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Students' Perception of the Role and Challenges of Practicality in Understanding Clothing and Textiles Concepts

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Abstract: The importance of laboratory works in the training of vocational students cannot be underestimated. The aim of this investigation was to explore the challenges faced by clothing and textiles students in the course of laboratory works. The investigation employed a cross-sectional survey involving students taking clothing and textiles in tertiary institutions in Delta State Nigeria which served as respondents. Data collection was done using a self-developed questionnaire administered through personal contacts. Data collected were analyzed using the mean and standard deviation. The benchmark for accepting or rejecting statements made in the questionnaire was set 2.50. The study established positive disposition of clothing and textiles students towards the role of laboratory works. This hinged on the overall relevance of laboratory works in explaining key concepts in clothing and textiles curriculum. It equally provided insight on the perceived challenges. It is therefore concluded that laboratory works should be sustained since it enhances students understanding of curriculum concepts.

Keywords: Challenges; Clothing and Textile; Practical; Students' Perception

Introduction

Clothing and textile as a subject is studied at all levels of home economics education. It is a core component of Technical and Vocation education curriculum for skill acquisition and national development (Arubayi and Obunadike, 2011). Clothing and Textiles is seen as a subject that enables knowledge acquisition which helps students to develop self-reliant skills and techniques in pattern making, garment construction and amendments, as well as fabric design, care and maintenance in the fashion and textile industry (Muzenda, 2014; Azonuche, 2020). In clothing and textile, students are able to acquire the necessary skills for the selection of appropriate materials and resources such as fiber and textile products needed for the production of quality apparels, fashion styles and designs in the fashion industry as well as textile merchandise (Osifeso, 2004; Foster et al., 2017).

Owing to the importance of clothing as a basic need of man, it is seen to be a very important influencer of an individual's wellness and positional and social standing (Arubayi, 2003; Ukpore, 2006; Obunadike, 2015). Simply put, the Clothing and Textiles curriculum is aimed at fulfilling three core mandates of helping students and learners acquire needed knowledge, skills for meeting personal and societal clothing needs and utilization of enormous natural resources available within the environment for improvement of society and earning a stable source of livelihood (Osisefo, 2004; Mberengwa, 2004).

Owing to the nature of clothing and textile curriculum as a practical base that needs constant hands-on training and apprenticeship, clothing textiles have ideas, terminologies, principles which constitute concepts that require practical demonstrations for in-depth knowledge, understanding and skill competencies and acquisition. The role of practical clothing and textiles in understanding concepts and

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utilization of tools and equipment is paramount in achieving skill development competencies. Students work on their own giving room for individualized instruction to demonstrate individualized instruction to capture what was initially learnt in theory for better understanding and mastering.

Students have been observed to often detest and show fear towards practical activities in clothing and textiles, perceiving them as cumbersome, uninteresting, and abstract, which makes it difficult to grasp underlying principles and concepts (Arubayi & Obunadike, 2011). Such attitudes can undermine skill acquisition and limit learners' enthusiasm for vocational subjects. Studies emphasize that effective teaching strategies, collaborative instructional methods, and supportive school-based management are critical in addressing these challenges (Ohamobi & Manafa, 2021; Osegbue, Manafa & Ohamobi, 2022). Furthermore, integrating innovative approaches, including artificial intelligence and improved guidance services, can enhance student engagement and ensure sustainable learning outcomes (Okafor, Ohamobi & Manafa, 2021; Osegbue et al., 2025; Ohamobi, Akulue & Okonkwo, 2021).

Effective clothing and textiles practical to a great extent has been hindered by learner's attitude, lack of facilities, equipment, funds, students' curriculum content coverage, teaching and supporting staff inadequacy, among others. (Arubayi, 2009, Arubayi 2014; Azonuche, 2020). Though studies have assessed teaching and learning clothing and textiles, but at present no known study in the area of student's perception on the role and challenges of practical in understanding clothing and textiles concepts. The objective of this research therefore was hinged on examining students' perception on the role and challenges of practical in understanding clothing and textile concepts.

Method

Informed Consent

The approval for the research and its protocol was granted by the Departmental ethics and board of studies committee. The study was also conducted according to the declaration of Helsinki involving human subjects that made all participants to sign a written and informed consent.

Recruitment of Study Participants

This study adopted the descriptive survey method. The size of the population was 96 students which comprised all the students that take clothing and textiles courses under Home Economics. The participants were drawn from college of education, Agbor, college of education, Warri, Federal collage of education (Technical), Asaba and Faculty of Education, Delta State University, Abraka. The participating students were in year 2 and year 3 in tertiary institutions in Delta State. The entire 96 student were used as subjects because the populations were selected because their institutions have students who undertake clothing and textiles courses and as at the end of second semester 2019/2020 session, they had taken a minimum that requires practical sessions.

Instrument of Data Collection

A questionnaire titled students perception of the role and challenges of practical in understanding clothing and textile concepts (SPRCPUCTC) was developed by the researcher. It comprised three sections. The first section was targeted at collecting the demographic information (gender and level distribution) of respondents. The second and third sections contained 12 items each containing statements that sought students' perception on the role and challenges of practical in understanding clothing and textile concepts. While statements in section two were rated on a four point likert scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A) Disagreed (D) and Strongly Agreed (SD), section three identified several challenges that may hamper effectiveness of practical sessions in clothing and textile. Respondents were thus asked to rate their perception of the extent to which these challenges hampered their understanding of the concepts in a scale of Very great extent (VGE=4); Great extent (GE=3) Low Extent (LE=2) and Very Low Extent (VLE=1). The respondents were free to tick their responses based on their level of agreement and evaluation of the statements made.

Validity of the Instrument

The developed instrument for the study was validated by three experts, two lecturers in clothing and textiles and one lecturer in measurement and evaluation at the Department of Vocational Education and counseling psychology in Faculty of Education, Delta state University, Abraka, Nigeria. Based on their understanding of the significance of practical in clothing and textiles, for effective teaching and curriculum implementation, they made necessary inputs and corrections and adjudged the instrument good enough to elicit responses on the role and challenges of practical in understanding clothing and textile concepts. Thus, they approved the instruments face and content validity.

Reliability of the Instrument

The instruments reliability wastested employing the Cronbalch alpha analysis. Thus a sample of 20 questionnaires was first administered to students

specializing in textiles in the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Faculty of Arts Delta state University, Abraka which was not part of the main study sample. Section two generated an alpha of 0.87 while section three generated an alpha of 0.81 leading to an average alpha of 0.84 indicative that the instrument was reliable.

Instrument Administration and Retrieval

The instrument was administered to the students after the second semester examination of the 2019/2020 academic session. Students prior to the instrument administration during one of their examinations were educated on the objectives and the aim of the study, thus they were required to fill the questionnaires. All were filled and returned immediately. All returned questionnaires were examined for appropriateness and eligibility to be included in the data analysis process and a total of 96 valid questionnaires were selected for analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

Responses of respondents were entered into the template of the computer software Statistical package of the social sciences version 23 (SPSS 23). This was followed by frequency counts and a mean analysis of the individual items. A benchmark of 2.50 was set as the minimum mean score to accept the statements made in each of the items. The choice of the 2.50 benchmark was made based on the average of the 4, 3, 2 and 1 points of the likert scale for scoring the responses (SA, A, D and SD as well as the scale of VGE, GE, LE and VLE). Based on the scores obtained per item, the researchers adjudged the student's perception of the role and challenges of practical in understanding clothing and textile concepts. Data were summarized with percentages, mean and standard deviation. The data were equally ranked for clear comparisons.

Result and Discussion

The respondents were made up of 11.5 % males comprising 11 persons and 88.5 % of females comprising of 88 respondents. Also, 30.2.7% comprising of 29 200 level students, 35.4% comprising of 34 300 level students and 34.4% comprising 33 400 level students participated in the study (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by gender and year of Study

Variable		Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	11	11.5
	Female	85	88.5
Level of Study	200 Level (Year 2)	29	30.2
	300 Level (Year 3)	34	35.4
	400 Level (Year 4)	33	34.4
	Total	96	100

The responses of students' perception of the role of practical in understanding clothing and textile concepts are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Role of practical in understanding clothing and textile concepts

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Remark	RANK
1	Practical demonstration helps students to be familiar with the equipment	89	6	1	-	3.92	0.31	Accept	1st
2	Practical demonstration helps students to be familiar with the methods/techniques	65	31	-	-	3.68	0.47	Accept	2nd
3	Practical demonstration helps students practice clothing design/production	64	32	-	-	3.67	0.47	Accept	3rd
4	Practical demonstrations help students develop skills than their classroom lectures	65	25	2	4	3.57	0.74	Accept	7th
5	Practical demonstrations help students to demonstrate what was learnt in theory	59	37	-	-	3.61	0.49	Accept	5th
6	Practical demonstration helps to solve theoretical concepts	58	34	4	-	3.56	0.58	Accept	9th
7	Practical demonstrations help students to have confidence in handling tools and equipment	60	35	1	-	3.61	0.51	Accept	5th
8	Practical work helps students develop ability to learn new designs	58	36	1	1	3.57	0.58	Accept	7th
9	Practical demonstrations help students to understand clothing and textiles better	52	43	1	-	3.53	0.52	Accept	10th
10	Practical demonstration gives students opportunity for individualized instruction	45	48	1	2	3.42	0.63	Accept	12th
11	Practical demonstration helps students work independently	63	32	1	-	3.65	0.50	Accept	4th
12	Practical demonstrations help students to understand terminologies	49	40	7	-	3.44	0.63	Accept	11th

Based on the benchmark of 2.50 set for the acceptance of statements in the questionnaire, it showed that respondents agreed with all of the statements. This indicated that the highest ranked role of practical according to students is helping them to be familiar with the equipment. This was followed by getting familiar with the methods and techniques which were ranked as second most significant role of practical. These assertions are in tune with the submissions of several teachers regarding practical works as in Sani (2014) who investigated teachers' purposes and practices for implementation of practical. This study thus noted that the aim of practical work is to mainly develop procedural and conceptual knowledge achievable by organizing very structured tasks. In laying further credence, they also noted that in focusing on skill development through practical, students do not only become skillful, but they get acquainted with the equipment needed and learn how to use them correctly and safely.

The agreement of the respondents that practical offers them avenue to practice clothing and designs was ranked third while the next ranked item 11 which indicates that practical helps the students work independently. Earlier Ian and Saglam (2010) noted that one significant role of practical is making the physical phenomena more real through actual experience and arousing and sustaining students' interest in the subject and what has been taught. There is no doubt that the agreement of students of practical offering them avenue for practice and independent work must have arisen from the significant level of interest arousal and personal experience from previous practical sessions carried out by them.

Items 5 and 7 which were also accepted and jointly ranked 5th indicate that practical demonstration helps demonstrate theoretical aspects of the course as well as helps in building confidence of students. Also jointly ranked 7th were items 4 and 8 which stated that it helps in better skill development than classroom sections as well as offers avenues for learning new designs respectively. These agreements are also in line with the curriculum objective of the Clothing and Textiles curriculum which has a core mandate of helping students and learners acquire needed knowledge and skills for meeting personal and societal clothing needs as opined by Osisefo (2004); Mberengwa(2004) and Arubayi and Obunadike (2011).Also ranked 9th role of practical in understanding clothing and textile concepts is helping to solve theoretical concepts. Ranked 10th and 11th were the role of practical in understanding clothing and textile and understanding terminologies used in the course respectively. The least ranked role was helping to give the students individualized instructions.

The perception of students on the challenges to effectiveness of practical in the understanding of clothing and textile concepts are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Students perception of challenges to effectiveness of practical in the understanding of clothing and textile concepts

S/N	Items	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	Mean	SD	Remark	Rank
1	Lack of adequate equipment in the laboratory	67	24	5	-	3.59	0.75	Accept	1st
2	Electricity failure	46	28	15	7	3.17	0.95	Accept	12th
3	Lack of enough space to work in the laboratory	43	41	7	5	3.27	0.81	Accept	10th
4	Unavailability of working materials	55	30	7	4	3.42	0.80	Accept	6th
5	Lack of qualified personnel	52	37	7	-	3.47	0.63	Accept	3rd
6	Lecturer's attitudes and behaviors	46	33	14	3	3.27	0.83	Accept	10th
7	Students attitude and behavior	49	41	5	1	3.44	0.65	Accept	5th
8	Curriculum contents	48	38	6	4	3.35	0.78	Accept	8th
9	Not having enough time for work	53	30	7	6	3.35	0.87	Accept	8th
10	Phobia for practical work activities	59	29	4	4	3.48	0.77	Accept	2nd
11	Lack of technical support staff in the laboratory	56	28	8	4	3.42	0.82	Accept	6th
12	Lack of equipment maintenance	62	23	5	6	3.47	0.86	Accept	3rd

Based on the mean benchmark score of 2.5 for the itemized challenges, all of the statements made are considered to be bottlenecks to the role of practical in understanding clothing and textile concepts. Lack of adequate equipment was identified as the number one challenge to effectiveness of practical in understanding clothing and textile concepts. Reports on the inadequacy of laboratories and workshops for practical experience in secondary schools and most tertiary institutions abounds in literature and is not different from the submissions made by the students (Audu et al., 2013; Adedayo, 2015; Hinneh, 2017; Amadin and Obienu, 2017; Abebe, 2019).The second most ranked challenge was identified as phobia for practical work. Jointly ranked 3rd followed by lack of qualified personnel and lack of equipment maintenance respectively. There is no

doubt therefore that the poor maintenance culture of available equipment for teaching is a hinge to the promotion of technical education in Nigeria hence the supposed practical based vocational education scheme is only reduced to theoretical alternatives to practical (Usien et al 2012). From the foregoing, it is important to note that the quality of learning environment is significant to an effective learning experience.

A learning environment has been defined to also characterize all that makes up the teaching resources which includes human and nonhuman resources (Ikoya and Onoyase, 2008). In the case of clothing and textile, the human and non-human resources that are significant to quality practical experiences comprise of the number and quality of the technical/teaching staff, facilities and equipment needed for the practical thus when not available, it definitely serves as a stumbling block to effectiveness of practical teaching and learning. The fifth ranked challenge to effectiveness of practical was identified as students' attitudes and behaviors. These negative attitudes may have possibly been due to the lack of technical support and unavailability of working materials which were jointly ranked 6th. Also jointly ranked 8th challenge were curriculum contents and not having enough time for work. The importance of the nature and structure of a curriculum has been reported to be a significant factor in its implementation and pattern of teaching (Olaitan et al., 1999; Ossai et al., 2020). Thus, the nature of the clothing and textiles curriculum is such that it needs constant hands-on practice of which if adequate time is not allotted to this it becomes a serious challenge towards attainment of effectiveness in curriculum implementation. Lecturers' attitudes and behaviors and lack of workspace were both ranked 10th. This assertion agrees with the work of Muleta and Seid (2016) who reported that teachers input as well as lack of workspace represents a major hindrance in the learning of subjects that involve practical works. Although, public power source has been a major problem in this part of the world (Muleta and Seid, 2016), electricity failure was ranked as the least of the challenges hindering the understanding of clothing and textile concepts.This may be predicated on the fact that most of machine tools in clothing and textiles are manually operated, and thus require less electricity supply.

Conclusion

This investigation has identified the challenges faced by students in a bid to explore the importance of laboratory works in enhancing mastery of relevant concepts in trade-related courses. Practical sessions not only provided clarity to theoretical knowledge but also improved students' skill acquisition, creativity, and problem-solving abilities, thereby reinforcing the relevance of laboratory work in vocational education. However, the findings equally highlighted notable challenges such as inadequate facilities, insufficient materials, poor funding, and limited institutional support, which hinder the full effectiveness of practical learning. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensure that practical activities achieve their intended objectives of improving students' competence and readiness for professional practice. Based on the outcomes, the study concludes that laboratory works remain indispensable in clothing and textiles education and recommends sustained investment in facilities, provision of adequate instruction materials, and improved institutional support to optimize students' learning experiences and outcomes

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Conflicts of Interest
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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