

Reflective Practice to Support Professional Effectiveness and Learning of Textile Designers

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Abstract: As a textile designer working in the industry, the researcher has observed that practitioners do not overlook their practice at their workplace. So, they may be drawn into an error that cannot be corrected until they realize what the requirement of work is and what are they doing. So, the researcher thinks reflection on practice is an essential element to enable experiential learning for professional development. Some writers argue that we cannot learn from experience without reflection as adults. Just like an educational setting, the researcher wants to explore how 'reflection' can be added to the design industry setting to meet the challenges of the market. Design Thinking is becoming increasingly more established in the instructional contexts of design globally and has also been introduced in some of these contexts in Pakistan. As a professional who was trained in the design field and then worked in the design industry for almost a decade, the researcher believes, however, that there is a gap between professional training and the requirements that the industry demands of design graduates. When designers join the textile industry, the researcher has observed that they perceive a gap between their academic training and professional setting. The researcher considers her research a qualitative analysis based on a multi-method approach. The findings of the study are drawn from a case study carried out with a group of textile designers working in a textile design studio in an industrial setup in Lahore, Pakistan. A set of 3 activities was conducted with 4 participants. Activities were followed by reflective journals of participants and observations/field notes taken by the design head. This research examines how Reflective Practice can be introduced into the design process within an industrial context through a series of reflection-in-action learning cycles.

Keywords: Reflective Practice, Professional Development, Design Thinking, Experiential Learning

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1. Introduction

In the economy of Pakistan, the textile industry plays the role of backbone. It produces almost one-third of textiles and related goods in the production industry and appoints 38 percent of the laborers in the industry. In the world, Pakistan is the fourth prime producer of cotton. Ahsan & Malik, (2016). Moreover, with the accessibility of raw materials and sturdy infrastructure, Pakistan is not performing vigorously in the area of textiles

worldwide. The scenario of the upgraded product is also not satisfying. There is a lack of Research & Development in textile manufacturing in Pakistan. Similar to the other features alike association of extraordinary transaction cost along the supply chain and exchanges of cross-border besides indigent state of trade facilitation. This state is also a deficit in innovation and creative products. Memedovic & Gereffi, (2003).

Apprehension was also highlighted by Walayat, Kazi & Usman (2012), and Faini (1995) that the textile industry's demand is not satisfied by the academics of Pakistan. According to the researcher's observation, the culture of Pakistan is quite dependent on professional services but difficulties are still faced by the professionals along with the consistency of individual's knowledge like there is an uncertain component in the professional's mind as to the application of a skill learned. A similar issue is being encountered by professionals in the design industry. Fresh graduates & contributors who work conclusively the way of professionals are extremely confused with the designer's demand to accomplish the necessity of an uncertain profession. Design contributors frequently ask questions regarding the responsible and sound decision-making power and ability to inspire the design industry by creating an effectual design.

In the researcher's opinion, there is some lack in the professional practice of apparel and textile designers. We do not have a grip on the global level in this sector even though in the last twenty years, a few institutions have been offering a bachelor's degree in design discipline.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Reflective Practice and Design

It is not surprising that Reflective Practice (RP) is popular in education, as many of its chief objectives align with the objectives of educators and many organizations. For example, the use of AR allows educators to make decisions based on data as opposed to preferences (Fleming, nd.). Furthermore, it allows one to consider both the quality of student education and the need for professional growth as equally important research and educational endeavors. In addition to the possibility of institutional change, there is also a real potential for pedagogical change. In this capacity, RP makes a change manageable as practitioners can focus on one aspect of their practice that they wish to change at a time. Collaboration is effective in this regard, as approaches can be shared amongst educators and institutions. RP also helps to develop a culture of inquiry that is tremendously required in education today. The teaching method of textile design resembles the content of the RP approach. Usually, the instructor gives a task to the students based on the aesthetic or technical problem. Students go through the developmental procedure and interact with teachers and peers in the journey of the progression. Britt (2008) also considers evolution as a critical part of textile design

education. Macdonald (2005) deliberated that display and continuous critique enhanced the quality of art and craft work. So, the bottom line is that RP is close to teaching methodology in Art and design.

McNiff and & Whitehead (2005) discussed that recording the daily progress is a way to conduct RP. Designers and design teachers are not good at documentation and filing. The researcher also considers that design teachers do not have the realization that they are doing RP, but they need to streamline their process. So, if the researcher is given an opportunity, she will conduct a campaign for textile and fashion design academicians.

In textile design studio assignments, usually, an instructor plans a project in the light of guidelines provided by the relevant department. In the 6th and 7th semesters, a single assignment comprises of an average four weeks. So, in one semester students do four major tasks. At the beginning of the project, the instructor provides some guidelines needs. These guidelines include possible theme/themes (i.e., mood, color palette, imagery), technical aspects of artwork (i.e. no of colors, repeat, rotary screen-printing machine size), End product information (i.e. Home textiles, apparel, upholstery) and other requirements like target market and cost for the production. Students work in the studio for about six hours a week, and during this time, the

instructor interacts and provides recommendations in the process of design development. At the end of every class, the teacher gives feedback to every student so they can work on their design during the week time. In the next class, the teacher evaluates the work, and the cycle continues until the end of the assigned task.

2.2 Action learning & Problem Solving

Action learning is a problem-solving procedure of experience with the help of action and reflection. It has developed an active approach to communication, learning, and behavior indicating the outcomes that are desired.

Problem-solving sometimes becomes complex especially when we are dealing with participants from different backgrounds. Problem-solving directly relates to the culture of an individual. Culture is an interpretation of experiences and social behaviors. Culture distinguishes individuals from each other. We can say that different people have different experiences related to the same situations or circumstances

Generally, Problem identification and definition is the first phase of problem-solving. When Participants have different cultural backgrounds, they will analyze the problem differently. Maybe someone is unable to consider a problem as a problem

because he or she has not experienced a specific situation.

2.3 The Methodological Perspective of Reflective Practice

Reflective Practice could be considered both a framework and a methodology (at least to some extent). Despite the specifics of the individual project, most Reflective Practice tends to follow the same cyclic method of plan, action, observation, and reflection O'Brien, (1998). Perhaps this is not the intent of the methodology, which is more focused on the selection of the specific method (such as a case study, interview, etc.). In this regard, Reflective Practice can vary tremendously as a variety of different methods can be used. Similarly, Reflective Practice is not necessarily aligned with a single approach either. For example, one can take a positivist approach to RP where research is a social experiment to test a hypothesis in the real world, it can be interpretive/contemporary in its focus on

organization factors, or it can be critical in its attempt to look for improvements Action Research, (2018).

3. Methodology

The researcher considers her research a qualitative analysis based on a multi-method approach. Multi-method refers to the use of multiple methods of data collection. For the above-mentioned purpose, the following major activities were conducted.

- Action Research is based on the design development process in the design studio
- Observations and reflections

3.1 Participants

Data was collected from four participants. Two are senior textile designers from the industry and two are novice textile designers. All of them are intended to pursue a career in this domain. In studio work, a head designer (HD) is assigned a task or project. At the beginning of the project, the HD

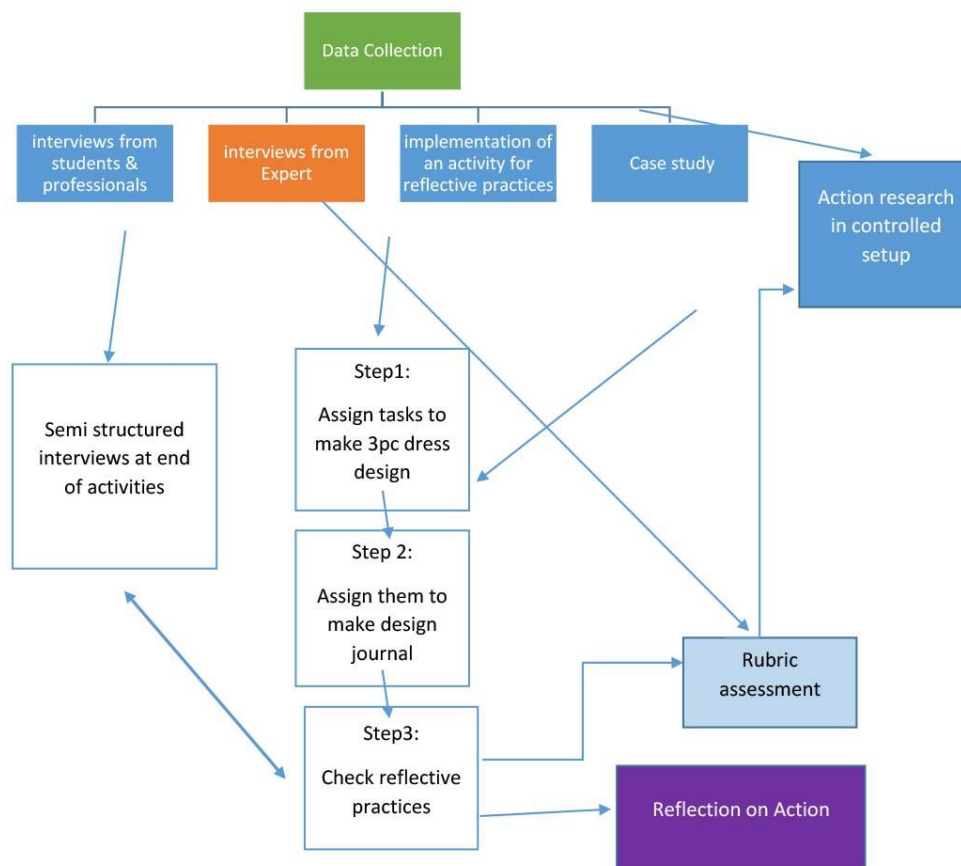


Figure: Data collection process

provides some guidelines. These guidelines include possible theme/themes (i.e., mood, color palette, imagery), technical aspects of artwork (i.e. no of colors, repeat, rotary screen-printing machine size), End product information (i.e. home textiles, apparel, upholstery) and other requirements like target market and cost for the production. Designers work in the studio for about six hours a day. At the end of the task or sometimes in the middle of the task, the HD gives feedback to the designer so they can work on their designs according to requirements. All the activities of the presented work

were based on this (or identical) format of design development.

3.2 Setting

The researcher conducted her study at the textile designer’s workplace. She selected a professional design studio to work for apparel products (particularly for the Pakistani market). She will address her selected place as a design studio (DS) in the upcoming dissertation. The design studio is located in Lahore which is the 2nd largest city in Pakistan and is considered as one of the hubs of the textile and fashion industry beside Karachi and Faisalabad. The design studio is run by a

renowned textile industry in Pakistan. The Head office is situated in Faisalabad but design studios are located in Lahore. The selected DS is specialized in printed and embroidered designs. A team of 10 designers is headed by a head designer who reports to the chief executive officer (CEO) of the company. Casual hierarchy is observed in the design team because all of them work under the guidelines of the design manager. For this research activity, the researcher had to take formal permission from the CEO through the consent of the head designer. Because it involved, company resources (i.e., material and CAD systems) and office time of the employee. The researcher wants to mention that, the administration of the company appreciated the idea of Reflective Practice and advised her to discuss the result of the activity. DS has the facility for various art mediums to create manual designs, but most of the designers work on computer-aided design software. Adobe Photoshop is the popular software for the creation of designs. DS is a big spacious room with ten office tables of designers in the room organized with walls and a big center conference table. Figure 3 depicts the studio settings of the project. A designer used to have an individual workstation and system. Designers discuss their ideas with the head

designer and colleagues and work independently.

3.2 *Observation and Reflection*

Reflection is one of the most critical aspects of a researcher's methodology. The reflection reveals what has been learned from the overall research process and how the experience has helped shape the research outcome. The reflective process is segregated into three parts during these research activities.

- Reflective Journals by the participants
- Reflection in action
- Reflection on action

4. Findings

The analysis of the relationship between textile design and the cycle of reflective practice and the founded outcomes has been derived through data analysis. It will be based on two major findings. The first one is about the gathered evidence from suggested comprehensive practices in the element of reflection. The second finding is about the obvious aspects of practices in textiles which are proposing reflexivity as a methodology based on practice.

4.1 *Finding #1*

The process of the textile design runs similarly to Schon's Theory of Reflective Practice. Although designing was a routine activity of design, this time, I

observed that designers seemed to be extra conscious about their practice. They became more cognizant when proceeding in their work with reflection. I also noticed that designers became stuck at some stage because self-assessment made them think more about the next step. Reflective Practice and making reflective journals alone were time-consuming. Though it involved their interest in their work due to consciousness, they got stuck at some points, and it made them take more time to complete their task. I also observed more ownership of their artifacts as the way they were dealing with and talking about their design showed affiliation. RP led to consciousness which developed a better connection with their designs. When designers were at the final stages of their work and completing their task of activity 1, they were more explicit about the idea of reflection as according to them it helped them in making decisions about different aspects of the design process. They feel more involved, and involvement made them see their design critically.

The artifacts they came up with at the end of Activity 1 were more exploratory than they were before. Practicing reflection in their work allowed them to meet their goals more effectively. Critical thinking came up with an exploration of themes, motif reflection, compositions, and color schemes. Two of the participants came up with very creative artefacts plus meeting the client's needs. Also, keep in mind the demand of the company; they explored multiple possibilities through reflection.

4.2 Finding# 2

Reflection is a significant approach to learning from the experience of textiles otherwise one cannot learn it.

Construction of an emergent vocabulary with an appropriate shared language and encouragement towards an enhanced textile understanding just like the treasured form of reflective practice and critical thinking could be possible while considering the reflexive methodology.



Figure 2: Multiple experiments done with the design layout of the shirt

5. Conclusion

5.1 Enhancement of creative performance through Reflection

Reflection is a word used by textile designers with one meaning when it is the process of consideration by including three various approaches which are observation, analysis, and evaluation. The identification of reflection elements may explain language and improve the creative tactics and critical framework of the practice of textiles. In the current research, it was demonstrated by designers that lasting usage of these approaches, after a long they were properly attributed to it helped them to analyze their achievements and ambitions.

Kolb strengthens the significance of the association between the experience and the examination admitting that reflection permits the designers to learn from the experience and reflexivity is a means of designers' behavior studying through investigating deep-rooted and repetitive ways of intelligence, acting and appraising the skills and strengths of designers along the weaknesses too.

'Learning is greatest assisted in a situation where there is a dialectic tension and conflict among instant, analytical detachment, and experience.' Kolb, (1984 and 1985)

In the mentioned quote, resonances however he is precisely defining the learning of the textile environment, where the designer of the textile substitutes their opinion among the investigating and evaluating those experiments.

The reflection of textile designers converted a significant focus for the current research like former researchers had examined reflection mostly from an educational rather than a creative perspective. A critical method can be permitted through reflection to learning in entire subjects which permits the designers to make decisions and decide the assessment of these decisions, thus extending understanding and improving the capacity of learning. Reflection is a motion in which individuals evoke their experience and reflect around it, consider it, appraise it, and plot the deed of the future. For example, reflexivity is expressed in measurement by Moon (1999 and 2004) who has examined the matter broadly and supports the usage of learning journals of reflection. Explicit examples of reflective intelligence have been delivered by Moon for expressive learners and after that those who transfer into a profounder method of critical intelligence.

5.2 Professional Effectiveness

The process of creative textile is an external and internal negotiation between

the experience of artistic designing and reflection. This negotiation arises between the creator's mind and the material's manipulation. Reflexive practice is a way of examining and connecting the individual knowledge expanded over the experience learned. This consciousness which is internal and generally stimulated by the touch, our sense is further externalized. These perceptions of intellect consist of the retentions of reflection or descriptions of experiences, sensual wants, effects externally, and emotions which are converted and interconnected externally by the graphic language of the cloth.

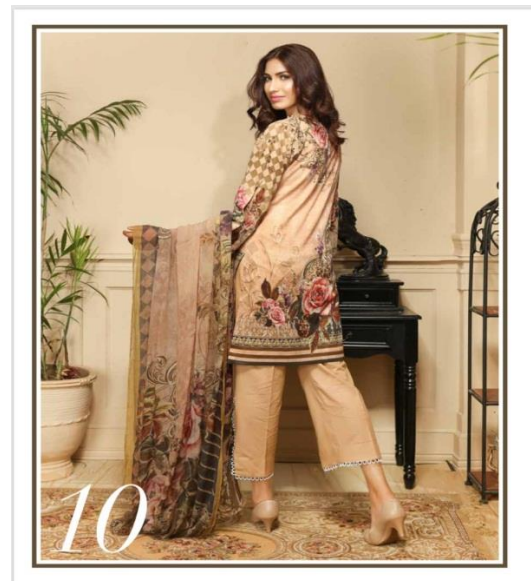


Figure 3: Printed Design After

5.3 Reflection

The objective of the research explore how the procedure of textile designing associated with the theory of experiential

learning has been attained. The results have revealed that it is a procedure of learning experientially as the cycle of Kolb defines the practical designing procedure by the conceptualization of intellectual, observation of reflection, experience, and vigorous investigation. By the inquiry in a realistic way, it developed that the process of reflection in the textiles was even further surrounded in its practice and might propose innovative information to others grounded on practice areas of the subject by a prolonged expression of reflexivity.

These outcomes of the research express that this novel consideration is based upon the fact that the feature of the reflective practice of textile is holistically surrounded in the subject along with the tactic created on the reflective practice. That is why the current research prolongs the procedure understanding of us. Textiles do not essentially need a prearranged duration of time or arrangement of reflective thinking. For example, the references that currently the work is completed is a time to reproduce when the continuous reflection during the procedure should be recorded spontaneously at individual key phases and to produce the unrestricted thinking, authentic and applicable assessment. Practitioners of textiles demonstrate their knowledge of the subject by the evaluative and investigative reflexivity of their work.

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