

REDEFINING PROFESSIONALISM IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA VISUAL ARTS: A STUDY OF TEXTILE STUDIO PRACTICE

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Abstract

Professionalism in textile studio art practice implies the set of skills and values that characterize the essence of humanism in the production of a fabric piece of art. It is known that textiles play a very important role in the economic development and transition of any culture in the world. Unfortunately, due to lack of experience of some textile art practitioners in Nigeria, they garner little reward for their artworks and remain solitary individuals, powerless to influence the working of the art world. This is because they have no formal accreditation system to initiate professional standard in their field. This study conducted as a case study with qualitative research model consisted of six textile art learners as participants. Data were obtained using interview forms, observations, literatures and online sources. The paper anchors on functionalist theory and adopts SWOT analysis to highlight on how professionalism in visual art can promote cultural and economic development in Nigeria. It was observed that professionalism contributed to the knowledge and skills of prospective textile art practitioners in terms of application of materials and methods. It concludes that professionalism is indispensable for visual arts practices. Suggestion for occasional professional knowledge lessons to be conducted were made.

Keywords: Professionalism; Visual Arts; Textile; Studio Practice, Redefining

Introduction

Professionalism is a person's abilities, competence, and behavior in a particular profession. It aims for higher standards, more remarkable performance, and better connections with clients and co-workers. Business professionalism entails honoring commitments, producing excellent work, and holding yourself up as an expert. On professionalism, Ulfsdotter, Eriksson and Linde, 2014 penned:

An occupation denotes what you *do* as well as who you *are*. Your identity can be more or less connected to your education and occupation. Professional occupations demanding a long and comprehensive education provide more probably an identity where you would call yourself by your title—I am an artist, rather than I am working as an artist (Ulfsdotter, Eriksson and Linde, 2014). Most artists and people in the creative sector would identify themselves with their work.

Professionalism in textile art is developed in the studio. Therefore, textile studio practice is an educational studio where students learn to develop skills related to textile design ranging from drafting to finished work. This study explores the set of

skills and values that characterize the essence of humanism in the production of a fabric piece of art. It is known that textiles play a very important role in the economic development and transition of any culture in the world. Akenoo in Adom and Baah (2016) concurs that aside from textiles giving identity to an ethnic society or nation, clothing helps in understanding the beliefs, ideologies, and accepted norms governing the lives of a group of people.

Sjöholm (2013) noted that textile production processes are of different stages and involve a variety of creative spaces and practices. Sjöholm (2013) opined that repetitive and haptic practice needs to be followed by self-monitoring as well as an awareness and ongoing readjustment, because the conditions of learning processes constantly are changing.

When national and international literature is examined, it was observed that there was no study conducted on Redefinition of Professionalism in Textile Studio for Enhanced Cultural and Economic Performance in Nigeria. Therefore, the current study was designed to impact prospective textile artists, the studio ethics involved in fabric manufacture for the production of excellent woven piece that can excel in the visual art domain.

Problem of the Study

It was observed that some textile art practitioners in Nigeria discouraged because they get little reward for their artworks and unable to influence the working of the art world. This is because they have no formal accreditation system to initiate professional standard in their field. As a result, many of them opted to quit the profession thereby creating room for the erosion of culture and economy in Nigeria.

Literature Review

There are numerous definitions of professions (Brante, 2011; 2014). One is offered here, which is general and exceeding the two earlier traditions: the essential trait approach and the conflict project approach. Professions are occupations applying scientifically based knowledge under collegial control and with the political legitimacy to perform certain societal assignments (Svensson, 2011; Abbott, 1988; Freidson, 2001; Molander & Terum, 2008). Occupations in art and culture rarely apply scientific knowledge in the same sense as professionals do in diagnoses, inferences and interventions—often followed by some kind of account for the decisions taken (Abbott, 1988). Still, art is international and global to a great extent comparable to science. Some professions such as law, social work and theology do of course, however, depend more on codified texts and rules than science and research, and are also more nationally delimited. However, there has been an intentional academization of fine arts education with the merging of schools of fine arts into the university system, nevertheless, referrals to theory and research are scarce. In higher education for art and music this connection is as discipline called artistic development, and is mainly comprised of systematic (scientific) documentation of the investigations and studies of artistic case processes. Fine arts primarily refer to genres, traditions, styles and individual performance rather than to scientific theories and research. Architecture, on the other hand, involves the divisions and tensions.

Professionalism most commonly means the state or practice of doing one's job with skill, competence, ethics, and courtesy. At work, professionalism exemplifies

when a worker performs to the best of their abilities, especially on challenging days; exhibits the knowledge, skills, and behaviours necessary for their position; exceeds the requirements of their work, and continually seeks out chances to advance better both the organization and themselves.

Professionalism skills ensure a friendly, secure, and inclusive workplace. It's about fostering an environment where individuals feel valued and a part of something. This involves being a courteous team member, being transparent in our communication, making sure everyone feels included, participating and interacting, and taking the opportunity to get to know co-workers. The legacy of profession in fine arts originates in the mid 17th century Europe by the visual art L'Academie de France. There was the first professional graduate school with a core curriculum, guidelines for competitions, formal conferences, and the first visual-based dictionary (Sciully, 2010). For two centuries this was the leading professional actor with immense enduring impact on the processes of consecration of visual art—a historical case, which also was used as a prototype on professionalization.

Conceptual Discourse

Studio Practice: This is the way in which an **artist** works; their individual ideas, subject matter, conceptual possibilities, influences and inspiration and the style of their work dependent on the period of time and culture in which they are working. Kadiria (2020) defined artist studio practice as the creative process itself. That is collecting source material which might involve travelling to places and taking photos or doing sketches, and then taking that material back into the studio and working up concepts and ideas which might be done either manually as drawings or painting studies, or digitally in programs like Photoshop.

Studio art practice needs to be seen as a valuable site for raising theoretically profound questions and exploring those using robust visual methods that have the potential to yield critically grounded and individually transforming outcomes. Artistic practice therefore comprises a critical coalition that involves an ongoing dialogue between, within and around the artist, artwork and context where each has a role to play in the creation of meaning.

Sullivan (2014) theorizes studio art practice as practice-based research and articulates the role of art-making experiences: For some art educators the studio is a unique place for problem finding and problem solving, media exploration, and giving form to ideas of personal and social relevance. For others, it is the educational consequences of the studio experiences that offer tangible outcomes.

For proper understanding of textile studio practice, one must distinguish textile studio practice from any kind of textile industrial practice. Textile studio practice results in artists and designers acquiring knowledge about concepts, materials, processes and applications. In the process they develop an intimate understanding of their practice, which is held at various levels of consciousness; depending on the activities in which they are engaged. The textile industry is primarily concerned with the design, production and distribution of yarn, cloth and clothing.

Professionalism in textile art studio will help students generate more ideas or move to the next stage during studio practice. As students develop these activities of textile studio practice, issues of quality and the generation of the finished products become

more important. The emphasis at textile studio practice should be on creativity during studio practice, for these students are exploring their abilities to generate good finished product with the supervision of a trained technical staff. The art teachers who believe in the power of studio practice consider that making art, responding to art, reflecting, researching and teaching art are significant in fostering creativity and innovation as well as inspiring their students (Wright, 2017).

Importance of Professionalism

Boundaries

Although it can be challenging to establish boundaries in personal relationships, it is essential to establish boundaries in the workplace. Everyone has a role to play in an organization. Professional behavior helps separate business from the personal; it keeps relationships limited to the business context at hand. For example, a judge cannot have personal conversations with a plaintiff or defendant. Bank tellers represent the institution as they perform transactions for the customers. No one finds it offensive when a teller checks a client's math or his accounting of cash. The role demands it and professional behavior makes it clear that the teller is simply doing his job.

Duty

A professional works in her employer's or client's interests. She may not always agree with decisions or enjoy what she's doing but in order to do right by the person engaging her services, she does her job ably. If a professional doesn't like her work or agree with her employers, she should probably consider a new job. However, the idea is to always act ethically by taking fiduciary duties and loyalties seriously.

Respect

Taking the high road can be a challenge. Those practicing professionalism always strive to keep their personal feelings in check and show respect, even to those who are disrespectful or rude. For example, a good customer service professional doesn't argue with an irate customer. Instead, he listens and addresses the customer's concerns. Even though an irate customer may irritate him or demonstrate a lack of respect, a customer service representative understands that becoming angry and making the situation personal will only worsen things and lower his professional standing.

Ownership

People respect someone who takes pride in her work. Whether she's shining shoes or running a multinational corporation, someone who values professionalism does the best work she can at all times. Dedication, integrity and responsibility are elements of professionalism that make a person successful in her field. By taking ownership of their roles and duties, professionals make names for themselves and usually find promotion, opportunities and repeat business come easily to them.

Cultural and Economic impact of Professionalism.

Cultural fields in society are separated from economic fields. Cultural fields including art fields are divided on a horizontal dimension between two economies: autonomy (limited production) and heteronomy (large scale production). In the autonomous subfield, there is no or little contemporary demand in the market, and the so-called

reversed economy is dominant. Economic capital is devalued while symbolic capital is highly upgraded. Here l'art pour l'art is embraced and revered, and the valuation by colleagues, competitors, critics and exhibitors is primarily sought. As said about the ideal employee: A person regarding his/her own work as excellent is reward enough. In the large scale and market directed subfield artists are instead competing for public success and sales, not among connoisseurs in the cultural elite, but among collectors in the economic elite and people in general.

Methodology

This study was conducted as a case study with qualitative research model which consisted of six textile art learners as participants. A SWOT analysis is used to strategically identify areas of improvement or competitive advantages for Art profession. In addition to analyzing thing that artists do well, SWOT analysis takes a look at more detrimental, negative elements of a business. Using this information, artists can make smarter decisions to preserve what it does well, capitalize on its strengths, mitigate risk regarding weaknesses, and plan for events that may adversely affect the company in the future.

By using ClickUp's Artists SWOT Analysis Template, this study :

- Identified the artistic strengths and leverage them to stand out
- Pinpoint areas for improvement and devise strategies for growth
- Explore potential opportunities to expand the artistic career
- Mitigate threats and navigate challenges that may arise along the way
- Uncover potential opportunities in the art industry, such as collaborations, exhibitions, or grants
- Recognize external threats that may impact the artistic career, enabling you to mitigate risks and make informed decisions.

As an artist, understanding your unique strengths and weaknesses is crucial to your creative journey. The ClickUp's Artists SWOT Analysis Template was used to conduct a comprehensive analysis of artistic practice, uncovering areas of strength, weakness, opportunities, and threats.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designing and production of fabrics through printing, resists; embroidery etc. • Weaving on standard broad loom, traditional loom, inkle loom etc • Macrame knotting • Fabric painting • Art branding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing on social media • Finishing designs • Creating more dynamic designs Application of CAD in textile

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not many exhibitions’ artists • A lot of low-competition keywords in my niche to create blog content for • A new social media platform • tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • importation • cultural erosion • modern technology • Reduced organic exposure due to platform changes

In Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of digital technology in traditional weaving • Workshops • Exhibitions • competition

Conclusion

The field of arts and other fields in the cultural sector are excellent examples of these subtle and delicate productive processes. Textile Studio ought to be a space where reflection takes place, where textile designers can get intellectually, critically and intentionally engaged with their developing work and material. It is a space for reflection but not an empty one: it is a space where collections, research material and archives are kept and reflected upon. Professionalism in textile art studio will help students generate more ideas or move to the next stage during studio practice

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