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AFRICENTRIC PERCEPTION OF CHILDHOOD AND DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS/STRATEGIES FOR SOCIO-COGNITIVE ENRICHMENT OF CHILDREN

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INTRODUCTION

The development of social, moral and practical skills as aspects of developmental tasks for cognitive enrichment of children is supported by Super and Harkness (1997) who introduced "the developmental niche framework" for directing research in different cultures and Ogbu (1994) who posited the "frame of reference" paradigm for understanding the differences in development within technologically advanced cultures and those that are not. Super and Harkness (1997) and Ogbu (1994) suggest that various cultures perceive childhood differently and have different kinds of developmental tasks embedded in the eco-cultural and social environment in which the child is nurtured.

There is a difficulty in understanding and conceptualizing childhood. According Jenks (1996), children are social beings whose world is constructed within a historical and a cultural frame of reference. Thus, an attempt to universalize the concept of the child leads not only to a misunderstanding of the world of children, but also tantamount to interpretational fallacies. Onwauchi (1972) maintains that the indigenous African societies educated their children through the on-going processes of life in their traditional customs and values. Through their traditional tales and myths, the elders taught the children the moral ethical codes of behaviours and social relationship. Through certain religious rituals and practices, communal attainments of spiritual ideas were established. These spiritual ideals lay the foundation for the respect which the indigenous Africans have for their political institutions; the love, respect and obedience which the children must show their parents and elders.

Socio-cognitive enrichment of children entails the acquisition of skills by children through socialisation with parents, siblings, peers and the community at large. Illumined by Gardner's (1983) Theory of Multiple Intelligences and Sternberg's (1985) Triarchic Theory of Intelligence and Nsamenang's (1992) Social Ontogenetic Theory, socio-cognitive enrichment of children could be conceptualised in the child's acquisition of moral values, the ability to perform daily routines, the ability to sustain interpersonal relationships and the ability to adapt to the local environment. Hence this paper seeks to answer three principal questions:

- How is childhood perceived in African traditional cultures?
- What are the developmental tasks children are expected to perform for their socio-cognitive enrichment?
- What are the socialisation strategies used for socio-cognitive enrichment of children in African cultures?

CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS
Childhood in African Traditional Cultures
Childhood in African philosophical thought is considered as delicate as holding an egg in one's palm. Holding the egg too tight crushes it; a careless handling of the egg may fall from the palm and be destroyed too. Childhood is a delicate concept in African traditional system, which provides a political and social space for children to develop and perpetuate the cultural legacies of their ancestors. Childhood as a social construction is very relevant within the African context. Children are perceived both as biologically vulnerable beings in need of protection and nurturing and at the same time a social construction, which prescribes certain social functions and relationships. Children prescribe the roles that parents play because fathers are the providers of the family and the mothers provide the needed nurturing for the children. The importance of children in traditional Africa is their fundamental role as future insurance for their families.

According to Nsamenang (2005), the period of childhood is stretched out within the developmental periods of social apprentice and social entrée (Nsamenang, 2005). In the early years of these developmental stages, the child is expected to recognize social roles, acknowledge self in connectedness and develop a high sense of peer interaction and work. In later years, the child is tasked with the ability to recognize and adjust to changes, perform domestic chores and participate in rite of passage if any.

Fortes (1957) writing about the Tallensi in Ghana, divides child development into two stages, the babyhood and childhood. The first stage, the babyhood is the period of birth till about a year's old. Although the baby is in the absolute care of the mother, the responsibility of care for the baby is that of the whole household, including older brothers and sisters, the mother's co-wives and grandparents. The babies in Tallensi tradition are weaned around the age of three. But they are fed exclusively on the mother' breast milk for a whole year. According to Fortes (1957), the first development stage is marked by the completion of weaning. This is the period when the child is physically and psychological severed from its mother. After the child is weaned, the Tallensi children often follow their older siblings, playing and communicating his/her feeling verbally. This increased freedom of the child does not relegate the position of the mother as the centre of the universe for the child. For girls, the reference of the mother as the centre of the universe remains until marriage, but ends sooner for boys, who must be attached to the trades of their fathers. For the Talle child, although the primary distinction and recognition exist for the biological parents, such distinctions are blared with the wider household all adults in the household are referred to as 'mothers' and 'fathers'.

The next period in the development in the Talle child is the period of childhood. This is between the ages of 4 and 8 years, and it is the happiest and freest of the child's life (Fortes1957). The child begins to participate in the daily events in the community through observation and mimicking of such activities. Parents begin to instill discipline and exert some authority over the children. Fortes (1957) claims that until it (the child) reaches the threshold of adolescence, at about 12 to 14 years of age, it still remains free to play for much of its time. But from the age of 7 or so boys and girls are eager to participate in the adult routine of life and they become more and more involved in it. They begin by being given the simplest economic and household tasks. The division of labour begins to manifest during this period.

Boys are generally trained to engage in the manual aspect of the labour process, while girls follow their mothers in their occupational duties. Although the Talle child is allowed some latitude in value conformation up until the age of 5 years, the period between the ages of 8 and 9 is considered the period in which the child has acquired some sense. Conformation to the values and norms of the community is expected from the children.

Another important conceptualization of childhood and rearing practices is through the concept of lineage in Africa. There are two main lineages in Africa, the matrilineal and the patrilinear. The lineage in which a child is born has two important significances. First, it determines which household the child will spend the greater part of his childhood. In matrilineal societies, childhood training, and apprenticeship exists mainly in a matrilocal context. The reverse is the truism in patrilineal societies where rearing and training practices are conducted within the patrilocal context. The second is how inheritance is arranged. In a matrilineal culture, one can only inherit from the maternal side of the family. For example, a son in a matrilineal society cannot directly inherit the father. But he can contest for an inheritance from the brothers of the mother.

However, inheritance in a patrilineal society holds that children of the father are the direct beneficiaries of the property(s) of their father. This is interesting because, when it comes to child rearing the role of the mothers are uncontested. However, when the child is between the ages of 7 and 9 years, their maternal uncles train boys from matrilineal societies, and those from the patrilineal remain under the tutelage of their biological fathers. Whatever the dichotomization of lineage, the child from the union of a man and woman possesses some important features of both. From the Akan perspective, the child possesses the sunsum that is the spirit of the genitor. The child also possesses the mogya (blood) of the mother. It is the possession of the mogya of mother by the child that earns him/her lineage. An Akan child ascribes to the abusua of the mother and the sunsum of the father. The prominence of the matriarch in Akan polity does not diminish the role and importance of the patriarchy in the lives of children. The child within this traditional lineage arrangements is perceived to be sacred and in need of protection, physically and spiritually.

The concept of childhood in Africa is incomplete without a discussion of the fostering practices. Fostering includes the provision of the needed material and spiritual support for the development of the children. According to Kilbride and Kilbride (1990), sibling interdependence is a significant feature underlying patterns of fostering in Kenya. Writing about the Samia people in Western Kenya, Kilbride and Kilbride (1990) assert that a child born out of wedlock will live with his mother's parents, usually permanently. At the death of one or both parents, a child may move to live with the relatives (uncle, aunt, etc.) after the funeral. A child is sent to a "more prosperous" relative but will visit his or her parents regularly and will eventually return to live with them. If living alone, one can request a child from a sister to alleviate loneliness or to live in the house while the resident is away at work, on night or periodically absent. In traditional African societies, the notion of destitution was non-existent. Every child belonged to a family, a kinship or a community. The rearing of the child was the responsibility of not only the family, but all well-meaning members of the society. As has been opined by Kilbride and Kilbride (1990), the family support system

invariably formed a barrier against child abuse and neglect. The support system inherent in the African traditional family system actually reduced the rate of child destitution.

The above analysis seems to suggest that there were no problems within the traditional African family system. However, some evidence suggests that the traditional African family may have been overrated in its potential to be a stabilizing unit and as a protector of children. It has been argued by Kayongo-Male and Onyango (1994) in their discussion on traditional African family system that although the system was fairly stable, there were credible incidences of divorce and abuse. This stemmed from polygamous family systems where co-wives competed for the attention and resources for their children. Children were witnesses to occasional family squabbles between their mothers and among the children. There was jealousy and a scramble for family resources especially from the children.

AFRICENTRIC DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS FOR SOCIO-COGNITIVE ENRICHMENT OF CHILDREN

Nsamenang (2005) opines that the period of childhood in Africa can be likened to social novices (social apprentice) during which children are gradually and systematically initiated into various social roles. The principal developmental tasks are to recognize, cognize, and rehearse social roles, to be an active agent in the endeavour to become a socialized novice. Children are expected to internalize moral values, sustain interpersonal relationships, perform daily routines and enhance enhance their environmental adaptation skills.

Moral values

Moral development can be defined as a change in people's sense of justice and of what is right and wrong, and in their behaviour related to moral issues. (Feldman, 2003). This involves how people reason, behave and feel when confronted with moral problems. It can therefore be inferred that moral development is not limited to one particular domain; rather it embodies tenets of the cognitive, behavioural and emotive theories of human development. (Santrock, 2004).

In the African Society, ethical principles are of two types: positive and negative. The positive values include justice, gratitude, honesty, loyalty, truthfulness, tolerance, responsibility, hard work, cooperation, generosity, kindness, fidelity to one's duty (Ayantayo, 1999). The society expects its members to apply these values to all social relations. Conversely, negative values, which are just direct opposites of positive values, consist of actions and ways of behaviour which are considered wrong and which people should abstain from. They include idleness, laziness, injustice, selfishness, greed, avarice, intolerance, stealing, exploitation, oppression, hatred, falsehood, dishonesty, irresponsibility and many other social vices (Brandt, 1961).

According to Kohlberg (1984) moral development is embedded in moral thinking (reasoning) and unveils itself in stages. His studies are based on interviews made primarily with male children, adolescents and adults on their responses to what he terms moral dilemmas. Kohlberg insists that changes in cognitive development, give and take relationship with parents and peers are essential factors that promote and develop advanced moral thinking in children. Kohlberg further suggests that moral development takes place in three levels. These include the pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional levels of moral development. Each of these levels is composed of two stages, making a total of six stages.

Kohlberg's theory is practically applicable within the African context because just as the child within Kohlberg's framework needs to think through moral dilemmas, the child within the African context need to think and make moral judgements from cultural folktales and proverbs so as to understand and practice what is generally accepted by society to be morally right or wrong. Within cultures in the African context, society is free to pass judgement on the behaviour of people in the society. This is done to protect and foster ethical values of the society. Ethical judgements of these values are concerned with actions or kinds of actions that seek to uphold or destroy the moral values. Ethical judgement is possible after a careful ethical analysis of an action. Ethical analysis according to Niebuhr (1963) embraces evaluating moral values, goals, purpose and moral claims and aspirations, underlying human thought or actions. (Niebuhr, 1963). Ethical analysis goes hand in hand with ethical dimension of an action in which a person seeks to know ethical content of or ethical values inherent in an action such as speech, communication, etc. The major concern of ethics is the examination of implications which an action has on individuals and the entire society; hence, such ethical questions: Who is performing an action, what action does he perform, why is he performing it and what are the implications of the action for him (the performer) and for others (that is, people whom the action is directed to)? In all, every society expects its members to conform to the approved standards of behaviours.

Within cultures in Africa, Ethics and Morality are highly valued as important aspects of intellectual behaviour. The virtues of respect for community hierarchy, obedience to parents and elders, sharing with others, good dressing habits, morning salutations and care for ageing parents are greatly upheld within the African context. These moral values are culturally transmitted to children through oral language by the use of cultural folktales, proverbs, riddles and metaphors out of which the child is expected to draw out moral significances.

Daily routines

A child's participation in family life through the performance of daily routines is of capital importance to African parents and elders. In the light of Sternberg (1985), the child's ability to perform daily routines can be considered practical intelligence, which involves the ability to grasp, understand and deal with everyday tasks. Yatta (2007) highlights two main categories of daily routines: household chores and farming duties. Household chores include the child's ability to perform activities such as cleaning duties, running of errands, fetching of objects like wood and water for the family and cooking. Children are socialized into these intelligent behaviours through observation and imitation of parents and older siblings.

Farming is another aspect of intellectual behaviour. According to Yatta (2007) from an early age, children accompany adults to the farms where they participate by observing and emulating what adults did. From about age six, children can be seen with tiny blunt utensils digging the soil, planting seeds, chasing birds away from crops, and harvesting. Over the years, boys are expected to know how to clear while girls are socialized into hoeing and weeding. Through interaction with parents and elders, children acquire necessary knowledge about the land, the soil, different seasonal crops, and trees that were imbued with spirits and therefore not cuttable. It is important that children, especially girls learn how to take care of their families and how to balance household chores with those of farming.

Interpersonal skills
This involves the child's ability to make and sustain healthy relationship with peers and other members of the community through the exhibition of pro-social intelligent behaviour. Commenting on interpersonal relationships as an aspect of intellectual behaviour Gardner (1983) considers interpersonal relationships as the ability to communicate and engage in effective social relationships with others. Within the African context, Nyota and Mapara (2008) reveal that through games and play songs with peers, children socialize themselves into acceptable interpersonal relationships. These include the child's ability to; give and receive help from peers, keep friends and playmates, manage conflict, learn future gender roles, manage success and failure, live and work together with others, participate in community tasks, celebrate with others and feel for others in times of worry and distress.

Environmental adaptation
The ability of a child to adapt to his/her environment has been considered by Gardner (1983) in his theory of multiple intelligences. As one of the components of intelligence, Gardner considers naturalistic intelligence as ability to identify patterns in nature and to determine how individual objects or beings fit into them (Gardner, 1983). It is important that within the African context, the child is able to know how to make use of the natural environment around him or her. This is the contextual and practical aspect of intelligence and reflects how the child relates to the external world about him or her. Sternberg (1985) states that it is adaptation to, shaping of, and selection of real-world environments relevant to one's life.

Nature intelligence is highly valued amongst cultures of Africa. In this regard, a child growing up in typical African indigenous context is required to be able to; identify medicinal plants, do basic plant concoctions that cure basic illnesses, produce play objects and house furniture like chairs and brooms out of natural (bamboos) and waste material, identify cultural symbols and objects like trees, rivers, insects, plants, animals that are of spiritual value and even identify poisonous plants (Sternberg, 2001; Yatta, 2007; Nyota & Mapara, 2008)

AFRICENTRIC SOCIALISATION STRATEGIES FOR USED SOCIO-COGNITIVE ENRICHMENT OF CHILDREN
Within African contexts, culture influences the child's socio-cognitive enrichment through his or her experiences with his parents, his family and/or those adults closely associated with him or her. In addition, his or her siblings and peers, as well as the physical and social world around him or her, contribute to this process (Elam, 1968). These social interactions are often composed of activities such as folklore, indigenous games and play-songs as well as rites of passage.

Folklore socialisation strategy
According to Gyekye (1995), stories (folktales) and proverbs are primary ways through which a great deal of African philosophical thought, knowledge and wisdom has been taught. Preliterate African culture was characterized by an oral tradition that found expression in stories, folktales, anecdotes, proverbs, and parables that provoked a great deal of reflection. Most of the African knowledge, myths, philosophies, liturgies, songs, and sayings have been handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. Through these oral media preserved, more or less accurately, children are educated on the people's conduct and moral values.

Folktale has been given many definitions by many scholars of different orientations. Its definition depends on its functions in a society and the way the narrator and the audience think of it at the time of performance. For instance, according to Akporobaro (2001) folktale is an imaginative narrative (story) in prose form. The story that constitutes a folktale may have a basis in real life, but generally the story is an imaginative recreation of a memorable experience that is intended essentially to entertain rather than to record history or social experience. A folktale may be believed. Generally, however, they are considered to be untrue stories, and hence not objects of serious belief. Also, Hagan (1988) provides a comprehensive and critical list of the technical features of a folktale: It has a literary convention expressed in the scheme of formal features: the introductory statements; the body of the tale interspersed with songs; the moral or etiological conclusion; the narrator-audience interaction; the use of language characterised chiefly by repetition and resort to ideophones; the role of songs to punctuate sections of the story and to advance the plot in some cases.

Apart from folktales, proverb is another significant medium of indigenous communication in African society. It occurs informally in day to day verbal communication or conversation (Olatunji, 1984). In fact, according to Ikenga-Metuh (1992), proverbs spring spontaneously from the people. They are *vox populi...* in profound sense and consequently, should be accepted as a true index of what a people regard as true and are interpretative of the principles of life and conduct. Proverbs are therefore, trustworthy witness of the social, political, ethical and religious ideals of the people among whom they originate. In the words of Olatunji, proverbs serve as social characters to praise what the society considers to be virtues such as tolerance, responsibility, dedication, love, discipline, justice amongst others (Olatunji, 1984). In the same way, proverbs are used to condemn what the society considered injustice, intolerance, destruction, jealousy, envy, hatred, sexual immorality among others (Ajibola, 1947). For example, hard work is praised and laziness condemned in the samples of Yoruba proverbs. Atelewo eni kii tannije. meaning One's own palm does not deceive one. That is, every man must work for his material success for if neighbours are not ready to help one hand does through hard work. This proverb extols the virtue of industry or hard work. On laziness, a Yoruba proverb says: Iponri ole kii ni laari Ojoojumo lakitiyan nba. The lazy man's destiny does not prosper, it is daily that trouble besets it. This indicates that a lazy man always gets into trouble. From this point, we can argue that while proverb communicates ethical values of society, a person who speaks it becomes an agent of articulating ethical values of society in an informal manner.

Folktales and proverbs can be understood as metaphors to guide moral choice and self-examination because, when reflected upon, they act as mirrors for seeing things in a particular way. More than any theoretical discussion or philosophical writing, they throw light on the concrete reality of lived experience; they serve as important pedagogical devices because they provide experiential case material on which pedagogical reflection is possible (Manen, 1990). As learners break into (analyse) the proverbs or stories, they are able to reflect on the meanings and implications embedded in the experiences.

Indigenous games socialization strategy
In African cultures, as the child grows, his/her social world is not as limited as the child's from the western culture. His/her general learning is beyond the immediate family circle. At

this age period too, particularly if weaning has been instituted, the environment of a child is much less mother-centred. He is brought into the group in the area of play. By the time he is fully weaned, somewhere between two and two and a half years, the African child spends a great deal more time with his or her siblings and/or other children in the total family compound. In this way, he is exposed to areas of socialisation and complex social interaction at an early age. During this age period, social gains begin to come into the foreground (Elam, 1968).

Nyota and Mapara (2008) highlight two important ways by which the African child interacts with peers and siblings. This is done through African traditional games and play songs. Berger (2000) has remarked: If a child's learning is not aroused by his or her parents, it may be aroused – and powerfully – when the child begins to compare his or her skills with those of other children of the same age. Berger (2000) emphasizes the fact that older African elder children who have mastered the skill or graduated from apprenticeship so to speak normally give the apprentice child guidance. The critical element of these games is guided participation. The older child who has mastered the skill and the learner child interact in order to accomplish a task. As they do so, the mentor is both sensitive and responsive to the needs of the learner. Through these traditional games and play songs, children learn how to handle interpersonal relationships and develop more social and cognitive competences.

Rites of passage socialisation strategy
Rites of passage are critical narratives and dimensions of traditional socialisation of gender social roles in Africa. These rituals mark an individual's transition from one stage of life to other concerning gender roles and function (Turner, 1985). For instance, amongst the Nso of the North West Region of Cameroon, the birth of a child, a youth's coming of age, and the funeral of a respected elder are all events in which an individual undergoes a change of status within respected gender functions as either male or female (Nsamenang, 1992). According to Turner (1985), most African societies have different age-linked rituals and mark the passage from one to another, but not all have the same rituals, either in number or in kind.

Birth rites are the major African initiation rites and involve initiating the infant into the world through a ritual and naming ceremony. Birth rites often begin with the prenatal stage with rituals to confirm pregnancy, foetal growth, and safe delivery. At this conception, some rites are performed to plead to God via the ancestors for the birth of either male or female child as deemed necessary by the family (Manu, 2003). At birth, the naming ceremony is always gender sensitive as both males and females participate in giving the name of the child, who often is considered as a reincarnation of a profound male or female that had lived a virtuous life in the family. Names of female children are given after female adults as well as male children given after male adults. Children from birth are therefore expected to recognise and grow within gender barriers as defined by the culture of the people (Nsamenang, 1992).

Adulthood rites are the most gender-sensitive of all rites. These rites are often initiated at puberty and involve socialisation of males and females into assuming their future roles as adults, as well as initiations into different male and female cultural associations. African societies systematically initiate boys and girls into assuming their adult roles and functions. Within the course of these rites boys and girls are separated and taken out of the community, and away from the concerns of everyday life, to perform gender-sensitive tasks that will make

them responsible male and female adults. They often learn the rules and taboos of society; moral instruction and social responsibility; and further clarification of his/her mission or calling in life. Adult rites often culminate in emerging adults joining different cultural associations concerning their different gender affiliations.

Mzeka (1980) reports that there are cultural associations that belong only to men as well as those that belong only to women where gender-related issues are specifically handled. For instance, within the Nso of the North West Region of Cameroon, we have the Nfu association, where only men are members, and the primary function is that they serve as soldiers and protectors of the clan. Here, men are socialised in taking up the task of protecting the family as well as the entire tribe. In the same vein, there is the Chong association for women, whose primary duty rests in nurturing and feeding the clan. Here women are socialised into how they can nurture the family and entire clan (Mzeka, 1980). Other adult rites include betrothal and marriage and rituals elevating individuals to high office or to priestly functions. With these rites of passage, men and women are expected to perform their different gender roles and functions.

SOCIAL ONTOGENETIC THEORY (NSAMENANG, 2005) AS AN AFRICENTRIC THEORETICAL BASE FOR SOCIO-COGNITIVE ENRICHMENT OF CHILDREN

Nsamenang builds on Bronfenbrenner (1979) and his ecological treatise on human development and the implications of the ecological environment's impact on human ontogeny. For Nsamenang (2005) African worldview visualizes phases of human cyclical ontogenesis of systematic socialization of responsible intelligence in participatory curricula that assign stage-appropriate developmental tasks. In these curricula, knowledge is not separated into discrete disciplines, but all strands of it are interwoven into a common tapestry, which is learned by children at different developmental stages, who participate in the cultural and economic life of the family and society. This line of thought permits the integration of diverse ethno-cultural realities and disparate theoretical threads into a common conceptual system—social ontogenesis. A theory of social ontogenesis addresses how, throughout ontogeny, children are co-participants in social and cultural life.

According to Nsamenang (1992), West African ontogeny recognizes three basic dimensions of personhood. First there is a spiritual self-hood beginning at conception and ending with naming; the social self-hood extends from naming until death (which is more acceptable in old age); and the ancestral self-hood that follows biological death (Nsamenang, 1992). It is within the social ontogeny that the stages of development (seven) are articulated below in Table 1. In sum, the West African social ontogeny posits nine cycles of human life, namely, spiritual self-hood, period of the new-born, social priming, social apprenticing, social entrée, social internment, adulthood, old age, and ancestral selfhood.

The first social stage in social Ontogeny is the period of the new-born, marked by happiness for the "gift" and safety of birth, with the simultaneous projection of the kind of socialized being the neonate should become. In some cases, the name given to the child may epitomize the expectation or reassert gratitude to and resolute trust in the Supreme One. Representing the expectations of significant others, West African names carry potentially critical implications for personality development. For example, among the Akan of Ghana, as in much

of West Africa, a powerful element of uniformity is introduced by the existence of socially determined beliefs about certain defined categories of children.

The second social stage of social self-hood, which approximates the period of infancy, is the pre-social phase, identifiable by such biological behaviours as, for examples, smiling, crying, teething, and sitting up. Implicitly, the biological markers are regarded as the precursors of social functioning. The major developmental task of this stage is success in social priming; failure usually provokes anxiety, with efforts to remedy it.

Table 1: *Socio-cognitive core features and developmental tasks*

SEQUENTIAL STAGE	CORE FEATURES	DEVELOPMENTAL TASK(S)
Spiritual self-hood *Prenatal*	Infant is a "project –in-progress. Human frame to shelter a spiritual self-hood	Beginning at conception and ending at the naming ceremony
First social stage *Neonatal*	The new-born period identified by happiness for the safe arrival, the gift, and the projections regarding his/her future	The naming ceremony, names determined on the basis of historical and circumstantial factors—transcendent, character- evoking, expectation-laden
Second social stage *Infancy*	Infancy period. Pre-social	Social priming such as smiling, crying, teething and sitting up
Third social stage *Childhood*	Social apprentice, novice	Initiated into social roles. Expected to recognize, cognize and rehearse social roles.
Fourth social stage *Puberty*	Social entrée.	Appearance of secondary sex characteristics. May attend initiation ceremonies.
Fifth social stage *Adolescence*	Probation and "socialized" Internship	Social induction. Preparation and training for adulthood
Sixth social stage *Adulthood*	Adulthood	Marriage and responsible parenthood. Seniority increases with the birth of each child.
Seventh social stage *Senescence/death*	Old Age	Grandparent. Epitome of social competence. Offspring living with the blood in them.
Ancestral Self-hood	Biological death	Transcendence. Extends to rituals of the higher spiritual realms.

Source: Nsamenang (2005)

The third social developmental stage, which may roughly be equated to childhood, begins with walking and extends to the throes of adulthood. This the period of the social novice (social apprentice) during which children are gradually and systematically initiated into various social roles. The principal developmental task is to recognize, cognize, and rehearse social roles, to be an active agent in the endeavour to become a socialized novice.

The fourth and fifth social stages, the transitional phases from social novice to the socialized neophyte, heralded by the appearance of secondary sex characteristics, may be designated social entrée. Societies that still practice initiation ceremonies mark this phase with the so-called puberty rite; others mark it with accentuated efforts to allocate more responsibilities and to co-opt the neophytes into adult social groups and role. This marks the beginning of social probation or internship: a period of intense social induction, the definitive preparation and training for adulthood. The developmental task of social induction is to become a socialized intern-an emerging adult.

The sixth social stage is adulthood, with implications for marriage and responsible parenthood. Individuals acquire only proto-adult status on marriage. This however increases their seniority with the birth of each child. That is, a person is not considered "man" or "woman" enough if he or she is unable to reproduce. Full adulthood (personhood) is thus synonymous with "married with children".

The seventh social stage of social self-hood is old age. Old people are expected to be grandparents, who, though frail, are usually regarded as the epitome of social competence. The confidence level with which old people face death depends on the number of competent offspring who live with their "blood." Thus, biological readiness, inclusive fitness, and social competence are implicit concepts in the West African social Ontogeny.

The seven social stages are underpinned by spiritual and ancestral selfhoods. At the spiritual selfhood the infant is a "project –in-progress. This is the beginning of life at conception and ending at the naming ceremony. The ancestral selfhood is marked by biological death but depicts transcendence and extension rituals of the higher spiritual realms. This is characterised by a strong belief of reincarnation where the loving dead are believed to be reborn into new life to begin another cycle of life.

CONCLUSION
How childhood is construed and how children acquire socio-cognitive skills varies across cultures. In some societies children learn in schools; in others, they learn from active involvement in the life of families and communities. Within African cultures the knowledge, skills, and values that constitute socio-cognitive tasks, which children learn are massed together as integral to social interaction, cultural life, adapting to the local environment, economic activities, moral obligations and daily routines. Furthermore, as the African child grows, he or she begins to learn and practice these intellectual skills from active involvement in the life of families and communities. Folklore, indigenous games and rites of passage are important strategies used for the socio-cognitive enrichment of children.

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