

# Local Weaving in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions with Focus on the Views of Textile Erudites in Enugu State

By

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**Abstract:** Textile weaving art has been in practice before the advent of the Europeans and its importance to society cannot be undermined. This paper revisited the local weaving in Nigerian tertiary institutions with a focus on the views of textile erudites in Enugu State. The study adopted a descriptive research design. In order to elicit appropriate responses; structured questionnaire was used by the researcher - "Erudites View of the State of Local Weaving in Nigerian Education" (EVSLWNE). The questionnaire comprised two sections. Section A sought for demographic data of respondents. Section B has two sub-sections. Subsection 1 comprised ten statements considered as challenges to local weaving in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Subsection 2 contained ten statements that were considered as major factors that mar effective teaching and learning of local weaving in Nigerian institutions. The respondents indicated the level of agreement or disagreement with each of the statements in each section on a five-point scale: Strongly Agree ('AS'), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD), Undecided (UND). Data were presented in frequency tables. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, the results of the findings revealed a deficit of modern and local looms, pitiable conditions of existing local looms due to lack of maintenance, and insufficient man power among others. The educational implications of the findings were discussed and appropriate recommendations were made.

**Keywords:** Local loom. Nigeria, Weaving, Technology, Tertiary education

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## INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is naturally endowed with both human and natural resources. The citizens are creative and well-talented in various skills, this implies that craft which is the product of human skills and talents has been in practice before now. Therefore, traditional craft metamorphosed into "Creative Local Industries" before the advent of Europeans in Nigeria. In affirmation, Ajayi, (2018), opined that "by the 16<sup>th</sup> century, cotton was a major agricultural product among Nigerian people. The cotton products and locally processed weaving fiber into yarn and fabrics became famous. Although, it is traditionally woven, the uniqueness of the products promote standard that draws demand for ceremonial purposes before the invention of technology". In other words, by the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there was extensive cotton farming practice in Nigeria; the product was of international standard that attracted exportation of

cotton trade before the advent of European explorers and traders. The colonial masters succeeded in modernizing the textile cottages to industries. This resulted into mass recruitment of workers and economic stability in Nigeria. Murtala *et al.* (2018). described textile and weaving apparel in Nigeria as a leading industry that generated 19 percent of total consumer commodity industry employment in 1983.

Unfortunately, these textile industries that contributed immensely to the development of our nation are in a state of dilapidation without any hope of revival. But the local or traditional weaving has remained; even though the practitioners particularly the youths have abandoned the craft of weaving due to the tedious nature of production. The ignorance of youths pertaining to the preservation of cultural heritage has negatively affected

the local weaving in Nigeria with individuals and cooperatives, closing their weaving centers. The few that are operational still mirror the cultural values, social and economic life of the communities where they are practiced and remained a source of livelihood for the weavers. Recently, the locally woven fabrics have continued to attract high demands in both local and international markets but due to certain intricacies that are involved in the production, it takes more time to produce than the modern loom weaving. Adu *et al.*, (2018), stressed that even in the post-colonial era that the local weaving industry was patronized among the Yoruba as ceremonial wear remained their pride. So, the importance of locally woven fabrics to the fashion industry cannot be questioned. Therefore, there is a need to revisit the local weaving in Nigerian tertiary institutions through the maintenance and modification of local looms and the reintroduction of modern looms so as to include some modern concepts or designs that cannot be achieved ordinarily without a mechanized loom.

However, modern technological inventions in Africa have been attributed to the advent of Europeans. The industrial revolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Nigeria generated the use of modern or mechanized machines that involved computerization of all the stages of production. Hence, the manual method of weaving which entailed the use of local loom was substituted for automobile weaving machines. The technological advancement of textile production greatly improved productivity and projected the textile industry to a fully

mechanized industry. According to Sankar, in Waziri, (2021), he noted that “Production and Quality are the two main things that any textile manufacturer has to keep up with. Starting from handlooms to the shuttle-less looms used today, there have been a lot of innovations in the weaving machine. The inherent problem of the shuttle mechanism was discovered and this led to the latest shuttle-less technologies like rapier, projectile, and fluid jet”. Obviously, if the tertiary institutions in Nigeria were given the opportunity to train weavers and lecturers on how to operate mechanized loom so as to transfer the knowledge of mechanized loom weaving to the students, the students would definitely develop an interest in the course. The tedious aspect of weaving with local loom would not have been noticed by the students and this would have resulted to reviving the indigenous cultural heritage and transferring the skill to the next generations. The modification of the local or traditional loom to the contemporary loom will be a stepping stone in arousing the students’ interest in textile weaving art. According to Adetoro, (1980), “development from the grassroots level is more adequate.” He added that “what is important is for the present Nigeria textiles producers to translate the mechanism of the traditional looms to contemporary types”. This singular gesture will automatically improve production and reduce the time consumed in the production process and the high level of demand both locally and internationally which has been observed will be met by the weavers/practitioners.



Image of local or traditional loom

<https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcS-ztqzwAd6pTKYQ9p3ilIWNtgmkQOHCs4IXg&usqp=CAU>

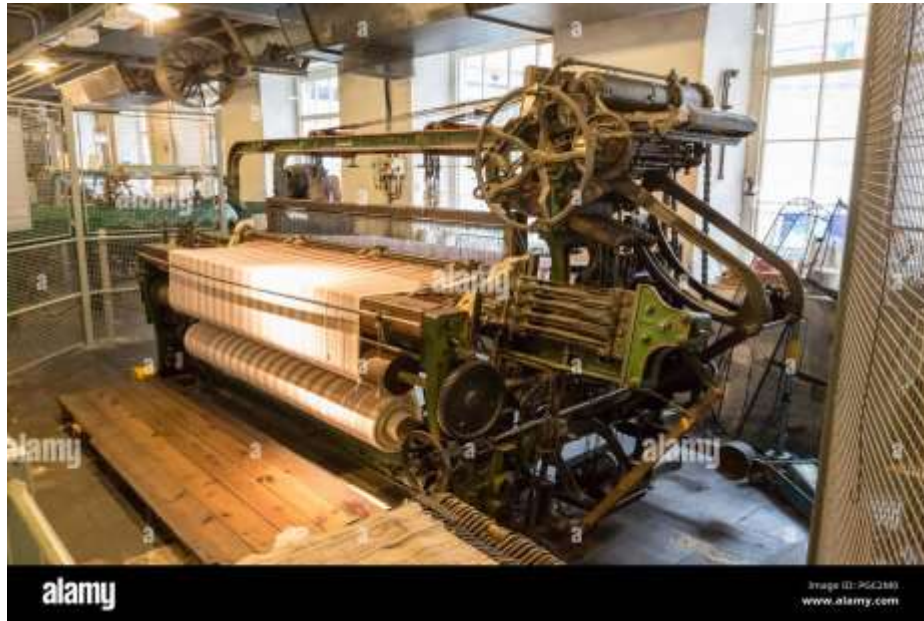


Image of a standard mechanized loom.

<https://c8.alamy.com/comp/PGC2M0/mechanical-loom-in-the-national-wool-museum-drefach-felindre-llandysul-carmarthenshire-wales-uk-PGC2M0.jpg>

According to Ntagu, (2015), most traditional woven fabrics are used as a way of preserving, maintaining and strengthening the empirical reality of a unique and established cultural behavior of a people. It is a common fact that modern inventions caused the sudden disappearance of many local crafts at home and environments but local weaving loom still persisted and can be found in some tertiary institutions and communities. Therefore, local looms are not anticipated to go into complete extinction due to the role they play in supporting indigenous cultural identity and its social functions to the society in general. Moreover, local weaving if encouraged will flow with the new trend in fashion as it satisfies the massive demand of woven products which is scarce and of exorbitant price. It will be a source of revenue generation to the country, create employment for the majority of the unemployed and crimes will in the near future be a history, because an idle hand is the devil's workshop. This is in line with Tony Elumelu's Entrepreneurship Foundation that focused on self-employment and self-reliance of youths in Africa.

Therefore, this study calls for scholars (lecturers and students) perception in this concept for wider ideas on how to solve the problems observed. The main focus lies on the textile lecturers/weavers and all the textile students of the tertiary institutions who are interested in the study in Enugu State. This is because lecturers/weavers as the respondents will be able to explain their experiences during instruction or in the course of teaching the students in the weaving room before arriving to production; the students as another

respondent are in the best position to explain the difficulties they encounter while carrying out the weaving assignment given to them. This is in an effort made by the researcher to identify the present challenges of local weaving and to define major factors that marred the teaching and learning of local weaving in Nigerian tertiary institutions with Enugu State in focus.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The importance of textiles to man has been overlooked by the people in authority, institutions and the youths of Nigeria. Locally woven fabrics are not in reach and when seen are very expensive. Textile weaving has been identified as one of the ancient art crafts through which people from diverse cultures showcase their cultural values, norms and endowments. It was also noted that textile weaving in Nigeria, was a source of livelihood to our forebears who committedly engaged in it as an occupation. Unfortunately, textile weaving craft has been eroded and misinterpreted by the youths who are so impatience and desperate for quick money making. The process of production may be tedious but its uniqueness attracts the attention for of fashion and ceremonial targets. Therefore, the observations made from Nigerian tertiary institutions about youth's apathy towards studying textile weaving in schools, will in no time result in the extinction of the practical knowledge of traditional weaving. Moreover, this paper seeks to revisit the local weaving in Nigerian tertiary institutions with possible

suggestions on measures to nip in bud the current problems in order to enhance its sustainability in Nigerian education sector.

### Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to revisit the local weaving in Nigerian tertiary institutions with a focus on Enugu State.

### Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide this study:

- (1) What are the present challenges of local weaving in Nigerian tertiary institutions in Enugu State?
- (2) What are the major factors mar the teaching and learning of local weaving in Nigeria tertiary institutions in Enugu State?

### METHODOLOGY

**Area of Study:** This study focuses on some tertiary institutions in Enugu State that offer Visual Art/Fine and Applied Arts. Enugu State is one of the five South Eastern States in Nigeria, created out of the old Anambra State in

1991. According to Udo, (1970), Enugu was the capital of the East Central States. The state accommodates some popular towns like Nsukka where the highly prestigious University of Nigeria is situated, Oji River where the power generation in the South East of Nigeria resides, Udi where Enugu coal mines are located, Agbani and many others. The state is popularly known as “Coal City State”, this is because the colonial administration of the British Empire, established Southern Nigeria Protectorate in 1900 and this led to the discovery of coal by the colonialists.

Culturally, the state is endowed—~~in~~ with skills, natural resources and many more. Local textile is as old as the existence of the people in the state. The state, just like most states in Nigeria has a history of traditional hand weaving. Hand spinning by women and most times weaving by women using horizontal looms. This craft has been long for ages and the products are known as “Akwa mmili” in the Igbo language. However, the advent of the Europeans in Nigeria introduced industrialised and mechanized looms often used for production.

**Population:** The population of this study therefore comprised of all the lecturers and students that who like textiles and undertake courses in weaving in some tertiary institutions in Enugu State. There are three such schools or institutions in the state. However, three hundred respondents were randomly selected from the institutions as distributed in the table below:

**Table 1:** The Institutions and Population

S/N	Name of schools	No. of Respondents
1.	University of Nigeria Nsukka	120
2.	Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu.	100
3.	Enugu State College of Education (Technical), Enugu.	80
	GROUND TOTAL	300

**Research Design:** The study adopted descriptive research design. The researcher was fully present in each institution visited and questionnaires were distributed to consented staff and students by the researcher. This enabled the researcher to attend to questions from the respondents where necessary, and reduce the cost by avoiding repeated visit. Copies of the questionnaires (n = 300) were successfully distributed and retrieved for the study. Data collected were subjected to descriptive statistics and analysed using chi-square. Probability value less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

The instrument used to generate data for the study was researcher’s developed questionnaire titled “Erudites View of the State of Local Weaving in Nigerian Education” (EVSLWNE). The questionnaire comprises of two sections. Section A sought for demographic data of

respondents. Section B has two sub-sections. Sub-section 1 comprises of ten statements considered as challenges to local weaving in Nigeria tertiary institutions. Subsection 2 also contains ten statements that are considered as major factors impeding the teaching and learning of local weaving in Nigeria schools. The respondents were to indicate the level of agreement or disagreement to each of the lading statements in each section on a five- point scale Strongly Agree (AS), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD), Undecided (UND). The respondents were to tick according to their choices on a 5-point scale (4 = strongly agree, 3 = agree, 2 = disagree, 1 strongly agree, 0 = undecided). The data were presented in frequency tables. However, the research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation.

## RESULTS

(1) Research Question: What are the present challenges of local weaving in Nigeria tertiary institutions in Enugu State? The Table 2: Questionnaire items that determine the present challenges of local weaving in Nigeria tertiary institutions in Enugu State (n = 300)

	No of items that constitute the problems	S/A (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	UND (0)	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Decision
1	Scarcity of loom, dilapidated loom and lack of maintenance	150	88	52	10	0	3.26	0.73	Agreed
2	Stressful nature of weaving production	160	90	20	25	5	3.26	1.20	Agreed
3	High cost of raw materials	101	100	70	19	10	2.91	0.77	Agreed
4	Monotony in designs	105	70	80	30	15	2.73	1.39	Agreed
5	Limited time allocation in studying the course	108	100	48	40	4	2.89	1.07	Agreed
6	Lack of interest by students	60	80	107	50	3	2.49	2.05	Agreed
7	Lack of man power	95	125	45	30	5	2.93	1.00	Agreed
8	Unfriendly nature of lecturer/weavers in the classroom	125	75	50	35	20	2.8	1.59	Agreed
9	Misconception in gender equality	70	40	100	80	10	2.3	1.39	Agreed
10	Infrastructures: poor classroom spacing, lack of steady power and water supply	133	82	35	50	0	3.99	2.21	Agreed

**Decision rule:** Accept item if mean 2.00 otherwise it is not accepted.

Table 2 above shows the responses from respondents with regard to the present challenges of textile weaving in Nigeria tertiary institutions in Enugu State. From the table, the responses show that there are several challenges facing weaving production in Nigeria education. Observations from the table, the main focus were highly concentrated on infrastructures with the weighted mean response of 3.99 with standard deviation 2.21, scarcity of

loom, dilapidated loom and lack of maintenance with the weighted mean response of 3.26 with standard deviation of 0.73, and stressful nature of weaving production weighted mean 3.26 with standard deviation of 1.20.

(2) Research Question 2: What are major factors impeding the teaching and learning of local weaving in Nigeria tertiary institutions in Enugu State?

The Table 3: Questionnaire items that determine the major factors that marred the teaching and learning of local weaving in Nigerian tertiary institutions in Enugu State (n = 301)

S/N	Factors to be considered in solving the problems	S/A (4)	A (3)	SD (2)	D (1)	UND (0)	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Decision
1	Installation and maintenance of local looms in Nigerian institutions	120	95	50	35	0	3.0	1.03	Accepted
2	Installation of modern looms and discarding of the local ones	15	30	150	115	0	1.88	0.65	Not Accepted
3	Installation of modern loom to blend with local ones	175	120	0	0	15	3.53	0.86	Accepted
4	Monotony of designs should be avoided and exploration of new ones that will promote varieties should be encouraged	116	94	44	42	4	2.29	1.20	Accepted

Table 3 Continue

5	High cost of art materials in Nigeria should be addressed	180	80	40	0	0	3.36	0.51	Accepted
6	Misconception on gender equality needs to be addressed	60	25	110	75	20	2.03	1.12	Accepted
7	Specialists in the field should be employed with attractive salary in Nigerian tertiary institution	120	80	55	30	15	2.8	1.02	Accepted
8	Cordial relationship between lecturers and students should be encouraged	150	80	50	10	10	3.16	0.73	Accepted
9	Maintenance of good infrastructures for conducive classroom weaving	160	100	25	15	0	3.35	0.69	Accepted
10	Promotion of local weaving cultural heritage through compulsory learning of visual arts in Nigerian schools	140	95	50	15	0	3.2	0.79	Accepted

**Decision rule:** Accept item if mean 2.00 otherwise it is not accepted.

Table 3 above shows the responses of textile erudites with regard to the major factors to be considered in revisiting of local weaving in Nigeria tertiary institutions in Enugu State. From the table, it was observed that the respondents are hopeful of revival of the local weaving, if the major factors on the table is considered excluding one concept with low weight of mean 1.88 and standard deviation of 0.65. This implies that the replacement of local looms with the modern looms in Nigerian education is not the best option as this will affect the preservation of indigenous cultural identity. On the table, in as much as every other factor was agreed useful to be considered, but some were highly weighted which show their importance in the system. The concepts are: the installation of the modern loom to blend the indigenous (M= 3.53, SD= 0.86), reduction of the high cost of raw material (M=3.46, SD= 0.51), maintenance of good infrastructures (M=3.35, SD= 0.69), cordial relationship between lecturers/weavers and students (M= 3.16, SD= 0.73), compulsory practicing of Visual Art with practical learning of weaving (M=3.2, SD= 0.79) and installation and maintenance of indigenous looms (M=3.0, SD= 0.03).

### Summary of Findings

The result of this paper revealed the following:

1. Lack of looms, poor state of existing ones and lack of maintenance, which need to be addressed for successful classroom delivery
2. Stressful and slow nature of local weave production, which needs to be addressed by the installation of a modern loom to blend the local looms for easy production
3. More so, the installation of modern looms due to stressful and slow nature of local looms should not result in the replacement of the local Looms so as to sustain and maintain the cultural values of the aborigines.

4. Lack of manpower, this implies more employment of qualified teachers in the system with attractive salary scale to motivate them.

5. High cost of raw materials should be addressed so as to reduce the high cost of textile products.

6. Insufficient time factor in school time table needs to be addressed in order to create enough time for achieving of reasonable product in a given period.

7. Visual Art should be made compulsory in Nigerian school system where practical learning of weaving should be encouraged for promotion of cultural values.

8. Monotony in woven fabric designs should be discouraged, rather variety of motifs and design patterns should be introduced to meet up with different demands from different individuals.

9. Lack of infrastructure needs to be addressed in order to maintain conducive environment for classroom weaving production.

10. Lack of good relationship between the Lecturers and students need to be avoided for smooth and meaningful transfer of knowledge.

11. Misconception on gender equality in study of textile weaving needs to be discouraged so as to arouse the students interest in studying of the course.

12. Lack of interest among the students, which calls for motivation of the students by the lecturers and practitioners, to promote the indigenous skill for self-reliance and reduction of crimes in Nigerian society.

### Educational Implication of Findings

The perception of certain concept on state of local weaving by the textile erudites has several implications for lecturers, students as well as the society. The practical knowledge of weaving which is expected of every student to internalize in the cause of studying textile will not be actualized, thereby creating room for increase in crime

and unemployment. Furthermore, the lecturers and weaver who are redundant in the practical aspect of weaving tend to forget the skill within a space of time. This may result to producing “half baked” graduates who when have the opportunity to teach, avoid some topics which they are not conversant with; thereby watering down the knowledge in textile weaving art.

Secondly, based on the responses gathered, lack of loom can stop the practical learning of weaving, leaving only the theoretical aspect of weaving, which is against the philosophy and objective of the course.

Finally, another factor is, the workload time allocation in tertiary institutions affects practical knowledge of weaving. As a practical oriented course, knowledge of local weaving in such level of education should be considered while constructing the school time table to accommodate the period for practical learning of local weaving by the students.

### Conclusion

In other to gain useful information concerning the extinction of local weaving in Nigerian institutions, the researcher deemed it fit to source for the opinions or perception of scholars comprising the lecturers, students, and weavers. This is to obtain reliable information that will assist and contribute to reviving and developing sustainable measures to uphold the smooth teaching and learning of local weaving in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This will help to produce self-reliance graduates that can take up the skill of weaving as a source of livelihood, create employment for the youths to reduce crime and insecurity in Nigeria. The researchers recommend as follows:

### Recommendations

1. Further studies should be carried out by other textile researchers on a larger scale in order to gather more information related to weaving for effective teaching and learning.
2. Installation of both traditional and modern looms in Nigerian tertiary institutions should be an utmost priority of Ministry of Education so as to sustain the local weaving and collaborate it with the modern weaves.
3. Nigerian education curriculum should be modified to accommodate practical oriented courses like Visual Arts; the curriculum planners should ensure that sufficient time is allocated for study of local weaving in Nigerian tertiary institutions especially in colleges of education where education courses take more of the studies time than the practical courses.
4. Employment of lecturers, art teachers and weavers should be based on merit, to avoid employing mediocres who have no knowledge of practical weaving; their salaries should be reviewed and more attractive salary structure is recommended by the researcher.

5. Conducive and serene environment is also recommended by the researcher for the lecturers, students and weavers for effective transfer of knowledge of weaving due to its tedious nature.

6. Weaving lecturers/weavers and art teachers should explore for possible means of making their teaching more attractive, accommodate slow learners and endeavor to create a room for cordial relationship with their students rather than disdaining them; which may result to apathy by the students.

7. Weaving is not for a particular gender, therefore the issue of gender equality should be discouraged by the lecturers and weavers.

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