Textile Design Education in the Development of the Unemployed Nigerian Women

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Abstract: This paper examines the use of textile design, (an aspect of Art) in fostering the development of unemployed Nigerian women. The paper interprets the meaning of textile design to the unemployed women of different categories who could adopt it for self-reliance. A course proposal for the establishment of this is suggested.

Keywords: Textile, design, Unemployed, Nigerian women

Introduction

Many types of development including job creation through crop production and food processing have been developed recently for the unemployed women by successive governments in Nigeria. Productive results were not forthcoming because of a lack of emphasis and commitment on the part of the initiators. And perhaps also because the programmes lack some strategically and analytical values in implementation. At one time, textile programmes such as weaving, dyeing, and knitting were introduced, but all these show a lot of inadequacies also for lack of focus and implementable syllabi.

In order to provide job opportunities for unemployed women in Nigeria, many programmes should be designed. The World Bank data compiled by Lele (1976) and later undated indicate that over 76% of the Nigerian population dwell in rural areas and with an annual population increase rate of between 2.5 to 3.5 percent. The consequent effect is poverty and hunger, ill-health and unstable family life, poor nutrition, and little or no access to formal education.

It is pertinent to establish the knowledge as to how development can reach the subsistence unemployed women who constitute the majority in the women race. It is also essential to extend this privilege to both rural and urban unemployed women. The author has chosen an aspect of Art (Textile Design) as a vehicle to drive development and economic independence to unemployed women.
There is hardly any need to repeat the definition of textiles as it is being understood as the basic necessity of life. In Nigeria, clothing, the manufacturer was given priority attention only when there was a ban on the importation of foreign textile goods. The need then arose for Nigerians to look inward. At first, textile education was overlooked at the expense of other areas of Art. It becomes necessary therefore to train artists and craftsmen to know the simple art of dyeing, batiking, and weaving for use as local substitutes.

The training and the subsequent acquisition for craftsmanship did not only flourish in art schools, apprenticeship system was also adopted to teach the crafts to non-literate communities. Ojo (1991) categorized a thin set of "deschoolers" into 3 groups as stated hereunder:

1) Those who find it difficult to complete orthodox school:
2) Those who are less privileged to obtain formal education; and
3) Those who prefer to learn the trade and involve in business ventures »

Many of the unemployed women fall under one or more of those groups. (Another categorization of these groups will be mentioned later in this paper). Mat weaving, weaving in horizontal looms, weaving for roofing and other utilitarian objects, dyeing, printing, and tailoring thus become basic necessities of crafts to learn and understand for the unemployed women who are not privileged to have formal education.

The unemployed women, usually of the village setting, are mostly associated with tasks involving food and crop production and processing, the planting of rice and harvesting of cocoa, breeding seedlings, and tending domestic animals also occupy much of their time. Although these activities provide some peanuts for survival in the home, they were not seen to engage rural women with skillful tasks for self-reliance.

Textile art in this respect can help to fulfill the aims and objectives of actualizing womanhood both at rural and urban settings. It is a profession that trains the woman to achieve economic independence.

Categories of the Unemployed Women

The study of Obbo (1980) reveals that most women in Nigeria are unemployed; a larger percentage are illiterates and very small numbers received formal education. This unemployment still covers those women who "engaged in irregular trades along verandah", while some are wives of salaried men engaged in petty trades.

The "kept women", Obbo (1980) revealed, are “non-producing consumers." These women are fortunate groups who enjoy the good things of life. Some of them who do not possess teaching or secretarial qualifications to look for white-collar jobs depended entirely on their husbands' income.

The jobless woman needs some financial support from a man to survive. Few men in Nigeria would prefer women with a job and some level of economic independence while most non-literate men would also prefer jobless women that would be servile and kept for sexual activities all the time.

Women seem to be seen as assisting men in their successes because they play multiple roles of mothers, daughters, sisters, and wives of male power holders. Men in their characteristic manners tend to use
women to build power "Weave kinship, and make more friends for economic and social growth" (Obbo, 1980).

The issue of laziness and idleness arose because of the fact that women are not usefully engaged. Male counterparts, who even after amassing much wealth would still accuse women of laziness so that they would not give a fair share of their wealth to women to trade with.

Women who gainfully employ selves do so not only to ward off starvation but also “to reduce unhealthy dependence”. (Obbo, 1980).

For a woman to assist her husband at home does not mean to most taking over the entire home. For example, women's assistance in the provision for schooling, feeding, clothing while the husband is away adding a lot of prestige to a woman's stability in ‘the home.

It has been suggested by sociologists that men wanted power so as to be able to hold firmly their positions and they also pursue wealth in order to cater for parents, family, and dependant relatives.

Wealth and power are virtues of supremacy, Obbo (1980) opines that "any attempt (by women) at self-reliance and economic independence is interpreted as a challenge to male juridical supremacy". This should be discouraged in a growing society like Nigeria.

The predicament of women of different categories as explained in this context leaves us with no doubt that women need to be engaged positively such as through textile design education. It is also the position of this paper to establish how these categories of unemployed can gainfully advance textile design for fostering domestic and economic needs.

**Textile Design for the Unemployed Women**

Programmes for the unemployed in Nigeria are not new. Though most of the programmes were set up to actualize the existence of rural people but the urban unemployed have also enjoyed this benefit since the produce of the rural people are taken to urban areas for sale. To fit well into the society, the programmes were established also to assist male folks in establishing active free homes for "kept women". The Family Support Programme (FSP) of Maryam Sanni Abacha (1994-1997) was top on the list and was meant to assist rural families and the unemployed generally, as well as giving financial support for the implementation through Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP). Among others, the Programmes (now defunct) were also to create employment opportunities and self-reliance. Abdullahi (1997) postulates that the overall aim of the FSP is to improve and sustain family cohesion through the promotion of the social and economic well-being of the Nigerian family.

Earlier, there was the "Better Life for Rural Dwellers" programme initiated by the Babangida administration between 1987-1993]. The similarities of both programmes were considered along the lines of giving loans to the unemployed and assisting them to utilize the loans for gainful engagements. It is not the intention of this paper to highlight the inadequacies of these programmes as they fell short of human expertise and professionalism. Most of the loans granted were misapplied to purchase equipment and machines which cannot be operated by women themselves.
Textile design programmes were brought alongside the programmes. There were records of how participants seized the opportunities to establish independent textile shops and fashion houses (Ojo, 1997). But the channelization of both theory and practice of the subject of textile education was not properly utilized to encourage the much-desired independence that the unemployed women needed. Loans for establishing textile shops were disbursed with apathy and partiality. Although the insinuation of Abdullahi (1997) that the "loans are disbursed only when actual activities or use for such loan has been ascertained" did not add-eas the lopsidedness of the methods of disbursements.

**Proposals for the Organisation and Teaching Textile Design Programmes**

A committee to recruit the manpower needs and design the organisation structure of the textile design programme should again bè set in motion. As against the practice in the past where the instrumentations and implementation powers rest in the office of the wives of governors and presidents.

To assist the unemployed, therefore, this committee (although annexed to the Ministry of Labour and Productivity) should design the network of artistic programmes based on expertise counseling and advice. Exraré in relevant fields drawn from Colleges and Universities should be assigned part-time duties or recruiting the 'unemployed women intakes and teach course contents designed by the committee.

**Suggested Course Outlines**

For proper skill acquisition based on practical activities, the unemployed women should participate in the following short-term courses between 3 months - 4 months per season.

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<td>Sewing Techniques and Fashion Design</td>
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<td>Printed Textile!</td>
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<td>Fabric Enhancement Process (FEP)</td>
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Note:

Suggested course contents are based on previous experiments from FESP (Ojo 1998) and additions from colleges and workshops syllabuses.

**Basic Design Course** for the unemployed should exclude the intricacies arid technicalities of academic exercise as in orthodox school education. Simple leaf printing, monitored pencil designs, crayon samplings, tracing of objects and pictorials, imitation of motifs and symbols, simple line and object delineation should also be included.
Printed Textile

This should also incorporate the simple mesh frame techniques. Blackout method in silkscreen process, the lacquer coating method, the photo method, the profilm ironing method, and other stenciling techniques. Fabric pre-treatment before printing, fabric enhancement after printing, and general printing table practice. Design transfer methods, design registrations, and measurement would enhance adequate craftmanship:

Dyed Textiles

This course should take off from simple dye extraction from woods, seeds, insects, and leaves. The application of the home-made dyes on fabrics compared with dyes and dyeing techniques of European origin. The dye bath, the reaction of dyes and chemicals, chemical components in dyeing, bleaching. Hot water and cold water dyes and dyeing effects. Dyeing of used and unused fabrics, dyeing of designed fabrics, and oxidation process in dyeing. This should be followed by activities in tie-dye (methods and varied techniques), batiking, and other materials for proper usage in textile

Production

Also to be studied are dew axing methods, by solvents and not water, fabric varieties, and workable dyes on them. Types of dyes. Teaching types of wax and different methods of application.

Weaving

The traditional spinning of cotton into yarns, yarns setting, simple methods of calculation of yarns setting, simple methods of calculation of yarns on looms. The study of horizontal and vertical looms; the.

Instrumentations and design, it will and Satin weaves, modern weaves, ethnic differentials as in methods and types of yarns used in weaving simple design, weaves manipulation and behaviour. Weavers' design orientation, colour selection, occasional selections, and general weaving habits should be taught with a view to enabling unemployed women to acquire skills with a minimum degree of aestheticism. The most important aspect of weaving is the construction of the loom which should be aided by a carpenter

Constructed Textiles

Activities in the simple flat loom for the construction of rugs, carpets, and wall hangings. Knotting techniques for rug weaving and tapestry design for furniture.

Assemblage and construction exercise in mat weaving, doll and pillow quilts, trapunto tucks, and applique assemblages for wall decoration, interior, and wall hangings. Knotting techniques for rug weaving and tapestry. Decoration and head rests. Foot mats arm rest and design for furniture.

The establishment of these courses would enhance women's chances in home management economics and interior drapery decorations.

Fabric Enhancement Process (FEP)

The after-treatment of fabrics printed, dyed or woven should be given special considerations. Printed fabrics when made should be ironed. Dyed batik should maintain a special gait by sizing. The various
sizing methods should be incorporated into the syllabus for the effective enhancement of sale, fabric upkeep and general maintenance culture of fabric should be discussed for proper noting and applications.

**Workshop Management**

The aftermath of the training of programmez should be how best to establish an independent workshop for graduates participants with consideration for minimum financial support. Ordinarily, textile workshops do not huge financial involvement before setting up. The ability of the trainee to utilize the meager resources to manage a textile workshop should be the core for the contents of this course. Therefore the course should include basic economics of division and priority in terms of the various sections of textiles in the establishment. This should also cover the financial budget for materials and equipment; manpower needs (in form of apprentices) and join men, payment of rent; the proceed and profit of products; products sales and marketing. Continuity and sustenance of workshop practice. Advertisement and Exhibitions.

**Materials and Techniques**

General materials used in Textile Design outfits and the maintenance culture should be taught. Teaching should be done by discussion method while participants contribute meaningfully to the discussion, they should also make up the list of materials and equipment for their proposed establishments. Each participant should be taught the importance of estimation and budgeting for materials.

**Tailoring and Fashion Design**

As an option in the course, it should teach basic sewing techniques as in stitching, bottom hole threadings, seam management, and pleating. The course should emphasize the basic use of sewing machines and materials, teach garment parts, and overall design of simple wear. Participants should be able to sew for self and the entire family in the first instance.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

Previous rural development programmes by different federal and state governments as enumerated by Ojo (1998) and Obbo (1980) did not address the engagement of women in proper textile design education for lack of continuity and technical implementation. It was observed that only mat weaving was emphasised by the Ekiti State government at Ogotun Ekiti.

Weaving activities on the horizon and vertical looms were not seriously displayed and taught as it was the only aspect popular in textile design.

This prospers when implemented would enter for individual interest in special areas as enumerated earlier. The participant would not be restricted to weaving, which was the only partially organized trade taught by them.

Commodity programme such as livestock development and food production as much of enhancing rural policy cannot be said to be adequate. Government programmes such as insist (if for instance, it intends to foster the relationship between agriculture and textile production) by encouraging the growth of cotton for textile industries. In 1952. Mali sought the assistance of foreign textile companies to engage their unemployed rural poor by growing cotton for export (Lele, 1976). Improving the living standard of the
employed involves mobilization and allocation of a percentage of government resources to the textile design project. This will not only be seen to cater for the unemployed welfare but also be known to encourage the acquisition of appropriate skills for development.

The Federal Committee for the advancement of rural engagement should intensify effort at realizing the goals and objectives for the textile design programme. Teachers and instructors participating in the programme should be adequately remunerated to justify efforts at improving the well being of the Nigeria masses.

Elaborate ceremonies with exhibitors of works of participants should also be organized at the end of the season’s programmes. Government should encourage good works by cash and material gifts. Many unemployed women would then graduate to start independent workshops. This would assist their families and help the nation grow economically.

**References**


