). The steps adopted in carrying out the study are as follows:

- Developing Soft toys measurement chart that were used to collect data.
- Actual taking of measurement of the soft toys for soft toy making.
- Drafting of block soft toy patterns (for Dog, Fish, Rabbit, Mouse and Lion).
- Constructing the different identified soft toys.
- Field-testing for safety and shape of the block patterns drafted.
- Correcting and transferring the correct pattern on fresh paper.

Area of the study The study was carried out in Anambra State. The population for the study constituted teachers in all the government approved private nursery schools in Anambra State who are mothers. There are 1,514 such nursery school teachers in the area of the study (Anambra State Ministry of

Education).

Sample for the study Purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting teachers who are mothers from the six educational zones in the state. Namely: Aguata, Awka, Nnewi, Ogidi, Onitsha and Otuocho zones. Random sampling was used to select 12 schools from Aguata zone, 15 schools from Awka zones, 24 schools from Nnewi zone, 25 schools from Ogidi zone, 33 schools from Onitsha zone and 2 schools from Otuocho zone given a total sample size of 379 subjects.

Instrument for data collection Two types of instruments were developed for data collection – toiles constructed from drafted soft toys for children and assessment criteria chart for respondents. The instrument were face validated by three clothing experts from University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The instruments were subjected to trial testing using teachers that are mothers in one nursery school in the area of the study but not involved in the study. The scores were subjected to Cronbach Alpha method of testing internal consistency. The inter-item correlation was 0.85. These index in reasonably high enough to consider the instrument reliable.

Method of data collection This involved drafting, cutting out, assembling the patterns, evaluating the safety and shape, correcting and producing final pattern pieces.

Method of data analysis The soft toy toiles were validated by the

respondents. The mean of the evaluators score on assessments criteria chart were used. This chart have 5 options of strongly - 5, Agree - 4, undecided - 3, disagree - 2, strongly disagree - 1. Any item with a mean of 3.50 & above were regarded as satisfactory, while those below 3.50 were regarded as unsatisfactory. The evaluator's score formed a parameter for drafting the final pattern which served as block patterns for soft toys for children in Anambra State.

Findings of the Study

The following findings were made:

- Five soft toy patterns were drafted for Dog, Fish, Rabbit, Mouse and Lion.
- The Patterns were tried and assembled to make soft toy toiles.
- The toys were viewed as safe for the children's use.
- The shapes of the toys validated were appropriate.

Table I: Teachers assessment of the soft toys relative to safety for children

S/No	CRITERIA	Dog		Fish		Rabbit		Mouse		Lion	
		X	REMA RKS	X	REMA RKS	X	REMA RKS	X	REMA RKS	X	REMA RKS
1.	Well constructed to withstand the use and abuses by children.	4.00	Satisfactory	4.31	Satisfactory	3.63	Satisfactory	4.00	Satisfactory	4.18	Satisfactory
2.	No rough edges	4.10	✓	3.96	✓	3.68	✓	3.80	✓	3.66	✓
3.	No toxic materials in or on the toy.	3.97	✓	4.00	✓	3.77	✓	3.55	✓	3.58	✓
4.	No sharp point on toys	3.73	✓	3.77	✓	4.51	✓	2.38	Unsatisfactory	4.43	✓
5.	No small parts to be lodged in throat, ears and nose	3.69	✓	3.44	Unsatisfactory	4.13	✓	4.47	Satisfactory	3.48	Unsatisfactory
6.	No glass or brittle plastic	4.07	✓	4.04	Satisfactory	3.69	✓	4.00	✓	4.55	Satisfactory
7.	No parts to entrap fingers, toes and hands	2.66	Unsatisfactory	3.93	✓	4.11	✓	3.48	Unsatisfactory	4.47	✓
8.	No long strings	3.69	Satisfactory	4.13	✓	4.09	✓	4.10	Satisfactory	4.00	✓

Table I shows that seven of the criteria were found to be satisfactory and one criterion unsatisfactory for Dog and Fish soft toys. For Rabbit soft toy, all the criteria were found to be satisfactory. It was indicated that six out of eight criteria had a mean range

of 3.55 to 4.47 showing they were safe while two criteria with a mean range of 2.38 and 3.48 showed that some parts of the toy had sharp points and could entrap fingers, toes & hands respectively for the mouse soft toy. For the lion soft toy, the respondents

expressed non satisfaction with the Lion soft toy in terms of criterion no. 5. Based on the observations, the assembled soft toys (Dog, Fish, Mouse and Lion) were loosened, corrected and re-assembled.

Table 2: Teachers assessment of the shape of the parts of the soft toys

Shape of the parts of the soft toys	X	Remarks
DOG		
Head and Body	4.38	Satisfactory
Head gusset	4.10	✓
Ear	3.88	✓
Tail	3.59	✓
Leg	3.16	Unsatisfactory
Whole toy	4.04	Satisfactory
FISH		
Side body	4.25	Satisfactory
Upper tail fluke	4.30	✓
Lower tail fluke	3.98	✓
Flipper	3.79	✓
Whole toy	4.10	✓
RABBIT		
Side body	3.96	✓
Arm	4.10	✓
Sole	4.04	✓
Head	4.02	✓
Upper tail	3.88	✓
Lower tail	3.98	✓
Inside leg	3.51	✓
Head gusset	3.18	Unsatisfactory
Whole toy	3.59	Satisfactory
MOUSE		
Side body	4.24	Satisfactory
Base	4.19	✓
Nose	4.06	✓
Ear	4.12	✓
Whole toy	4.43	✓

LION		
Back of head	3.82	Satisfactory
Body-back&side	3.92	✓
Front body	4.14	✓
Face	4.18	✓
Leg	3.49	Unsatisfactory
Whole toy	4.24	Satisfactory

Table 2 shows that respondents indicated that the leg of the Dog soft toy was not well fixed. Other parts of the Dog as well as the whole Dog each had a mean of 3.50 or above and therefore were satisfactory. The shapes of the different parts of the fish and mouse soft toys as satisfactory. The shape of rabbit toy is satisfactory except the shape of the head gusset. Respondents were not satisfied with the leg of the Lion soft toy. The parts that were not good were loosened and corrected, therefore were satisfactory.

Discussion of Findings

Flat pattern method was used to draft five block patterns for children's soft toys. Igbo and Iloeje (2003), earlier agreed that flat pattern method is one of the good methods of obtaining patterns used for making clothing articles. The drafted patterns were tried, cut and assembled. The mean ratings for the safety of the five soft toys were satisfactory. The findings are in line with the agreement of the United States Consumer Protection Safety Commission (1998), and Lichtenstein (2004) on characteristics of safe toys. Those patterns that were rated unsatisfactory were loosened, corrected and reassembled. They

include Dog- no parts to entrap fingers, toes and hands, Fish- no small part to be lodged in throat, ears and nose, Mouse - no sharp point on toys and no parts to entrap fingers, toes and hands, Lion- no small parts to be lodged in throat, ears and nose.

The mean ratings for the shape of the five soft toys were satisfactory except; Dog-leg, Rabbit-head gusset and lion-leg. They were loosened, corrected and re-assembled; Igbo and Iloje (2003) observed that the accuracy of a drafted pattern depends on the accuracy of the measurements, drafting instructions and skills of the pattern makers. Also to obtain a more realistic fit/shape. Marshal et al (2000) observed that manufacturers toil their trial garment. The Toiles are used to correct the patterns before the final construction of the garment/articles.

The result is quite satisfactory bearing in mind that these teachers are nursery school teachers that know the needs of children and also mothers that provide play materials for their children. This goes to confirm the view of Dike (2007) that teachers and mothers are mostly concerned with providing toys and play materials for their children. All the toys were loosened, ironed properly and placed on fresh paper, the patterns were transferred to the paper. Pattern markings were then indicated on them and these were validated soft toy patterns for children.

Conclusion

Patterns are basic necessities in the construction of soft toys. In particular, they are quite valuable for large-scale production. The mean ratings of the respondents on the shape of the toys - Dog, Fish, Rabbit, Mouse and Lion were all indicative of good shape for most of the variables used for the assessment. The good shape obtained must have resulted from accurate measurements taken, precision in the drafting and development of the blocks as well as good construction technique employed in assembling the pattern pieces.

The findings of this study will adequately prepare tailors/seamstress for large scale soft toy production for the target group. They should be able to use patterns developed from the blocks for mass production of soft toys for children's play. This will create jobs for Nigerians and at the same time make the citizens self reliant in soft toy productions. The implementation of the results of the study would also help in reducing poverty, creating wealth and generating employment.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been proffered based on the findings of the study.

- Tailors/seamstresses should use the patterns obtained from the study to make soft toys for children.
- The result of this study provides

the information that there is no commercial soft toy pattern industry. Therefore, investors in big sewing industry can find Anambra State a land of establishing one without any competitor.

- Students who study clothing in higher institutions should use the result of these findings to produce soft toy for children in their entrepreneurship class.
- Vocational teachers should use the soft toy patterns to produce soft toys for exhibition.

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