

Tie and Dye Craft as a Means of Combating Unemployment among Female Youths: A Study of Abeokuta Artisans

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Abstract

In a country where the rate of unemployment is fast rising, giving room for jobless men who are liable to become hoodlums, drug addict, among others, the resultant effects tend to inflict danger more on the female gender since she is poorly encouraged for education; hence, becoming vulnerable to dissimilar molestations and other forms of abuse. Consequently, there is an immediate need to put into motion, feasible mechanisms that would reduce or scrap the fast-rising unemployment and its severe effects on the female gender. This study explains the importance of tie & dye craft as a means of empowerment for the female gender; and it also explicitly analyzes the step-by-step procedures involved in its production. As a means of unraveling the viability of tie & dye, a brief biographical study of Nike Davies-Okundaye, a female icon in the trade of tie and dye production is presented. The methodology used in this research includes literature reviews, one-on-one interviews and use of a biography. The study concludes that the practice of tie & dye is feasible enough to reduce or totally eradicate the incessant rate of unemployment among the female gender, if embraced. This research recommends that both governments and nongovernmental organizations should create opportunities to encourage the development of tie & die as a foremost craft among the female gender in Southwestern Nigeria; especially in Abeokuta which is the capital city of Ogun State.

Keywords: Tie & Dye, Female gender, Unemployment, Entrepreneur.

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1. Introduction

Tie & dye is the process of tying or binding a piece of cloth before it is dyed to create a beautiful pattern. It is an old handcraft which has its history cuts across the globe. Africans, Indians, Indonesians, Japanese, all have traces of this ancient tradition in their history of fabric design. The past years, with the constant development of arts and crafts in different culture of the world, many new types of tie and dye techniques developed, but the fundamentals remain the same. Tie and dye have appeared in various fashion trends so much that it becomes popular and never stop to be in demand; hence, it is valued as a viable vocational trade particularly for women. Another name for Tie and dye is *Adire* which is the popular name by which it is called among the Yoruba people generally, especially in Abeokuta, Ogun State and other Southwestern States in Nigeria. However, the wax resist technique of producing tie and dye is known as batik. The difference between the two is that in typical traditional tie & dye, raffia or a kind of rope or thread is used to bind many a specific portion of the fabric before it is dyed. While in batik, wax (most often called candle wax) is used to craft some patterned effects on the fabric, before it is dyed. It is worthy of note that the word *Kampala* also

emerged as another nomenclature for both tie & dye and batik at a point in time in history. A submission of thought believes that this name takes its root from Kampala the capital city of Uganda where a form of *Adire* is produced and exported to neighboring West African countries particularly Nigeria where it becomes popular (Tomori, 2011).

Abeokuta is historically the capital of *Egba* nation and also the capital of today's Ogun State, South-West Nigeria. Abeokuta is strategically located on the Ogun river, 78km north of Lagos and 70 km from the ancient city of Ibadan. It is an agricultural-based market with small and middle level agro industries and local crafts like the production of *Adire* fabrics, pottery, goldsmith practices and blacksmithing (Omoniyi, 2013). Abeokuta is reputed to be the capital of the *Adire* industry in Nigeria. Although, Osogbo, (the capital city of Osun State, Nigeria) is also known as a town where the craft of *Adire* is being practiced too. Osogbo is where the popular female Nigerian artist, Nike Davies-Okundaye, who majors in the production of tie and dye originated from. (Tomori, 2011). *Adire* was first produced in Jojolola's compound of Kemta, Abeokuta by Chief Mrs. Miniya Jojolola Soetan, the second *Iyalode* of *Egba* land, and later passed the craft to her children and onward to the future generations. *Adire* production was formerly known to be a craft passed from parents to their female children not exempting wives of their male children. The first *Adire* material was made with *Teru* (local white fabric) and with local indigo dye derived from a natural plant called *Eluu* in Yoruba language (Emedolibe, 2012).

It is worthwhile to note that *Adire*, which means "tied and dyed" was first applied to indigo-dyed cloth, until around the turn of the 20th century when imported synthetic dyes were introduced. As a result, several dazzling array of coloured dye tints and hues emerged on the platform of *Adire* production. However, things have changed during the past years; many people especially the uneducated are now practitioners of the trade. Therefore, it is imperative that both uneducated and educated young girls too should be encouraged to proudly trade tie and dye as a means of financial empowerment. In view of the ongoing discussion on entrepreneurial viability of Tie and Dye, this paper intends to look at tie and dye as a vocational and entrepreneurial means, especially for the female gender that are the most vulnerable by the menace of unemployment. (Okundaye, 2008). This does not exclude the male gender because the expositions rooted in this study are useful for both; after all, the *Adire* vocation is peculiar to both genders. The female gender in this context refers to both the youth and adult women generally.

The study focused primarily on tie and dye as a vocation. It enumerates the importance of tie & dye craft as a means of empowerment for the female gender which can financially and skillfully empower her economically and it does analyze the step-by-step procedures involved in tie & dye production in such a way that it is learnable for a layman.

2. Literature Review

As revealed by National Universities Commission in 2004, there was a huge unemployment of Nigerian universities graduates in the country. This problem was said to be as a result of the disequilibrium between labour market, requirements and inadequate essential employable skills by the graduates (Diajomal and Orimolade, 1991). Hence, the need to develop entrepreneurship education in Nigeria across all levels is expedient. No wonder the Obasanjo-led administration injected entrepreneurship education into the school curricula in all the tiers of tertiary education in 2006. (Obiorah, 2006; Ajayi, 2019; and Ediagbonanya, 2013). In the same vein, in March 2012, the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) also introduced an initiative called Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship (SAED) to oversee the integration of entrepreneurial vocations as part of the orientation exercises for corps members across all NYSC orientation camps in the country. The conventional vocational trainings injected into the National Youth Service Corps entrepreneurship education Program range from Bead Making, Aluminum Fabrication/Repair, Barbing/hair making, Shoe Making, Bag Making, Fashion Design, Computer/Phone Engineering, Interior Decoration, Events Planning, etc.

(Ajayi, 2019; and Brown, 1997) The essence of the introduction of SAED was to persistently make the corps members more skilled for employability after the one-year service to humanity (Ajayi, 2019; and Jones, 2004). As the rate of unemployment strive nonstop, the need for entrepreneurship education in Nigeria increases incurably. Hence, this authenticates the fact that this study and equals are pertinent in this period of economic brouhaha facing the country.

Entrepreneurship is the ability of a person to make an additional effort to achieve an objective or a goal (Val, Gonzalez, Beiva, Lasa and Maite, 2017) Similarly, entrepreneurship is commonly believed to be the process of starting and owning a business that provides goods and/or services to people in exchange for money. Brown, (1997) defines entrepreneur as a person that recognizes a business opportunity, organizes, manages, and assumes the risk of a business enterprise focusing on that business opportunity.

According to Oosthuizen, (2017), entrepreneurship has become widely recognized as a key driver of the market economy (Byfield, 2002), involving the bringing about of new economic, social, institutional or cultural environments through individuals or groups (Dayan, 2017). Although, these literatures do not discuss the production of tie and dye directly, their theories on entrepreneurship could be applied to the economic effect of Adire on female financial empowerment.

On theoretical framework of entrepreneurship, Oosthuizen (2015) stated that several attempts toward developing a coherent entrepreneurship “research paradigm” have been made, the entrepreneurship research landscape is still largely paradigmatically fragmented. He opined that entrepreneur causes "pervasive perplexity and frustration among entrepreneurship researchers regarding the lack of convergence towards a single paradigm and definitional clarity" petitioned for transdisciplinary as a more appropriate approach of inquiry for understanding processes and interactions involved in entrepreneurship activity, and that the dynamic, non-linear dynamics within these systems can be more effectively understood by applying ecological and complexity theories. (Oosthuizen, 2015; Newman, 1975).

On curriculum development, (Val *et al.*, 2017) examined entrepreneur education in European school curricula with an attempt to ignite the spirit of entrepreneur in the upcoming generation. Ajayi, (2019) listed many an entrepreneurship vocation commonly used in Nigerian tertiary institutions and advocated that photography which is a facet of the inexhaustible discipline, art, should be given more attention as a vocational course. In explaining the processes involved in the production of tie & dye, it behooves to be well informed of all the materials/tools instrumental for its production. Seyi-Gbangbayau, and Ajayi, (2019); Xiaohua, (2016); and Keyes-Adenaike, (1993) studied tie and dye techniques and its application to puppet products while Manitoba, (2015) explains the materials and techniques of producing tie and dye fabrics with step-by-step processes.

Many women are involved in the production of tie & dye in Nigeria especially the Southwest. Places like Abeokuta, Osogbo are well known cities for this practice. Few people in Ondo, Ibadan, Ogbomosho, Oyo and Ilorin also produce *Adire*; though in small quantities compared to the other two mentioned above. (Newman, 1975). Prominent among those women is Chief Nike Davies-Okundaye. Born in 1951 in Ofisi, Kogi State, Nigeria. Nike's experience as a craft woman started from childhood as her family were into traditional weaving and dying; which validates the fact that *Adire* craft practice is transferred from one generation to the other in Nigeria. The Nike's community use indigo colour for their dying. She spent part of her early life in Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria. (Nikeart.com, 2019). It is important to note that Osogbo is a prominent centre for art and culture in the Southwestern Nigeria.



Plate 1: Nike Davies-Okundaye wearing her notorious beaded wears.
Source: textile queen (www.forbesafrica.com)



Plate 2: Nike Davies-Okundaye's Art Centre Art Gallery, Osogbo.
Source: Nike Art Gallery (www.osogbo.com)

Without formal education but through her training and experience cum years of tireless and consistent practice, she was led into prominence in the trade. She had facilitated workshops on traditional Nigerian textiles in the United States of America, Europe and Nigeria. She had participated and individually hosted many exhibitions. Nike is the founder and director of four (4) art centres which offer free training to several young artists in visual, musical and performing arts; her collections comprising over 7000 artworks which include tie & dye and other related *Adire* works. (Nikeart.com, 2019).

Nike Davies-Okundaye's opinion is that the traditional art of *Adire Eleko* is fading away, hence, she took it upon herself to promote it by educating youths especially the female gender. She teaches technique of indigo dying to local women in her workshops and other series of training. She has her works in several art galleries in different locations in Nigeria and abroad, including the Gallery of African Art and the British Library in London. (Vaz, 1995).

3. Methodology

This research is qualitative. Methodology used includes review of literatures, one-on-one oral interviews, studio experiment and the use of a biography. In respect to the field work carried-out at Itoku market in Abeokuta, Ogun State, an interview was conducted to blend opinions and thoughts regarding the craft as well as to document a comprehensive analysis on how to go about the tie & dye fabric production. During the course of the interviews carried out, *Mama Oyinbo* a popular *Adire* artisan and seller in Itoku market and Mrs. Kuforiji Esther of the Federal

Polytechnic, Ilaro were among the randomly selected individuals that were interviewed. A lot of expository discussions ensued revolving around several materials that foster the production of tie & dye. Different techniques and some of the materials and tools required were also examined. Furthermore, brief notes on the biography of Nike Davies-Okundaye, who is an international female *Adire* producer was retrieved from online sources ranging from her official Facebook page, her website and others.

3.1. Interviews

Through various interviews carried out at Itoku market and other locations at Abeokuta vis-a-vis the authors' robust experience in the field, it was gathered that there is no limit or hard rules to the methods used for tie & dye. Besides the existing traditional methods, each individual entrepreneur can evolve his/her own methods. However, the following should be noted

The binding or tying of fabric should be firm or tied tightly in order to get good effect.

Warm water is used for mixture of the dye stuff and the chemicals. Though after it has thoroughly been mixed, cold water can be added to increase the level of the water to accommodate the number of fabrics to be dyed.

When dyeing more than one colour, it is better to start with the lightest colour e.g if dyeing with yellow and purple, yellow should be dyed first

In tie & dye the process is tying first, dye, rinse and allow to dry. One can remove the thread before drying or after, as long as there are no more excess dye on the fabric after rinsing.

Always allow the fabric to stay for a while inside the dye bath or bowl. It is recommended between 5-10 minutes if the chemicals are properly mixed.

Applying the Thread or Raffia; in applying the thread or raffia to the fabric, one considers the width or narrowness. If it is wide, the raffia is wrapped around the fabric several times. However, if it is thin or narrow, the raffia goes round it one or two times if you want the effect of lacey-spider, wrap the raffia up and down in criss-cross manner.



Plate 3: Post-Dye, Crisscross tying pattern.

However, it is always good to leave some area of the fabric free from tying and binding. This produces another beautiful effect on the product.

3.2. Techniques

Several techniques are used to produce tie & dye. The techniques range from tying method, folding, stitching or needle, knotting, marbling, pleating, twisting, adire eleko, adire eleso, and so on. The following is a brief explanation on few of the techniques.

Tying Method: it is also called binding method, it has several forms of tying which include stone, seeds or pebble tying, spot tying, circle method, etc. Stone, Seed or Pebbles are placed on the fabric, the fabric is folded over it while raffia is tied round the stone in a circular manner, this is repeated all over the fabric to the satisfaction of the artist. It is dyed, rinsed, untied and dried for finishing.



Plate 4: Post-Dye (1Colour) Circle



Plate 5: Post-Dye (2 Colours) Circle

Folding Technique: There are dissimilar methods of folding. The entrepreneur will discover more as s(he) practices.

Marbling Technique: This is a recent method. Though there are several ways of achieving marbling effect in the fabric. The basic foundation is that it is done on the floor not inside dye bath or bowl. The fabric is placed on the floor after rinsing to remove the sizing. It is then squeezed as the artist desires. Part of it can be tied. Dye is poured randomly on it on the floor in a pleasing manner to the artist. If many colours are to be used, it will be done the same way.



Plate 6: Post-Dye, Marbling pattern.

Knotting Method: fold up a piece of fabric into a string and tie it into knots, dye, rinse, untie and dry.

4. Findings

The basic materials for the production of tie and dye include but not limited to,

Fabrics: Suitable fabrics for tie and dye include pure cotton, silk, some rayon, wool, guinea brocade and some *Ankara* prints. Other fabrics like synthetic, polyester, acrylic, do not absorb dye, so they cannot be used. During production the fabric has to be washed first in order to remove sizing, which is the industrial starch on new fabrics. If not removed, it will prevent the dye from sticking to the cloth (Manitoba, 2019).

Threads: The thread which is also called bindings could be string, twine cord or rubber. In Yoruba land, Nigeria, raffia called “*Iko*” is used mostly.

Dyes: There are different types of dyes used for this craft. Apart from the traditional indigo dye, there are synthetic dyes which were imported. Dye stuffs are in various colours.

Caustic Soda: This is a strong alkaline substance that is used in the manufacture of paint and detergent or as a drain cleaner. It is mixed together with the dye stuff and hydrosulphite in good proportion. It serves as the chemical agent that allows both the dye stuff and the hydrosulphite to adhere to the fabric as it breaks down the content of the fabric to allow penetration of the dye. Caustic soda should not be overused on the fabric, it can damage it by softly tearing it apart.

Hydrosulphite: Like caustic soda, this chemical substance is mixed on a recommended ratio, with dye stuff and caustic soda. In proportion or quantity, it should be more than the soda. It allows the dye to fasten or stick to the fabric permanently. There are no restrictions to the quantity of hydrosulphite (also called sodium or salt). Some people even use common salt in lieu of sulphite.



Plate 7: Batik

Batik: This is a wax-resist method of dyeing fabric. The wax is melted in a container using kerosine stove or equals. The artist uses brush or any other device to block the areas that need not absorb the dye solution. Candle wax is commonly used.

Candle Wax: This is used for batik production. It is used as resist means for the dye not to penetrate the design area. It will be removed or dewaxed after dyeing with hot water. Other tools are needle, rubber gloves, pots for boiling water, stove, buckets and bowls, among others.

Market Prospect for *Adire*

Adire has long become a means of tourism attraction, international exchange and for creating mutual interpersonal relationship. Hence, demand for *Adire* goes beyond Nigerian borders. The demand for *Adire* has been huge right from its initiation, irrespective of religion, sociocultural background, et.al *Adire* is duly patronised by all classes of the society ranging from low, middle to the top (elites). The research carried out by Ware Magazine in 2018 envisioned 20% potential growth between 2019 – 2021 (Apprenticeship.ng, 2019).

Apparently, the above mentioned study carried out by Ware magazine is forging to accurately come to pass; if not more. This is as a result of the recent launching of the *Adire* digital market in Ogun State. To further emphasize the viability and how highly patronized *Adire* craft could be, according to (Monsurat, 2020), recently, while launching the *Adire digital* market in his State, His Excellency, Dapo Abiodun declared that as from next term, tie and die fabric must be integrated as school uniforms for all public schools in Ogun State.. Besides the visible rise in demand for *Adire* that is likely to suffice from next term, the initiative is likely to birth more subscriptions from other neighbouring States in southwest Nigeria and beyond. Hence, this will without doubts, bring more growth to *Adire* craft; as the governor also used the launching opportunity to crave the indulgence of the Federal government and other stakeholders to adopt *Adire* as ceremonial outfits for national events (Monsurat, 2020). The resultant effect of this awareness will assuredly stir reawakening regarding the craft and sooner, it will become a massive trade as a result of demand that is likely to rise subsequently.

5. Conclusion

The study had maintained a crystal-clear picture that entrepreneurship is not just the ability to establish a business, but the development of the spirit of innovation and creativity which allows an individual to be able to add value to himself or herself and also to his/her immediate environment. Part of the means through which a society can add value to its citizens especially the female gender is by empowering them to be entrepreneurs. Tie and Dye or *Adire* is an easy to



do trade which has a lot of possibilities of being a profitable vocation for women; as well as men indiscriminately. Hence, this paper had been able to do a comprehensive justice to the procedures involved in producing a viable and lucrative craft known as tie & die.

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