THE ROLE OF TEXTILES IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The quest for national development is of different perspectives, depending on the educational orientation, ideology and concept of the writer. This paper attempts to examine the role textiles play in our national development. The development of other professional areas such as medicine, law, surveying, pharmacy and technology without art, which textile is a part, is like building a house on a muddy ground. There is no society without art and culture. The thrust of this paper is the role of textile in national development as evident in cultural, economic, social and industrial developments. The paper analyzes the role textile plays in the individual lifestyle and mode of dressing, community development in regards to their festivals, social political activities, marriages, burials, and national development. The Federal Government has a boost of it by organization of art exhibitions, trade fairs and selling of art works to tourists and travellers for exportation in which, most of our Nigerian hand-made textile goods are sold for hard currency and promotes national income.

Keywords: Textile, role, development, national, culture

Introduction

Development can be regarded as a multidimensional concept with as many definitions as scholars (Akpan, 2007:89). The different professions such as economics, political science, international relations and sociology see “development” in their peculiar ways. However, Rodney (1982:10) opines that “development at the individual level implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being”. Although, Rodney believes that the achievement of any of the above aspect of personal development is highly tied to the state of the society in which the individual lives. Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2003) states that “development” is when someone or something grows or changes and become more advanced while Azeez (2011) opines that development is a process or act of creating something new and more advanced and that art is a creative endeavour which most of the time brings out something new and unique. It is necessary to note that the changes in the human endeavours could be in reference to social, economic, political, religious, and cultural aspects of life, which will usher in progress for the overall benefit of the entire population in the society and national in general. This involves positive and beneficial changes in personal looks,
characteristics and environmental modification. A cultured (developed) person in the face of adversity and poverty can adapt better and use his inner resources to develop a new condition of life that will help him/her and other Nigerians to survive.

Art plays a significant role in National Development as it covers physical, social, religious, political, economical, morals and educational aspects. However, Art today, has become multifunctional and cuts across science and technology, hence, National University Commission (NUC) has grouped it and rightly so, under environmental sciences (Egonwa, 1999). Egonwa further states that no industrial and technological decision or education can be meaningful or valued if it excluded the ingredients of art and design. He believes that thousands of jobs could be created and foreign exchange generated through culture, tourism and sports; and that if half of what has been invested in science and technology is committed to the development of these three sectors (culture, tourism and sports) in areas of environmental beautification and urban design, a lot of foreign exchange would be generated and avenue for youth employment is sure.

Textile is an aspect in art that deals with the manipulation and processing of fibres of different types such as natural and man-made fibres to produce functional objects/materials used for different social, political, religious and traditional ceremonies. According to Okpu (1997) treatments are given to various types of fibre for their functionalities such as cotton, linen, wool, silk and other synthetic fibres. Hence the individual put on these materials or fabrics on to be identified in their peculiar way and personality in different climatic conditions and for social engagement. The role of textile in natural development cannot be overemphasized as it affects the mannerism, norms and values of an individual as a family, community, social/religious/political group, and the nation as a whole.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of this paper is hinged on the citation of Diogu (2002) that one of the major contributing factors that help in the development of academic, economic and industrial sectors of developed countries is the knowledge of creative art and its application to the development of human and material resources for national building. Diogu cited the pragmatic and instrumental theories of art which are inculcated into the child’s developmental stages of primary and secondary school educational curriculum. He categorically stated the usefulness of art as the instrument of religious and moral indoctrination, while the formalistic theories of art promote the aesthetic interests of the individual as opines by (Osborne, 1968). All these theories of art according to Diogu have one focus, namely, integrated approach to manpower development. It is a known fact that Nigerian traditional societies developed as a result of the application of creative art in various dimensions, as it is through art that our accepted cultural values, norms, traditions, beliefs, behavioural patterns and laws are propagated and promoted. To support the above artistic theories, Fatuyi (1986)
stated that “cultural knowledge is the product of accepted behavioural patterns of a society, their concept of life, be it product designs, works of art, mode of perception of conception or execution of manipulative or responses to things seen or unseen including aesthetic or spiritual value” it is eminent therefore, that the responses of the people to their cultural knowledge, which is in their beliefs, norms, religions, values are found in their adornment and adoration of clothings in the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. This has also affected every facet of individuals in their manner of behavioural patterns, identification in relation of dressing styles, philosophy, social, political, economic and cultural ideologies as projected by this paper.

The Individual

The individual puts on clothing according to his/her status, philosophy, cultural affiliation, peer groups, environment and educational attainment. With the above variables, people prefer different materials, styles, techniques and colours to suit their ideology. All the beautiful coloured clothes worn by us are works of art (textiles) and even painting of faces and lips by the females are all exhibits of colour manipulation to compliments their dressing. It is obvious that life will be too dull without textiles. The researcher believes that a lot of development has taken place in our modes of dressing, for instance in textiles, “Akwete” and “Asoeke” of fabrics are used not only as traditional wrappers but also in designing shoes, handbags, belts and hats. Some of these fabrics are fashioned out as waist coats. The “Adire” fabrics made in Nigeria are designed into different styles to suit the contemporary time for different occasions. Some individuals have developed them for curtains (draperies) and bed-sheets. Others have developed them for both children and adult bouve and quilt using traditional motifs peculiar to their culture groups. Some individuals celebrate their marriages of silver or golden jubilee with special textiles outfit to suit the ceremony.

Presently, it is not common to hear a tailor being addressed as a fashion designer, because of his/her ability to apply creativity to making of fashion wears with combination of different colour scheme, texture, motifs/patterns and styles that appeal to modern taste. This special treatment applies to most national dresses as “Babariga”, “Buba” and “Iro” and the sophisticated lace-top blouses designed and used by the individual women in the South-South part of Nigeria. These are complimented with necklaces, waist beads, earrings, hats and headgears. The fashion wears of the people is an appraisal of their traditional cultural setting, religious beliefs, social norms and practices. The traditional motifs on Hausa and Yoruba embroidered garments exhibit high degree of technical skills, regularity of forms, symmetrical arrangement of motifs and rhythmic movements as against the olden days (Ogunduyile, 2004). Ogunduyile further states that’s the motifs are based on cultural, economical, social and political scenes. He observes that the art of embroidering provides employment for a large number of people, especially among the Hausa. However, the wearers are marked as rich, high in status and
influential because most of the traditional fashion wears are very expensive as shown below.


Delta State University Abraka, Cultural Day, Writer’s portfolio, created 22 March, 2012

Communities

The cultural communities in Nigeria are very many with diverse traditional, social, religious, political and moral practices. All the above variables are also found in their different festivals, ceremonies, occasions, excitements, and participations. Their practices and mannerism are found in their way of dressing in the different traditional or social functions perhaps that is why Umukoro (2008:50) states that “cultural symbolism is the hallmark of the Nigerian traditional dress. It is consciously or unconsciously evolved to bear emblems unique to its owners. Such emblems may be derived from common features in the environment”. It should be noted that these modes of dressing are equally employed to dramatize and buttress the social behaviour and belief cherished by respective groups making up the Nigerian nation.

In every community, we have the age grade system whereby membership of secret or purely social/cultural/political institutions spring up. In Cross River and Akwa Ibom States we have the “Ekpo”, “Ekpe”, “Ebre”, and “Ekong” groups with other social groups while in Niger Delta, there are a lot of social, traditional, religious, and philanthropic groups. These groups are also found in the middle Belt and Northern part of Nigeria according to their religious or cultural background. Fabric designs are created to reflect and conform to the acceptable characteristic and peculiarities of the respective groups. So also do the textile designs or fashion differ between the sexes, tribes, religious affiliation as well as within the various groups already mentioned above.

Today, there is consciousness of identity among the culture groups because of the high level of textile development in the country. Apart from the facial scarification of some culture areas, the mode of dressing easily identifies the individual in any social ceremony. The traditional elaborate way of dressing in the west is totally at variance with that of the North. Even in the South-South, the various communities are identified with the peculiar textile garments worn by both males and females. The Ijaw, Isoko, Itsekiri, Urhobo, Ika people (especially their men) dress differently, just like their female counterparts. It is a reality that most social, political, religious groups are identified with their club attires, fashioned out by textile designers. According to Bell-Gam (2000), a lot of interior decorations are found in shell petroleum development company, Agip, ELF and mobile. Some banks, insurance companies, schools and colleges including universities, offices are decorated with paintings, sculpture works and tapestries.

In Nigeria cultural context, death is regarded with mix feelings, depending on the circumstances, age, status, religious and the community in which it occurs. Like child birth which is followed by rituals, death rites are also performed, usually accompanied with elaborate, expensive, simplified to complicated...
It is obvious that Nigeria society recognizes life after death, because it is a phenomenon that touches everyone, family and community. What is important here, is the role textile plays in the making of the burial rite to be completed. These are found in the decoration of the arena, to make it aesthetically appealing, the use of banners, directing the audience to the venue and place of burial. The costume of the individuals, dancers, masquerades, different security agents with other artistic paraphernalia, compliment the main attires of the bereaved are all indispensable in the successful management of the burial rite.

Burial rituals are performed differently because of the socio-cultural setting of the society. In Ibibio (Akwa Ibom State) for instance, the ceremony include body painting or decoration of the dead. The priest also performs the ritual erection of a sculpture (architectural) piece to honour the dead, similar to Egyptian ideology of pyramids. The Nwommo house is normally built after the death of an “Ekong” member and “Iso Nduono” for a reputable woman after she has met some spelt out societal conditions (Ekwere, 2000). As usual there are a lot of special design costumes by different cultural troupes, traditional, social groups, and of course vigil and memorial services attire (for Christian burial rites) which show significant growth and development of textiles usage in all burial ceremonies.


Marriage

Marriage in most cultures is performed with elaborate ceremony, after all that is the only ceremony the individual witnesses in life and also participate fully
in the ritual, unlike birth and death rituals. It may be the obvious reasons why people frown at the individual who refuses to get married. Textile fabrics are highly and expensively used in this area. Banners of different sizes and colours are printed and fix in strategic positions to announce the date, time and venue of the occasion. Presently, committee of friends, relatives of both bridegroom sew uniforms (Asoebi). A lot of assorted, fashionable, sophisticated attires are worn to the occasion. The following invitation card was sent to the researcher by the cousin (Mrs. Monica Obieromah) as “This is to invite you to my daughter’s marriage coming up on the 17th and 18th of March 2017. Traditional Asoebi (bottle green lace & pepper red judge & pepper red head-tie), white wedding asoebi (baby pink wrapper & blouse with biro blue head tie).” This shows the role textile fabrics play in marriages and how it is held in esteem. Hence Obafemi (2011:18) states that “if you cannot afford the asoebi or chosen dress for the occasion, then you are alienated”. Musical/cultural troupes are always in attendance to entertain the audience. However, the focal point is on the presentation of the bride to the groom and exchange of gifts between the families. These also consist of textile such as clothes – dresses, wrappers, shirts, cooking utensils and other domestic items. The interior and exterior of the venue of the marriage ceremony is usually given special decoration treatment ranging from rosette, roses, ribbons to other artistic decorations. The special hairdo or headgear in traditional and the wedding gown worn by the bride and the special suit worn by the bridegroom go a long way to make the occasion a very successful one.
Urhobo/Isoko Traditional Miss University and More (N.Y), retrieved 3rd July, 2017.


Asoebi, Niger-Delta, Writer’s portfolio, June 2013
National

When Nigeria became independent, one of the first industries created was textiles. It is not because textile is the easiest but it is one of the basic need of man, after food, shelter, the next is clothing. Clothing is also an index of civilization of any culture. The more cultured a people, the more sophisticated their clothing. When a civilization is crude, the people almost go nude. Today every country is trying to be self sufficient, to provide its own clothing no matter the inflation rate. Presently, the national economy can no longer cope with importation of textile materials and Nigerians have been forced to look inward with the result of creating innovative and exotic fashion to fill the gap created by high cost of importation of the textile goods.

Although our indigenous craftsmen and artists have not changed their techniques and methods, but their creative ideologies have made them to produce highly skilled products demanded by Nigerians, travellers and tourists. It is on record that, through art, the Federal Department of Culture, National Council for Arts and Culture, National Commission for Museums and Monument, Centre for Black African Art Theatre and National Troupe were established in 1988. These bodies help in the transfusion of culture which results in the uplifting of most aspects of our culture, Federal Ministry of Information (1991) report. Most art works are found in the museums, galleries and some art stores. According to Akolo et al (1977), exhibition of art works in museums and galleries project Nigeria’s image and culture heritage within and abroad as these centres are also used for research works, references, excursions and tourism by scholars, researchers, travellers and tourists. It is obvious that the process of tourism is motivated by great works of art displayed in galleries, museums, other private and government reserves meant for this purpose. Adeyemi (2011:17) also believes that exhibition of art works can bring fame to the exhibiting artists while the art criticism brings growth to art practicing, art theory and art history. In the same vain, Okpu (2012:59) observes that exhibition of textile goods or art works exposes the designer to other international exhibitions outside the country, thereby propagating, preserving and promoting our cultural heritage to the outside world. International exhibition enhances the designer’s financial status which may result in employing of more workers in his/her workshop or art gallery. Art exhibitions mounted nationally and internationally accrue income to the artists concerned and the government that sponsored it.

Till date most of our craft products such as – raffia bags, hats, textile materials (Adire) of different techniques, carved images are exported from Nigeria to foreign countries. This foreign trade on art works promotes our economy. In the same way, the Ghanaian Kente has become an international attire popularized by Africans in Diaspora and the patterns are reprinted through industrial processes on different varieties of fabric (Akinbogun, 2004). Hence most of our mud clothes, Ankara, tiedye (Adire), Aso-Oke, Akwete and Akwo-ocha are sold to foreigners. Trade fairs are sponsored by State or Federal Government
which can be international in nature and the government will also get their financial gain.

Unity in Diversity, Delta State university   Abraka, Cultural Day, 17 March 2012 Writer’s portfolio

Self-Reliance

Although textile alone cannot make a nation to achieve self reliance in the process of national economic development, yet it is quite indispensable that textile has its unique role to play in the process of economic development of a nation. In the area of industrial arts, textile industries in Nigeria make use of locally grown cotton, indigenous manpower, other related materials, tools and equipments to produce abundant quantities of fabrics and even sell cheaper for national consumption. Today there are indigenous small scale textile factories which promote our indigenous fabrics. Little or no room is available for the importation of foreign goods as the Federal Government has banned their importation. The scope for self employment is being encouraged by the government in all sectors of academic programme. Considering the physical aspects of the out look of the nation, the artisans such as the masons, architects, carpenters, fashion designers, craftsmen/women, artists and several others contribute tremendously to the economic development of the nation by using their skills, knowledge and creativity they have acquired to erect architectural buildings, fashioning of clothes, weaving of domestic objects, carving of various art items and create series of domestic items which people appreciate either for aesthetic purposes or for utilitarian function.

Today, fashion homes are found in every nook and crannies of most Nigeria big cities. It is clear that if the fashion centres are not viable and enviable, other people from different professions will not set up fashion centres. All art educators from the different levels of academic institutions are mostly indigenous and the course contents are formulated to suit the cultural background of the nation and also to meet the socio-cultural, political, religious and ideology of the society.

Conclusion

From all the factors analyzed, it can be concluded that textiles help to elevate the standard of the economic development of our nation and also project the image of the nation in all spheres of life. It is so unfortunate that the Nigeria government is not willing to fund the development of design and technology of textile production and machinery in higher institutions. For Nigeria to be relevant to global developments in relation to the textile field as other countries, other private and multifunctional industries should be encouraged to jointly fund the textile, design and technology programme in most higher institutions, such as petroleum industries, multi-national companies, Chevron, ELF, Agip etc (Adeniran, 2004). We should know that no human being can live in the absence of textile. Hence Ogunduyile (2005:8) popular statement says that when we wake up in the morning, we wrap ourselves with textiles, wear textiles as clothing, brush our teeth with textile fibres, towel our body with textiles, step on textiles in form of rugs and wear textiles as clothing. This is the daily routine as we move to our
various working places and programmes. It is obvious that textile is joy, happiness, peace, love and hope to all that put them on in a well organized manner, no matter how simple, complex and sophisticated the outfit.

References


