

ISSUES IN FINE AND APPLIED ARTS: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS IN TEXTILE DESIGN EDUCATION AND PRACTICE IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The paper surveys issues in fine and applied arts and examines the problems and prospects in textile design in Nigeria education. The paper also notes the numerous problems that exist in textile design by discussing issues such as inappropriate appreciation and understanding of the differences between textile design and textile science. Textile design has been wrongly conceived as a female profession. Other problems including high cost of learning and production materials, inadequate teaching and learning material/research/facilities, insufficient period of ITF programme, job opportunities and so on. Ideals in textile design profession outlined by this paper include: development and improvement in the socio-cultural and economic life of the people, job, enhancement, self reliance, encouragement towards the growth of indigenous small scale: modern textile, - design industries in Nigeria and the recommendations suggested include: improvement in funding of institutions, enlightenment programme on the gap between textile design education, and a general call for more research in textile design education in our schools.

Introduction

Art has a history of functionalism and with it, its numerous problems that have continued to exist. The various aspects of arts despite their roles in society have consistently experienced problems. Textile design is one of those art activities, importantly as it is, that have continued to face controversies. This paper observes that numerous problems exist in textile design which include the following:

- Lack of understanding;
- Differences between textile design and textile science profession;
- A notion that textile design is a female profession;
- High cost of learning and production of materials;
- Inadequate teaching and learning materials / facilities;
- Short period during the ITF programme;
- The difference between quality in studio products and industrial textile goods;
- Job placement; and
- Inadequate funding.

In this paper some of the prospects of textile design education are identified for better education achievement especially for the individual. Also, is the need to develop and improve textile design materials, improvement in socio-cultural and economical empowerment of every individual and communities, job opportunities, self reliance, encouragement and promotion of creativity in textiles design as well as a spring board for the growth of indigenous small scale modern textile design industries in Nigeria.

Problems and Objectives of Textile Design Education

However, the problem of this paper concerns itself with the need to determine factors that are largely responsible for those problems facing textile design education in our institutions and the poor outlook accorded it. The paper identified problems being encountered with the view to suggesting and recommending ways of promoting and appreciating those ideals of textiles design education in Nigeria.

Therefore, the specific objectives of the paper include the following:

- To present the appraisal of the major issues militating against better appreciation of the role of textile design education in Nigerian national development;
- To create greater awareness of the values of textile design education and practice to the

- contemporary Nigerian society;
- To identify those major factors responsible for inadequate appreciation of the value of textile designed education in Nigeria; and
- To provoke greater and further debate on the significance of textile design education and practice in the development of contemporary Nigerian society and give recommendation towards better appreciation of the development of textile design education in Nigeria.

Any discussion of textile design education in contemporary sense simply means the focus on teaching, learning and production of clothes/ clothing and its significance to mankind from traditional society to date. Christian, M.K. and Sarah, F. (2002) observed that cloth has always been a vehicle for certain message, a symbol of authority, power, an expression of personality and a maker of historical epochs or even political doctrine and relationship that had existed between two parties. ZUNA (2001) reported that textile arts of Madagascar (Malagasy) provide a splendid opportunity to commemorate and tell the stories of another historic relationship that had been established between her and the United States of America (U.S.A.).

Nigeria from her traditional period through colonial time to date has good records of indigenous textile arts, which the contemporary textile design educational systems do appreciate and emulate in their programme. Ewule (2001), Ada and Kparevzua (2005) and Aboho (2006) agree that building and development are not tasks for one sector or individual alone but rather a collective responsibility of both government and professionals in fine and Applied Arts, etc. A desired attention is necessary by way of funding, provision of infrastructures, facilities and vital materials for teaching and learning in particular to promote teaching and learning in time and Applied Arts in Nigeria

Textile Design and Textile Science Education

Education in the various forms of art are necessary tool for self-development, which can only be understood and appreciated when it is recognized that subjects complement each other. It is however, noticed that there is lack of coordinated efforts between teachers of various subjects and even among subjects that are closely related in nature. Art education for what it is and what it does for the individual must be allowed to grow and function well without bias. The artist and the scientist cannot function without the other. Both of them are parts of national development. This is to say that the artist reveals the possibilities and the scientist makes them possible.

Textile design and textile science education have been wrongly understood. In fact, many people see textile design as an area just for women while textile science is also seen as an area for men. The trends and outlook in both textile design and the textile science education are as a result of the general societal feelings of art education as a discipline. Art has been perceived wrongly and people are not making enough efforts towards understanding this important subject. According to Palmer (2004), it is viewed only as a subjective manner of expression, that is intuitive and the intellectual behavior involved in the process has been repeatedly neglected. Apart from understanding, there are other factors that have continued to constitute problems as far as textile design education is concerned. These factors include high cost of learning and production materials, inadequate teaching and learning materials/facilities, timing of the ITF programme, job placement and the need for proper funding in textile design education.

In all aspects of learning not just in textiles design education alone problems exist in all other disciplines except that they differ due to popularities Art education is used by everybody yet people have failed to see why it needs all the attentions. Experiences by the writers of this paper as teachers at all levels of education shows that textile design education deserve more attention than it is presently being given. The need for textile design should not be questioned, noting its contribution to the development of society.

Teachers, Facilitators for Textile Design Education

The teacher is the backbone of classroom activities. The major role of every teacher is to teach his or her discipline effectively. Apart from normal classroom teaching, he works with other staff members,

the principal, students and the community at large. Effective classroom teaching demands much from the teacher because he is expected to know the subject and how to teach it. For the textile design teacher looking at the problems being faced in art, education in general and textile design in particular, the teacher's tasks can be difficult. The textile design teacher needs to prove his/her worth in society so that he and his discipline can be appreciated. A lot of influence has come to bear on the market scene and only very skilled and professional designers can stand the challenges of the moment. Textile designers generally work from basic human needs and those products that satisfy people's needs. Uzoagba (1978) states that "modern designed should blend with the expression of utility, materials and into a visually satisfactorily whole" Besides, a professional textile designer should not only see himself or herself as provider of theories, but a provider reputable examples in practical production of viable textile design products and services through practice. The blending materials and experience come from uncountable sources that are available to the textile design profession. The only demands on the part of the vibrant textile design teacher is to explore and exploit such rich sources of design to produce aesthetic and useful designs for his or her society while keeping watch with modern development and challenges in the profession. Part of the tasks include the ability to be resourceful when handling textile design education before the students, even though, faced with the presence of scarce resources of materials. He or she should be able to present clear demonstration of various steps in all the lesson for easy and permanent assimilation and motivation. Another issue is inadequate funding in Nigerian Educational Sector, which almost all the academic wings in both lower and higher institution in Nigeria do face and the textile design area is not left out. Agbionu (2006) in his consideration for good primary education in Nigeria, observed the truth that the financial burden on government has forced parents to be involved in funding of education through one type of levy or the other despite the poor capacity of the parents. The textile design discipline is a course that requires sufficient funding because of the nature of materials. A situation where adequate materials and equipment are not provided both the learners and the teachers are no longer comfortable in meaningful learning and teaching (Textile Design education inclusive). From personal experience as one time departmental examination officer, between 1999 and 2004 academic sessions; many sections in the Department of Industrial Design Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria had some of their examinations date, shifted due to lack of examination materials such as gas, Kaolin, Dyes, printing, ink postal colour, organdy and enough fabrics. The textile design section of Industrial Design Department in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria has been rationing the only functional floor looms for both 300 and 400 level students for the past six years now. Therefore, the chances of creativity development in weaving is not as hopeful because of insufficiencies of learning and teaching materials in the section. According to Agbionu (2006), education should be seen as the key to unlock the door of modernization for any society and recommends both states and federal / local government to assume greater responsibilities on funding the educational sector in Nigerian.

The issue of short period for Industrial training and its effect on the learner, in textile design education is a training that gears towards industrial application and viable productivity. A situation earlier reported in this paper serves as an example in the lack of adequate teaching and learning materials/ equipment. Ideally academic textile design studios should be equipped with some basic materials, facilities and equipment so as to motivate learning and teaching of the subjects, Ada (2002), presented such a list which includes: functional and durable floor looms with necessary accessories, assorted dyes their and assistants, paper design materials postal colour, drawing instruments, roller printing machine, steaming, screen printing, photographic equipment, assorted colour yarns, fabrics and laboratory facilities for dye experiment etc. Nearly all the institutions, where textile design is being offered in Nigeria lack adequate laboratory in their studio and this is a serious issue for concern.

When a student of textile design goes to a good textile Industry, the departments that should be found are administration, security, weaving spinning, printing, carding, printing, dyeing and finishing including Engineering. Each of these departments has peculiar sections. For instance, weaving has seizing, warping, beaming and the weaving with the looms. For any meaningful acquisition of comprehensive industrial skills, it requires at least three months in each department to enable the students have enough opportunity to gain industrial knowledge, thereby promoting his or her employment opportunity after graduation. The present bias by some textile industries for textile design graduates for employment is based on the feeling that sufficient industries skills have not been acquired from those schools

This last factor can then be used to understand the difference between textile design studio products and those from industrial sector. Observation made by this paper is the fact that, textile industries make use of high quality materials, equipment and facilities where as most studio rely on available resources and materials provided by the institution.

Recommendations

- 1) There is need to consider increasing the industrial training attachment period from the present three months to at least six months to enable students acquire sufficient skills and experience before graduation.
- 2) The paper equally recommends for adequate laboratory setup, which will be based on the need of textile educational research to cope with modern age.
- 3) Government should pay proper attention for adequate funding of all high institutions for the provision of adequate learning and teaching materials, equipment and facilities.
- 4) Textile design lecturers, especially in the universities and polytechnics should do more research towards inward sourcing of learning and teaching materials and equipment for self reliance and promotion of textile education.
- 5) Textile design teachers (especially lecturers) should not only see themselves as theory profounder but should be demonstrators of practicality to motivate their students as well as society around them.

Summary and Conclusion

The paper presents the appraisal of problems surrounding ideal textile design education in Nigeria. It identifies issues such as lack of understanding the gap between textile design education and textile science, explained that textile science education deals with the scientific study of textile materials, equipment, their manufacturing and management. Textile design education on the other hand, is concerned with artistic study and aesthetic design/application from the science sector to produce or make fabrics in a variety of forms for human kind. Its tools lies with adequate elements of design and their principle both in application and the appreciation of problems connected to textile industries design process. However, the two are united by a common term known as textiles or clothing that are commonly used by every society. Despite the importance of textile design, today it is seen as not being significant. Also, is the problem of the short period of industrial student's attachment, which are usually not enough for acquisition of skills to achieve design objectives. High cost of learning materials could be resolved through adequate funding. The paper also considers the role of the textile design teacher as very important in motivating and promoting students interest to encourage students to be self reliant, by creation of jobs on their own, being very creative, and above all, for enhancing industrial / technological advancement of the society.

The conclusion of the paper is based on the fact that vital areas affecting education in contemporary textile design education in Nigeria have been identified, analyzed and documented and hopes that both government and textile design professionals will play their roles to improve the situation for a better technological growth so as to keep pace with modern development.

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