

## Educational Toys in Child Upbringing in Plateau State

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### **Abstract.**

*This study focused on the use of educational toys in child upbringing. Two research questions guided the study. The area of the study was Plateau State. The population for the study was 100 parents. Survey research design was adopted for the study. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Data was analyzed using mean. It was discovered that 21 reasons were given by parents for their use of educational toys for their children and 14 factors they considered in the choice of educational toys for their children. Some recommendations were put forward.*

**Key Words:** *Toys, educational toys, child upbringing, parents, care-givers, safety and play.*

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### **I. Introduction**

Young babies get enough stimulation and activity from being fed, changed and bathed. It is play when they get older. They enjoy playing with things. Toys are objects that are intended for play and whose main purpose is to provide fun and amusement. Toys play important roles in the development, upbringing and the education of the child. They help children to learn and make discoveries about themselves, the environment and the people around them (National Literacy Trust 2005). Anyanwu (2004) observed that children have general tendency to play. The author then suggested that children should be provided with toys and other play materials by parents and other care-givers which they can manipulate and play with.

The National Policy on Education (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 exist in different shapes, forms, texture and colours. They can also be categorized as hard, semi-hard and soft toys. Toys could also be grouped based on their functions as toys for exploration, toys for muscle exercise, toys for creative play, toys for role-playing and for sports and skills (Anyakoha, 2015).

The choice of toys from any of these categories should be for the benefit of the child. It is important that the toy is educative. Educational toys are those toys that are used to teach children shapes, numbers, colours, weight, height English language and its vocabulary. Educational toys encourage reading in children and aim at developing skills in arts, mathematics, science and other disciplines (Anyakoha, 2015). The author listed some examples of educational toys to include; soft dolls, tinkle blocks of bright colours which can also produce sounds, rattles, nylon plush, balls on strings, which encourage the child to explore, those for muscle exercise include large balls, tricycles, push and pull toys, swings and slides. For creative play are clay, crayons and drawing sheets, non-poisonous paint and brush, sand and sand toys, soap bub, pipes, while toys and play materials for role-playing and imagination include; assorted sizes of doll babies, toy cars, colourful plastic plates, spoons among others. The author observed that educational toys help to relax and encourage creativity in children therefore they must be carefully chosen, monitored and supervised by parents, teachers and other care-givers for the educational objectives to be achieved. To benefit more from the toy, the safety of the toy matters a lot.

Safety according to Horn (2003) is the state of being safe and protected from danger and harm. Safe toys hence refer to toys children can use especially during play without the risk of injury. Liehteiens, (2004) is 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 internal hazards in electrical toys.
- No toxic material in or on toys
- No sharp points on toys.
- No small parts to be lodged in the ear or nose.
- No glass or brittle plastic.
- No parts to entrap fingers, toes or hand.
- No long stripes among others.

Parents, teachers and other care givers should be very careful and watchful to ensure that children play with safe toys. Anyakoha (2015) in agreement with Liechteiens (2004) suggested some guidelines to follow in ensuring the right choice of toys as:

- They should be large enough so that the child cannot swallow them
- Be safe and hygienic
- Should have educational value for the child
- Suitable for the age of the child
- Be eye catching
- Should have smooth finishes.

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

Play is seen by Mgbodile and Iwuh (2000) as a natural activity for every young child. Play provides many opportunities for children to learn and grow physically, mentally and socially. They pointed out that play is the child's work, and then toys are the child's tools. (Santruck, 2003) Play is important for a child's health and contributes to the domain of development. Through play the senses of the child are stimulated and they learn how to use their muscles, coordinate sight movement, gain mastery over their bodies and acquire new skills. Play as stated by Feldman (2000) increases affiliation with peers, releases tension, advances cognitive development and stimulates exploration.

Anyakoha (2015) in agreement with Feldman stated that play develops individual's thinking and ability 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. In the words of Santruck (2000) play helps children to learn new roles, adapt to situations, cope with emotions, and understand other people's view points better. Seeing the positive impact play using educational toys has on children, parents and other care givers use them in child upbringing.

Child upbringing is the molding of the child's character, personality, talents, emotional and physical wellbeing of the child. Child upbringing entails all the activities and practices that help the growth of a child from childhood through adulthood. Anyakoha (2015) stated what is involved in child upbringing to include, feeding, clothing, health care, discipline and socialization. The author further stated that children require physical care, and psychological wellbeing when young to be able to grow into useful adults. Again adequate nutrition shelter, medical care, and safe environment, love, a sense of value, a sense of belonging and emotional child upbringing attribute.

For effective child upbringing, parents need to have quality time with the children, access and supervise the educational toys with them (children). This is to ensure that the right toys are selected and played with the right type of play and to ensure that learning is done.

This is very important because sometime toys are wrongly selected and used by children with the negative impact on the children. For instance, toy guns, snake toys among others have taught children aggression and fear. This can be corrected if parents and other care givers will help in the proper choice, use and care of these toys and play materials in the upbringing of children.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the educational toys utilization of parents in child upbringing in Plateau State. Specifically, the study aimed at;

- (1) The reasons parents use educational toys in child upbringing.

- (2) Guidelines for choosing educational toys for children.

**Research Questions**

- (1) What are the reasons parents have for using educational toys in child upbringing?  
 (2) What are the guidelines for choosing educational toys for children?

**II. Methodology**

**Design**

The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study

**Area of the Study**

The study was conducted in the 17 (seventeen) Local Government Areas of Plateau State of Nigeria.

**Population for the Study**

The population for the study was 1,700 made up of male and female parents of child-bearing age(25-40 years) in the seventeen Local Government Areas of the State.

**Sample for the Study**

The sample for the study consisted of 170 (males and females) in the State. Random sampling technique was used in the selection of the respondents. Ten respondents from each of the seventeen (17) Local Government Areas of the State.

**Instrument for Data Collection**

A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The 5-point scale was of strongly agree,agree, slightly agree, disagree,and strongly disagree to answer research question one and two.

**Validation of the Instrument**

The questionnaire was validated by two lecturers in Home Economics unit of University of Jos, Plateau State. The validators were requested to identify ambiguities and offer suggestions for improving the instrument to meet the stated objectives of the study .The imputes of the validators were used for the final drafting of the questionnaire for the study.

**Reliability of the Instrument**

In order to determine the reliability of the instrument, the questionnaires were administered on thirty age bearing parents (25-40 years) in Nasarawa State. The data from the trial testing were analyzed using mean.The Crombach Alpha Reliability coefficient index was used to determine the reliability of instrument, which yielded a reliability coefficient 0.81, thus indicated that the instrument was reliable and consistent in measuring what it is supposed to measure.

**Data Collection and Analysis Techniques**

One hundred and seventy copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents by the researchers and three research assistants in the area of the study. All the170 copies were returned. This represents100 percent return. Mean was based on 5point scale. An item with mean value of 3.5 above was regarded as agreeing with reasons and guidelines for the use and choice of educational toys for the upbringing of children in their respective columns while items with mean value below 3.5 was regarded as rejected.

**III. Findings**

The following findings were made;

1. A total of 21 reasons why parents use educational toys were identified
2. 14 guidelines parents adopt in selecting educational toys were identified/

TABLE1; Mean Responses and t-test Result on Reasons why parents use Educational toys in child upbringing.

**Reasons Why Parents Use Educational Toys**

	XG	SD	T-CALL	REMARK	
1. Provide fun and amusement	4.44	0.62	1.52	A	
2. Develop upbringing and education of the child.	4.11	0.88	1.51	A	
3. Make children to learn and make discoveries about themselves, the environment, and people around them	4.21	0.76	0.57	A	
4. Culcate in the children the spirit of Inquiry and creativity		3.53	1.17	0.83	A
5. Use to teach children shapes, numbers, colours, weight, height, English language and its vocabulary.		3.53	1.7	0.83	A
6. Encourage reading in children	4.08	0.83	0.12	A	
7. Develop skills in arts, mathematics,science	3.68	0.99	-0.61	A	

and other disciplines					
8. Help children develop physically, socially intellectually and creatively	4.65	0.56	0.03		A
9. Tools to accomplish activities and mediators of activities	3.67	1.08	1.98		A
10. Senses are stimulated and children learn how to use their muscles	4.26	0.99	0.72		A
11. Coordinate sight movement	3.75	1.01	0.22		A
12. Gain mastery over their bodies	4.41	0.81	3.20		A
13. Stimulate exploration	3.78	0.96	0.24		A
14. Increase affiliation with peers	4.75	0.99	-0.39		A
15. Release tension	4.25	0.78	2.30		A
16. Advance cognitive development	3.08	1.13	0.15		D
17. Develop individual's thinking and Ability to practice the roles they will Assume later in life	4.16	0.80	0.43		A
18. Satisfy their exploratory drive	3.26	1.12	0.48		D
19. Learn new roles, adapt to situations	4.43	0.78	0.02		A
20. Cope with emotions	4.26	0.99	0.72		A
21. Understand other peoples' view point Better	4.41	0.81	3.20		A
22. Develop mental alertness	4.16	0.80	0.43		A
23. Enable the child express himself in different ways	3.53	1.17	0.81		A
24. Get rid of their fears and frustration And develop emotionally	4.43	0.78	0.02		A

TABLE2;Mean Responses on the Guidelines Parents Adopt In Choosing Educational Toys for Children

**Guidelines in the Choice of Educational Toys for Children**

1. Well-constructed to withstand the use and abuses of children in the age range for which the toy is appropriate	4.67	0.58	3.48	A
2. No shock of internal hazards in electrical toys	3.76	1.09	2.58	A
3. No toxic material in or on toy	4.99	1.07	1.07	A
4. No small parts to be lodged in the ear or nose	4.62	0.92	0.12	A
5. No glass or brittle plastic	3.87	1.18	0.34	A
6. No parts to entrap fingers, toes or hands	3.42	1.23	1.99	D
7. No long stripes	4.47	0.77	1.99	A
8. They should be large enough so that they cannot swallow them	4.20	1.14	3.7	A
9. Be safe and hygienic	3.76	1.09	2.38	A
10. Should have educational value for the child	4.08	0.83	0.11	A
11. Suitable for the age of the child	4.26	0.99	0.72	A
12. Be eye catching				
13. Should have smooth finishes	3.26	1.12	0.48	A
14. No sharp points on toys	4.43	0.78	0.02	A

**Table 1** reveals 22 reasons why parents use educational toys for the upbringing of their children. This is because the mean value that ranged between 4.75 to 3.08 which are greater than the cut-off point value of 3.50. This shows that the respondents agree that the 22 items are reasons why parents use educational toys for children in Plateau State. The mean ratings on the remaining two items, specifically item 16 and 18 were 3.08 and 3.26 which are less than the cut-off point value of this shows that the respondents disagreed with the 2 items as part of the reasons why parents use educational toys for child upbringing in Plateau State being the study area.

**Table 2;** On the research question two shows that the mean ratings of the response of the respondents on 12 out of the 14 identified guidelines for choosing educational toys by parents had made mean values that ranged between 3.76 and 4.99 which are greater than the cutoff point value of 3.50. This showed that the respondents agreed that the 12 items are guidelines for choosing educational toys by parents for their children's upbringing in Plateau state. The mean ratings of the remaining two items specifically items 6 and 13 which are 3.42 and

3.26 respectively which is less than the cut-off point value of 3.50 This showed that the respondents disagreed with item 6 and 13 as guidelines for the choice of educational toys by parents in the study area.

#### **IV. Discussion**

The findings of this study as regard to research question one showed that parents agreed that reasons why parents use educational toys for child upbringing include; provide fun and amusement ,make children to learn and make discoveries about themselves, the environment, and people around them, inculcate in the children the spirit of inquiry and creativity, use to teach children shapes, numbers, colours, weight, height, English language and its vocabulary, encourage reading in children, develop skills in mathematics ,science and other disciplines, help children develop physically, socially, intellectually and creatively, tools to accomplish activities and mediators of activities, senses are stimulated and children learn how to use their muscles, coordinate sight movement, gain mastery over their bodies, stimulate exploration, increase affiliation with peers, release tension, develop individual's thinking and ability to practices the roles they will assume later in life, learn new roles, adapt to situations, cope with emotions, understand other people's view point better, develop mental alertness, enable the child express himself in different ways get rid of their fears and frustration and develop emotionally.

The findings of the study on reasons why parents use educational toys for children agreed with Anyakoha(2015) who pointed out that educational toys are those toys that are used to develop upbringing and education of the child. Also, the finding of the study agreed with the result of the study of Myoungson (2002).The findings showed that the use of educational toys help children gain mastery over their bodies, encourage reading in children and inculcate in children the spirit of inquiry and creativity, which are some of the reasons why parents use educational toys for the upbringing of their children;

The findings of the study showed that toys have a positive impact on the overall development of the child interns of physical, social, intellectual and emotional development.

The finding of this study as regards to research question two showed that parents agreed that the guidelines parents adopt in choosing educational toys for children include; well-constructed to withstand the use and abuses of children in the age range for which the toy is appropriate, no shock of internal hazards in electrical toys, no toxic material in or on toy, no small parts to be lodged in the ear or nose ,no glass or brittle plastic, no part to entrap fingers, toes or hands no long strings, no sharp points, no rough edges. The findings are in line with Bob-Eze and Eboh(2011) on characteristics of safe toys.

Other factors considered by parents in choosing toys for children were,they should be large enough so that they cannot swallow them, be safe and hygienic, should have educational value for the child, be eye catching, should have smooth finishes and no sharp points on the toys. This result agreed with Anyakoha(2015) on the factors to consider when choosing toys for children.

#### **V. Conclusion**

Educational toys are play materials that have educational value and are used to teach children colours, shapes, alphabets, weight, height, English language and its vocabulary and aim at developing skills in mathematics, science and other disciplines. The mean ratings of the respondents on the characteristics of educational toys and the guidelines for choosing educational toys were all indicative of provision of fun and amusement for children make children to learn and make discoveries about themselves, the environment and people around them, inculcate in the children the spirit of inquiry and creativity, useful for teaching children shapes, numbers, colours, weight,height,English language and its vocabulary among others and be safe and hygienic should have educational value for the child, be eye catching should have smooth finishes respectively.

#### **VI. Recommendations**

The following recommendations have been proffered based on the finding of the study;

- 1.Parents and other care-givers should use the result of the findings of this studyto select educational toys based on their good characteristics in order to benefit the children
2. Parents should be guided by the guidelines revealed by this study in choosing educational toys for their children
3. The producers of toys should use these facts to serve as a guide in the choice of materials and the proper production of toys for children.

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