

REVITALISING CRAFT EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: STRATEGIES AND CHALLENGES IN ABIA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates strategies for revitalising the teaching and learning of crafts in primary schools in Abia State, Nigeria. It examines the current status of crafts taught, the challenges impeding effective instruction, and potential strategies to enhance craft education. A survey research design was employed, targeting a population of 1,270 individuals, comprising 1,088 pupils and 182 teachers from schools offering crafts as a subject. A sample of 254 participants was selected using systematic sampling techniques. Data were collected via a structured questionnaire and analysed using mean and standard deviation. Findings indicate that ten distinct crafts, including painting, crocheting, and bead-making, are currently taught in Abia State primary schools. Key challenges identified include pupils' lack of interest, a shortage of qualified craft teachers, and the high cost of materials. Proposed strategies to rejuvenate craft education include providing adequate teaching equipment, raising awareness among parents and pupils about the value of crafts, and fostering creativity and skills to encourage engagement with textile and related crafts. It is recommended that the primary school handicraft syllabus be adaptable to incorporate locally available materials, thereby enhancing relevance and accessibility across different regions of the state.

Keywords: *Craft education, Teaching challenges, Primary School, Revitalisation strategies, Cultural preservation.*

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is both an art and a science, dedicated to fostering knowledge, understanding, and personal growth. It involves an experienced individual imparting moral values, abilities, and skills to an inexperienced person, facilitating positive behavioural changes that benefit both the individual and society (Okoye, 2011). Conversely, learning is the process of acquiring or modifying knowledge, behaviours, skills, values, and preferences through study, experience, or instruction. Together, teaching and learning constitute dynamic processes involving multiple variables that interact as learners assimilate new knowledge and skills, enhancing their range of experiences (Ward et al., 2015). These processes aim to develop practical skills, often to replicate demonstrated abilities. However, traditional approaches to craft education, rooted in manual skill development, are increasingly seen as inadequate for preparing students for the demands of modern technology and working life.

Craft, as a practice, involves creating objects manually or with the aid of tools, requiring practical skills and knowledge (Mahgoub and Alsoud, 2015). UNESCO (2017) defines crafts as products created entirely by hand or with minimal tool assistance, often associated with decorative arts such as

ceramics or lace-making, distinguished by a high degree of hands-on craftsmanship (Ukachukwu, 2009). Okoye (2011) and Onyeke (2010) further describe craft as a trade necessitating manual dexterity, encompassing activities like carpentry, crocheting, wood-carving, paper modelling, collage, pottery, ceramics, and jewellery-making. Craft education, traditionally a practical subject, focuses on developing manual dexterity with limited integration of science and technology, often requiring students to replicate products like wooden boxes or woven items without encouraging reflective or innovative thinking. Despite this, craft education remains appealing to students who value hands-on work, independence, and creativity, distinguishing it from more theoretical subjects like physics or mathematics (Ward et al., 2015).

The teaching of crafts in schools offers numerous benefits. Firstly, it serves as a medium to showcase the culture and traditions of a community. Mahgoub and Alsoud (2015) note that crafts are unique expressions of local craftsmanship and materials, enabling students to engage practically with cultural practices, such as creating fishing hooks or nets in fishing communities, thereby deepening their understanding beyond theoretical studies. Secondly, craft education enhances the economic well-being

of communities by producing goods that can be sold, meeting needs and fostering social stability. Thirdly, it promotes environmental sustainability by encouraging the use of eco-friendly materials, such as mats made from natural fibres, which increases demand for renewable resources and supports environmental conservation. Finally, crafts foster creativity and skillfulness, allowing students to develop dexterity and innovative thinking as they follow guidelines and create their own works (Obasi, 2015).

In Nigeria, the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004) mandates a nine-year Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, encompassing Early Child Care Education (ECCE), primary, and junior secondary education (NERDC, 2006). The National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) developed a curriculum in 2006 to align

with the UBE, incorporating National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Implemented from 2008, this curriculum includes ten subjects, such as cultural and creative arts, under which crafts fall as part of pre-vocational studies. These studies aim to spark interest in agriculture and home economics, develop basic skills, and promote the dignity of labour and entrepreneurship. The curriculum integrates global issues and is age-appropriate, ensuring effective learning through activities and projects delivered by specialist teachers. However, despite these objectives, the teaching of crafts in Nigerian primary schools, particularly in Abia State (Figure 1), faces significant challenges, including inadequate teacher training and logistical support (Obasi, 2015).

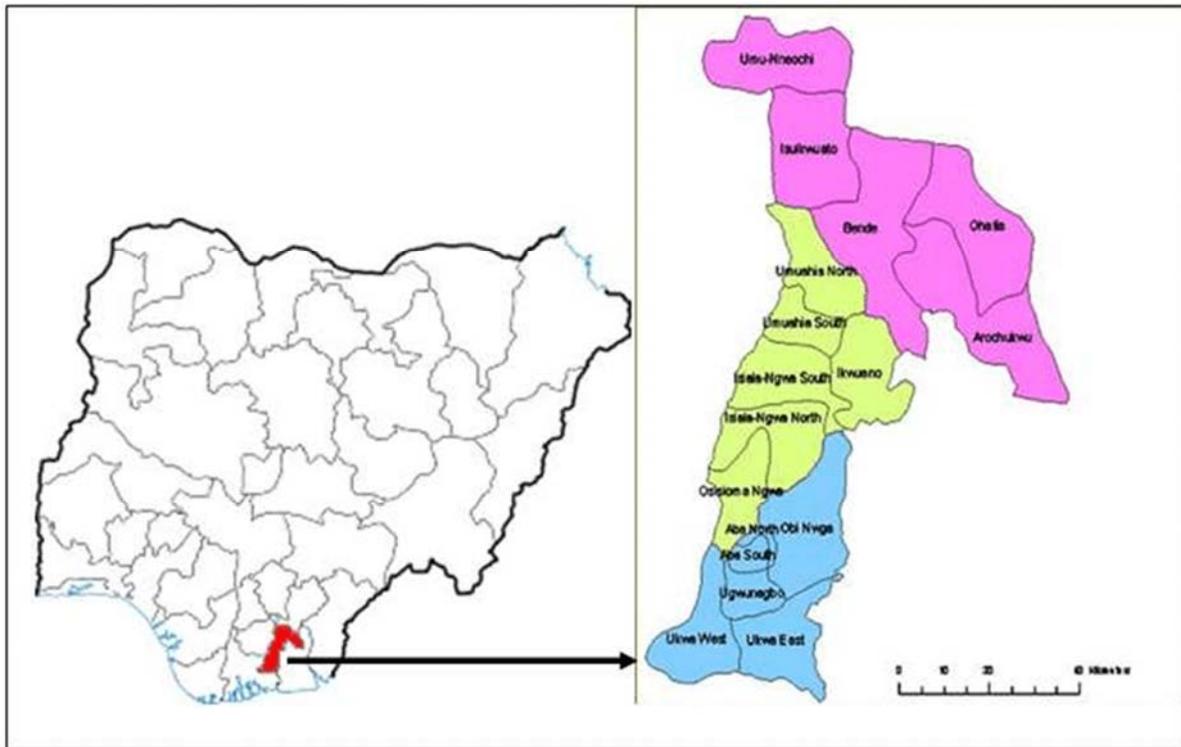


Fig. 1: Geographical location of Abia State in Nigeria showing the distribution of local government areas within the state. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone. 0073403.g001

Historically, Nigerian primary schools in the early 1960s had handicraft centres with specialist teachers, but the current state of craft education is poor, despite its inclusion in the NPE (2004). This decline undermines the foundation for developing skilled craftsmen, as a weak foundation risks the collapse of any structure (Esomonu, 2005). The lack of trained teachers and government support exacerbates this issue, with only subject specialists deemed capable of teaching crafts effectively. Johnson and Johnson (2014) highlight a persistent Nigerian Journal of Textiles (NJT) Vol. 10: 33 – 40

gap between research-verified instructional methods and those used in schools, a problem compounded by the increasing demands on teachers to engage a more curious and sophisticated student population (Ukagbu and Nwachukwu, 2006). Effective teaching methods for crafts in primary schools, such as play-way, dramatisation, demonstration, discussion, project, and field trip methods, are critical for fostering creativity, particularly in early childhood education (Obasi, 2015).

The challenges in teaching crafts are evident in Abia State, where the study focuses on government-owned primary schools. The research aims to identify the types of crafts taught, the challenges faced, and strategies for revitalising craft education. By examining these aspects, the study seeks to address the disconnect between policy and practice, ensuring that craft education equips students with technical and vocational skills essential for personal and societal development.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The study adopted the descriptive survey research design.

Area of the Study: The study was carried out in Abia State (Figure 1). Abia State is one of the states in the southeastern part of Nigeria, with Umuahia as its capital. The state of Abia was created on August 27, 1991. Abia State has 17 local Government Areas and three educational zones, namely Aba, Umuahia, and Ohafia. These educational zones were the focus of the study.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised 2 main groups of respondents, namely all Home Economics and crafts teachers and pupils who offer crafts as a subject in the primary schools. These are made up of 182 teachers and 1088 pupils, a total population of 1270 in the three educational zones of the state, namely Umuahia, Abia and Ohafia zones respectively. The breakdown of the population is presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Population Distribution of the Subjects

Population of Schools in Zones	Population of Pupils	Population of Teachers	Total for the 3 zones
Aba	550	100	650
Umuahia	320	50	370
Ohafia	218	32	250
Total	1088	182	1270

Source: Primary Education Management Board, Statistical Unit, 2023, Umuahia

Determination of Sample Size

Looking at the above population distribution of the subject, it is discovered that it is not evenly distributed; for that reason, the researcher decided to determine 20% of the subjects. The break is in Table 2.

Sampling Technique: A systematic random sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 254 respondents who were studied.

Table 2: Sample size determination Distribution

Location	Population (%)	Total
Aba		
Pupils	550 x 0.20 = 110	
Teachers	100 x 0.20 = 20	130
Umuahia		
Pupils	320 x 0.20 = 64	
Teachers	50 x 0.20 = 10	74
Ohafia		
Pupils	218 x 0.20 = 44	
Teachers	32 x 0.20 = 6	50
		254
Grand Total		

Instrument for Data Collection: A structured questionnaire titled “Strategies for Reviving the Teaching and learning of Craft in Primary School” (SITLCPS) was used for the data collection. The instrument was divided into three (3) sections: A, B, and C. Section A seek information on the type of crafts taught in primary schools currently, Section B sought information on the challenges facing teaching and learning of crafts in primary schools, while Section C seek information on the strategies for reviving teaching and learning of crafts in Abia State primary schools. A four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) was used for rating the responses, with values 4, 3, 2, and 1 assigned, respectively.

Validation of the Instrument

The instrument was validated by three (3) experts (two lecturers from the Home Science Department and one lecturer from the Measurement and Evaluation Department, both in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. The contributions of the validates are reflected in the final draft of the instrument before it was administered.

Data Collections and Analysis Techniques

The researcher collected data with the help of 3 trained research assistants. A total of 254 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and out of 254 questionnaires distributed, a total of 244, representing 96%, were correctly filled and returned, while only 10, representing 4%, were not returned. The analysis and presentation of data were based on the returned questionnaire. Excel is a statistical tool used for data analysis. Frequency was used to organise the data collected, and mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the responses to research questions. The mean was calculated by assigning nominal values to the response categories. Based on a four-point rating scale of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively, a mean rating of

2.50 was regarded as a minimum acceptable mean score, while any mean below the acceptable mean of 2.50 was rejected.

FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The analysis and presentation of data were based on the returned questionnaire. The result is presented in Table 3.

Types of Craft Taught in Primary Schools

Research Question 1: What are the Different Types of Crafts taught in Primary Schools in Abia State?

Table 3: Mean response of respondents on the craft taught in primary school in Abia

Type of Crafts Taught in Primary Schools	Teachers		Student		Grand Mean		Remark
	\bar{x}_1	SD	\bar{x}_2	SD	\bar{x}_g	SD	
1. Drawing	3.58	0.23	3.32	0.51	3.45	0.12	Agree
2. Painting	3.05	0.16	3.21	0.54	3.13	0.67	Agree
3. Print	2.90	0.68	2.88	0.23	2.89	0.16	Agree
4. Clay/ Paper Mache moulding	3.54	0.45	3.14	0.19	3.34	0.41	Agree
5. Patchwork	1.38	0.16	1.10	0.43	1.24	0.11	Disagree
6. Crocheting	3.16	0.62	3.00	0.16	3.09	0.41	Agree
7. Tie and Dye	2.98	0.34	1.44	0.28	2.21	0.31	Disagree
8. Hair making	3.94	0.71	3.00	0.32	3.47	0.66	Agree
9. Weaving basket	3.85	0.69	3.01	0.49	3.43	0.54	Agree
10. Making a local fan with a palm front	3.10	0.23	3.10	0.23	3.10	0.43	Agree
11. Mat making with raffia materials	3.64	0.19	3.26	0.22	3.45	0.12	Agree
12. Bag and shoe making with beads	3.58	0.40	2.20	0.31	2.89	0.67	Agree
Overall	3.16	0.12	2.78		2.97		

Key: \bar{x}_1 = Mean responses of school teachers, \bar{x}_2 = Mean response of school pupils, \bar{x}_g = grand mean response of the 2 groups of respondents, SD = Standard Deviation.

In Table 3, 10 different types of crafts were taught in primary schools, while 2 were not taught. This is shown in the grand mean scores of the response. However, the highest grand mean score is 3.47, item no 8, which represents hair making, while the lowest mean score was 1.24, representing patchwork.

Challenges Facing the Teaching of Craft in Primary Schools

Research Question 2: What are the challenges of teaching and learning craft in primary schools?

Table 4: Mean response of respondents on challenges Facing Teaching and Learning of Craft in Primary Schools.

Challenges facing teaching Crafts in primary school	Teachers		Remark
	\bar{x}_1	SD	
1. It is expensive to implement the syllabus	3.45	0.52	Agree
2. Incompetence on the part of teachers	2.00	0.32	Disagree
3. Inadequate instructional materials	3.19	0.16	Agree
4. Lack of funds allocated for the acquisition of materials and equipment needed for teaching craft in school	3.65	0.23	Agree
5. Unseriousness attitude of pupils toward learning craft	3.80	0.34	Agree
6. Lack of government support for teaching and learning of craft in senior primary school	3.14	0.54	Agree
7. Some pupils consider craft a subject for low achievers	3.35	0.35	Agree
	3.23		

Field Survey, 2023

Key \bar{x}_1 = Mean responses of school teachers, SD = Standard Deviation.

The result is shown in Table 4, the challenges facing the Teaching of Craft in Primary Schools in the study area. Item 2 had mean scores less than the benchmark, which implies that the statement of Nigerian Journal of Textiles (NJT) Vol. 10: 33 – 40

incompetence on the part of teachers was not agreed on by the respondents, with a mean of 2.00. Other items were agreed upon by the respondents as they had mean scores above the benchmark of

2.50 and above. From the table above, item 5 had the highest mean rating of 3.80.

Challenges Facing Learning of Craft in Primary Schools

Research Question 3: What are the challenges of teaching and learning craft in primary schools?

Table 5: Mean response of respondents on challenges Facing Teaching and Learning of Craft in Primary Schools.

Challenges Facing Learning Crafts in Primary School	Student		Remark
	\bar{x}_1	SD	
1. Most children feel it will soil their hands	2.45	0.52	Disagree
2. Parents do not provide children with materials for the craft	3.00	0.32	Agree
3. Children do not have the willingness to participate	3.19	0.16	Agree
4. Incompetent teachers to teach	3.65	0.23	Agree
5. Craft subjects are taught more on the board (theoretical) than in practical lessons.	3.80	0.34	Agree
6. Some pupils consider craft as a subject for low achievers	3.35	0.54	Agree

Field Survey 2023

Key \bar{x}_1 = Mean responses of pupils, SD = Standard Deviation.

Table 6: Mean Response of Respondents on Strategies for Reviving Teaching and Learning of Craft in Primary Schools in Abia State.

Strategies for reviving teaching of crafts	Teachers		Student		Grand Mean		Remark
	\bar{x}_1	SD	\bar{x}_2	SD	\bar{x}_g	SD	
1. Provision of adequate equipment for teaching and learning of crafts	3.12	0.23	3.12	0.23	3.12	0.40	Agree
2. Including learning of craft in the school curriculum for primary 1-6	3.38	0.34	3.10	0.34	3.24	0.24	Agree
3. Financial support by the government	3.85	0.45	3.05	0.54	3.45	0.62	Agree
4. Employment of experienced craft teachers by the school and government.	3.36	0.13	3.10	0.42	3.23	0.71	Agree
5. Making teaching and learning of craft more practical and less theoretically oriented.	3.82	0.21	3.18	0.35	3.50	0.52	Agree
6. Making craft a compulsory subject from junior to senior primary schools by the school authorities and the government	3.56	0.17	3.30	0.23	3.43	0.31	Agree
7. Uses of visual aids for the teaching and learning of craft	3.24	0.54	3.16	0.16	3.20	0.19	Agree
8. Provision of a conducive environment for teaching and learning of craft in senior primary schools	3.90	0.32	3.46	0.68	3.68	0.49	Agree
9. Exhibition of the student products from time to time.	3.95	0.30	3.35	0.45	3.65	0.67	Agree
10. Orienting parents on the importance of craft during PTA meetings.	3.45	0.11	3.31	0.16	3.38	0.57	Agree

Field Survey, 2023

Key \bar{x}_1 = Mean responses of teachers, \bar{x}_2 = Mean response of pupils, \bar{x}_G = grand mean response of teachers and pupils, SD = Standard Deviation.

The result revealed in Table 5 revealed 5 instances, the challenges facing the learning of craft in primary schools in the study area. The highest mean score is on item no. 5 with a 3.80 mean score,

which suggests that craft subjects are taught more on the board (theoretical) than practically in the study area.

Strategies for reviving the teaching and learning of craft in primary schools

Research Question 3: What are the strategies for reviving the teaching and learning of craft in primary schools?

The results in Table 6 showed that the respondents agreed that the listed methods in the above table can help revive the teaching and learning of crafts in primary schools in Abia State. This is shown vividly on their mean scores which were all above the acceptable mean score of 2.50 and above, the acceptable mean score.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results in Table 1 revealed that 10 crafts listed were taught in a few primary schools in Abia State, while 2 were not taught. This revealed that primary schools in the study area taught different crafts. This is in line with Elwood, K.F. (2012), who opined that the introduction of craft teaching in primary schools is a welcome development.

Teaching Crafts in primary school is very important to lay a solid foundation early enough in the education of the primary school pupils.

It will also showcase the culture and traditions of the people. According to Mahgoud and Alsoud (2015), crafts are unique expressions of a particular culture or community through local craftsmanship and materials. The culture of the people can be explained practically as the children are taught by way of producing what we use at home, what we wear, and the simple tools we use. When, for instance, a child from a fishing community is taught how to make fishing hooks, traps and nets, that child learns more about the culture and tradition of his/her people than reading it in pages of history and social study books. Knowledge of crafts enhances the economic life of the community. Craft products are often sold for money and when this happens, needs are met and the economic well-being of the people will improve. This will translate into good health, stable social relations and a tranquil society.

Teaching crafts encourages creativity and skillfulness. Crafts give birth to creativity and skillfulness. The ability to get things done with dexterity comes up when one is involved in crafts. The teacher gives the guidelines and perhaps makes a master piece for children to follow. As the child begins to do this, his/her own many capabilities begin to unfold and the creative ability in that child gets quickened. The result in Table 2 also revealed challenges facing the teaching and

learning of craft in primary schools in the study in Abia State. These include the fund to purchase materials for practical lessons, inadequate instructional materials for teaching crafts, little or no funds allocated for acquisition of materials and equipment needed for teaching of craft in school, lack of interest on part of the pupils toward leaning craft, lack of government support for teaching and learning of craft in primary school and some pupils consider craft as a subject for low achievers. The findings are in agreement with Onyeke (2003), who explained that craft teaching in Nigeria lacks support from the government.

Also the results on table 3 showed that the respondents agreed that the strategies identified for reviving teaching and learning of crafts which include provision of equipment for teaching and learning of crafts, including learning of craft from primary 1-6, financial support by government, employing experienced craft teacher by school and government, making teaching and learning of craft more practical and less theoretical, making craft a compulsory subject from junior to senior primary schools by school authorizes and government, use of visual aid in the teaching and learning of craft, provision of conducive environment for teaching and learning of craft in primary schools, exhibition of the student products from time to time and orientating parent on the importance of craft during PTA meetings can help revive the teaching and learning of crafts in Abia State primary schools. This is in line with Ward, Finke, and Smith (2015), who in their study found out that practical subjects in Nigerian schools are taught theoretically; consequently, the students do not have practical skills.

Summary of the Findings

1. Ten (10) different types of crafts are currently taught in primary schools in Abia State. These, among others, include drawing, painting, patchwork, basket weaving and bead making.
2. Six (6) challenges are facing the teaching of craft in primary school. These, among others, include:
 - i. Non-implementation of curriculum
 - ii. Inadequate instructional materials.
 - iii. Lack of funds allocated for the acquisition of materials and equipment needed for teaching craft in school.
 - iv. Lack of interest on the part of pupils toward learning craft
3. Challenges facing the learning craft in Abia State primary schools. These are:
 - i. Parents' unwillingness to provide materials for practical lessons

- ii. Pupil's unwillingness to participate in craft classes
 - iii. Incompetence on the part of teachers, among others.
4. Ten (10) Strategies could be employed to revive the teaching and learning of crafts in Abia State Primary schools. These, among others, include
- i. Provision of equipment for teaching and learning of crafts
 - ii. Including learning of craft in the school curriculum of primary 1-6
 - iii. Financial support to buy materials from the government or the school authority.
 - iv. Training and employment of experienced craft teachers by the school and government.
 - v. Making teaching and learning of craft more practical and less theoretically oriented.
 - vi. Uses of visual aids for the teaching and learning of craft.
 - vii. Provision of a conducive environment for teaching and learning of craft in senior primary.

CONCLUSION

This work focused on identifying the strategies for reviving the teaching and learning of the craft in primary schools in Abia State. Based on the study, it concludes that most primary schools in Abia State no longer teach crafts as a subject. It was also discovered that learning crafts has many benefits, like showcasing the culture and tradition of the people. It enhances the economic life of the community. It preserves the natural environment and encourages creativity and skillfulness among others. Certain factors are hindering learning and teaching of crafts in the schools and strategies like Provision of equipment for teaching and learning of crafts, including learning of craft from primary 1-6, Financial support by government, employing experienced craft teacher by school authorities and government, and making teaching and learning of craft more practical and less theoretical among others can revive the teaching and learning of crafts in Abia State primary schools.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Craft should be taught at all levels of education, including junior and senior primary schools.
2. The primary school handicraft syllabus should be sufficiently flexible to permit modification commensurate with the types of local materials available in different areas of the State.

3. Local craftsmen and other skilled persons should be used as resource persons and invited to act as aid teachers in the primary schools.
4. Each school should have its own craft workshop or centre.
5. School heads should enlighten the members of the immediate communities through PTA and a massive campaign on the place of Crafts in the Community Development.
6. The school should exhibit craft work done by pupils to the public to encourage other pupils to be motivated to learn craft in school.
7. All teachers in the primary school should be sufficiently motivated by way of improved service conditions, and thereafter, instructed in the proper usage and handling of tools and materials available in the crafts centre.

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