

## **A Step towards Improving Ncho Traditional Game in Anambra State**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Peace has been the watch word of every nation of the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century including Nigeria. Sport in Nigeria is the only phenomena that brings out the patriotism of Nigerians as it reminds the people that they concluded African Cup of Nations. There are a lot of Nigeria traditional Sports and games that cut across over 2008 ethnic groups of the people of which reflected the cultural heritage and religious backgrounds. The most popular traditional sports in Nigeria includes, Ayo, Abular, Kokawa, Dambe, Langa and Aarin. Ncho is the most popular traditional sports in Anambra State and it is being played by two persons at a time. The largest collection of the seeds is declared the winner. It has rules and regulation guiding the game. Ncho has many challenges which includes not in the school curriculum, poor funding, inadequate personnel and others which the paper offers some likely suggestion for a way forward in Anambra State.

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Date of Submission: 22 February 2014



Date of Acceptance: 25 March 2014

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Nigeria is a diverse and multi ethnic country in Africa with diverse cultures, values and traditions. Sports has a very powerful unifying force that undermines negative under tones, of misunderstanding, ethnic bias, religious segregations, gender dichotomy and wars of whatever dimensions. (Nwabuikwu, 1997) Sport in Nigeria is the only phenomena that brings out the patriotism of Nigerians as it reminds the people that they are one country with a destining especially football.

In Nigeria, there are a lot of traditional sports and games that cut across over 2008 ethnic groups of the people of which reflected the cultural heritage and religious backgrounds of the people of Nigeria. “Ncho” game is one of the most popular traditional sports and games in Anambra State. It is also called ‘Ayo’ by different ethnic groups of Nigeria. At the grass root or community level, sports like Ncho can be seen to provide a useful way of creating an opportunity and good environment in which people can come together to work towards the same goals, show respect for others and share an equipment with tolerance, peace and better understanding. After long day activities, the people come together to share ideas, chat and relax their muscles.

Ncho game is being played by all ages of human endeavour basically for leisure and recreational activities. It is an indoor activity and being played by two people a time. This paper will be limited to Ncho game at Ogbugbankwa square in Amikwo village of Awka in Awka South of Anambra State which is mainly played by old men adults basically for recreational activities and for relaxation.

### **II. TRADITIONAL SPORTS AND GAMES IN NIGERIA**

Traditional Sports Federation of Nigeria was inaugurated as a National Sports Association on 19<sup>th</sup> August, 1993 (Adeogun, 2002). The Traditional Sports Federation was mandated among other functions, to identity all traditional and invented sports and games, develop and promote them through creation of awareness and organized competitors on the sports and games, with a view to sell them to the international sports community.

There are a lot of traditional sports and games that cut across over 2008 ethnic groups of people in Nigeria which reflected the cultural heritage, religions background of the people of Nigeria in general. They can be played in both indoor and outdoor respectively. The most popular traditional sports and games in Nigeria include.

- a) Ayo: A seed game where in the one the largest collection is declared winner
- b) Abular: A ball game played across the net with a wooden baton
- c) Kokawa: Traditional boxing down with one hand clubbed with cloths and rope
- d) Dambe: Traditional boxing down with one hand clubbed with cloths and rope
- e) Langa: A hopping game of standing running with one leg, where an opponents struggle to dislodge one other
- f) Aarin: Is regarded as African billiards game. Is the spinning of the opponents marbles (s) in the court.

### **III. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF NCHO GAME**

Ncho is the most popular ancient African board game with many different variations among Anambrarians and other Igbo's who occupy roughly the South-Eastern State of Nigeria. Ncho is a member of a family of board game called Mancala. The term Mancala is used to indicate a large group of related game that was played almost all over the world. Two persons play Ncho at a time with board put in between the players. The board is a hallow out plank wood consisting of two rows of six pits belonging to either rows and each pit contains four seeds of the plant "Caeselpinia crystal" such that a total of forty-eight seeds are contained in a board at the start of the game. There are often two extra hollow normally placed centrally at the end of each rows of the board. These are called "seed bags" that are used to store the captured seeds by each of the players. As the game progresses, each pit can contain any number of seeds or seed at all. Just like any other games the ultimate objective of the game is to capture more seeds than the opponent to emerge as winner or have equal number of seed as a draw game. As a seed is captured, it is removed from the board and in the seed bag and plays on further part, other than being used to evaluate current game position. A player can only capture tow (2) to three (3) seeds in the opponent holes where the seeds end. The largest collection of the seeds is declared the winner. Only one Umpire determines the beginning and the start of the game by a toss of coin.

### **IV. NCHO GAME: RULES AND REGULATION**

1. Player should play anticlockwise.
2. Player can not reverse his/her play immediately he started distributing the seeds.
3. Player should play within thirty (30) seconds. If not the chance goes to the opponent.
4. Player cannot pack more than three (3) seeds in a hole of his/her success.
5. If a player realizes that he has first captured twenty-four (24) seeds he/she must notify the referee or an umpire.
6. There should be no side coaching during game situation to avoid cancellation.
7. In any competition, the number of the game shall be seven (7) and best of four (4) a game is awarded two points for the winner.

### **V. THE ROLE OF SPORT IN PEACE BUILDING**

The contribution sport can make towards peace - building has generally been considered at the grassroots, state, and nation levels. At the grassroots or community level, sport can be seen to provide a useful way of creating an environment in which people' can come together to work towards the same goal, show respect for others and share space and equipment. All these aspects are crucial to peace-building processes and are exemplified in findings from a peace player's international programmes.

The programmes "bridging divides" in Nigeria uses football while South African uses basketball to bring children and community.- together. An assessment of the programme shows that the majority of participants expressed fewer racial stereotypes and less racism compared to children who were not part of the programme in South African, Many participants were in favour of racial integration and further inter-racial Socialization other children.

A study on the role. of sport in fostering social integration among different ethnic groups in Nigeria and South African showed that severed factors contributed to the use of sport being successful in the bringing about exchange and building relationship between different groups including sports non-verbal means of communication, sports as a means to engage in collective experience and establish directly physical contact, and sports ability to transcend class divisions (Schrag, 2012). Since the open fun football schools were initiated in Bosnia- Herzegovina using grassroots football as a means to provide a site for interaction and to build relationships between young people and coaches so as Ncho game in Anambra Nigeria do. The initiative has expanded to being a reconciliation tool to encourage understanding and tolerance to various countries including Nigeria ([www.kroc.edu.ng](http://www.kroc.edu.ng)).

## **CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD**

1. Ncho game is not in the school curriculum. The Ncho game and other traditional sports and games in Nigeria should be included in the Physical Education curriculum from primary-tertiary institutions as a vital means for peace-building now that the challenges of insecurity, terrorism and others especially Boko Haram sect in some parts of Northern States of Nigeria.
2. There is poor support from the media press crew, both print and electronic media should be fully encouraged to project the image of Ncho game to create awareness and to canvass for private and public sports sectors for the image for Ncho game and other traditional sport in general.
3. Inadequate personnel, majority of the technical personnel in Ncho game and other traditional sports and games are either unqualified or are inadequate in number to meet the demands of the State, Government should ensure that qualified personnel are employed to manage the sports. The Non-qualified one should be sent to the National Institute for Sports (Lagos-Nigeria) to undergo the Institute's programmes for effective update of their knowledge.
4. Lack of incentives for the players, and coaches considering the economic situations in the country. Athletes and Ncho coaches need to be adequately remunerated either in terms of salary, wages, bonuses and other allowances should be paid as at when due.
5. Poor funding: Over the years, the state has failed to accomplish her sports targets and objectives due to inadequate funding. The state should endeavour to encourage corporate sponsorship by increasing the percentage of the tax relief as incentives. There is also the need to encourage other sports philanthropists to participate in sports programmes especially traditional sports and games such as Ncho game.
6. Poor state of facilities: The state can not boast of adequate sporting facilities and equipment to cater for the teaming youths of the state. Government should make some concerted efforts to provide facilities at all levels and ensure that trained personnel are employed to manage these facilities and equipment.
7. Lack of recreational parks: The Government can not boast of a single recreational park in the state where the youths and other will go and relax and shown some of anti-social behaviours in the society like terrorism e.g Boko Haram sect by the Muslims. The government should build many recreational parks in the cities to encourage and motivate the youths to come out to participate in Ncho Game and other traditional sports and games in Nigeria as a strategy national -peace building in Nigeria.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

Peace has been the watch word of every nations of the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century including Nigeria. It is only peace that can harmonies this great nation-Nigeria as one through sport. Traditional sports and games like Ncho should be encourage by the Government through provision of adequate recreational parks with adequate facilities and equipment. It is believed that, in a short while Nigeria higher institutions will include Ncho and other traditional sports and games in the Physical Education Curriculum to help further standardization of the game. Government should also encourage practitioners of Ncho game who win laurel for the state should be adequately rewarded by the government like their counterpart in other sports, this will help to encourage participation. Government through the Nigeria National Sports Commission Studies embrace corporate sports organizations or establishment to lend their support towards the growth and development of Ncho and other traditional sports games in Nigeria.

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