Knowledge Sharing in Indigenous Communities of Practice in the Arts and Crafts Sector in Zimbabwe

Esabel Maisiri
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7243-9184
National University of Science and
Technology, Zimbabwe
esabel.maisiri@nust.ac.zw

Patrick Ngulube
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7676-3931
University of South Africa
ngulup@unisa.ac.za

Abstract

The study that directed this article sought to understand the dynamics of knowledge sharing in operational engagements in art practice within the indigenous communities of practice in Zimbabwe. To this end, a qualitative study was conducted based on a phenomenology of practice research strategy. Purposive sampling was used to identify the research sites, to study participants at the sites and to review documents for analysis. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews in the field from seven participants, by observations at the research sites and by means of an analysis of documents on biographies of six participants. The findings were that indigenous communities of practice were central in facilitating the sharing and acquisition of artistic knowledge in the art world. In operational interactions, socialisation was the main mode of engagement, both among integrated and naïve artists. The commonly shared knowledge types were artistic and social knowledge, irrespective of the quality of the artworks produced. Rhythmic knowledge was applied largely in the production of airport art. The recommendations were for the indigenous communities of practice to develop knowledge-sharing strategies and for the artists to form a national association that would help them to harness their efforts.

Keywords: indigenous communities of practice; indigenous knowledge; knowledge sharing; stone sculpture; visual artists; Zimbabwe

Introduction and Background

Knowledge sharing is a core activity in the production of arts and crafts in indigenous communities of practice in Zimbabwe. This is because indigenous communities of practice are symbol-intensive organisations, in which the artworks produced are valued for the meaning that they represent (Lawrence and Phillips 2002, 431). The meaning is a key factor of the knowledge that is used during the production of the artworks. Hence, the essence to understand the dynamics of sharing and acquiring knowledge during operational engagements in indigenous communities of practice.

Knowledge is an intellectual capacity to perceive, learn, communicate, associate and reason (Omotayo 2015). In symbol-based practices, which indigenous communities of practice are, knowledge also includes an ability to apply knowledge to produce knowledge (O'Connor 2000). As such, operational engagements in indigenous communities of practice involve interactivities in which ideas and thoughts, in the form of indigenous knowledge (Maisiri 2020, 216), are exchanged and shared with new knowledge being created, concomitantly. The new knowledge includes "new forms of artistic expressions" (Farnsworth, Kleanthous, and Wenger-Trayner 2016, 2) that are distinctively indigenous arts and crafts (Maisiri 2020, 216). Indigenous knowledge is local knowledge that has been accumulated over time and justified by the social group within which the knowledge is used (Abah, Mashebe, and Denuga 2015, 668).

Indigenous communities of practice are specific workplaces from where visual artists operate (Wassenaar 2017, 89). The operations are artistic engagements that take place in social collaborative networks of actants with complementary roles in art practice (Abrams 2018), referred to as the art world (Burla 2012, 9). It is by participating in these networks that visual artists "learn both the cultural and cognitive ropes" (O'Connor 2000) of art practice. Actants are both people and facilities like "creators, technology, mediators, artistic works, contexts and recipients" (Sutherland and Acord 2007, 126, 134), with the power of agency in cooperative artistic engagements (Mellegård and Boonstra 2020, 1253).

In Zimbabwe, indigenous communities of practice include arts and crafts workshops, roadside apprenticeships and vocational art training centres (Maisiri 2020, 216). Most of the communities are located in urban areas and holiday resorts where they operate under the auspices of the local authorities. Roadside apprenticeships operate from marketing stalls that they mount along the sides of roads leading to tourist resorts (Mushowe 2015).

Knowledge sharing in indigenous communities of practice in Zimbabwe follows an open system of knowledge exchange or the "wild" system (Hutchins 1995, 370 as quoted in Moisa and Ngulube 2005, 176). In such a system, actants from different organisations in the art world engage each other informally on specific operations (O'Connor 2000). Engagements of this nature, largely, result in variations in the way that actants communicate, exchange and share ideas and knowledge, which invariably

impacts on the value of the artworks that are produced. This observation might explain why artworks produced in the indigenous communities of practice in the 1980s and 1990s are highly valued to the extent of receiving international acclaim, while those produced in the 2000s are lowly valued and derogatorily termed as "airport art" or "sidewalk art" (Shona Sculpture 2015). Airport art is produced *en masse* with a lot of duplication of commercially successful items (Mushowe 2015). Given such a background, it was assumed that in the 2000s, visual artists resorted to producing airport art because they were facing constraints in accessing and exchanging knowledge on indigenously-based aesthetics in the art world, because of the open nature of knowledge sharing in the indigenous communities of practice. However, the assumption could not be ascertained because there seemed not to be any studies on how knowledge was being shared, exchanged and acquired during operational engagements in indigenous communities of practice in Zimbabwe; hence, the essence of this study. Studies available on the acquisition of artistic knowledge concentrated on formal education. Examples include Mamvuto (2013; 2019) and Abraham (2002). Both authors acknowledge the presence of indigenous communities of practice in the art world, but do not query the dynamics of knowledge sharing in the communities, which is the thrust of this study. The need for such a thrust is highlighted by Agyemang, Ngulube, and Dube (2019) who observe that a poor knowledge-sharing culture was one of the hindrances to accessing indigenous knowledge and information among bead-makers in Ghana.

The knowledge gap that this study sought to address has a number of implications. For instance, at an individual level, without information on operational experiences in art practice, visual artists in contemporary indigenous communities of practice would find it difficult to choose the best practices to follow in advancing their careers and in producing competitive artworks. At the national level, the country would continue to lose its cultural heritage, identity and its share of the international art market.

Collaborative Knowledge-sharing Engagements in the Art World: A Review of Literature

This section is a review of the literature on collaborative knowledge-sharing engagements and communication processes in the art world. It constitutes the conceptual framework of the study.

Literature shows that a number of studies related to this study have focused mostly on the acquisition and use of indigenous knowledge in communities of practice. They do not delve into the dynamics of sharing the knowledge in operational engagements. Some of these studies include the research by Agyemang et al. (2019) on information needs and information-seeking behaviour of Krobo bead makers in Ghana. The study showed that immediate family members, neighbours, friends, the radio and television, non-governmental organisations, individual bead sellers and exporters, training sessions, seminars, workshops and village meetings were the main information sources. Shaari

(2015), assessing knowledge-transfer processes in the creation of batik, found that communities developed their own specific techniques, which were determined by human creativity, technological innovation and natural environmental endowments available in the community. Dovey (2011) studied learning forms that fostered creativity and innovation among visual artists in South Africa. He found the presence of a constitution that espoused the right to artistic expression and a political system that tolerated social engagements; an influx of young black artists who took up the arts as a form of employment; an influx of immigrants who introduced their cultural ideas; and the development of a "do-it-yourself" attitude among artists as factors that propelled creativity. The other study was conducted by Downsborough (2009) in South Africa on how farmers acquired knowledge on conservation farming through social interactions. He found that the farmers formed collaborative network relationships through which they acquired and developed a repertoire of resources for community use. Another study was conducted by Uwameiye and Iyamu (2002) in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria, on the indigenous apprenticeship system. They found that the system consisted of roadside apprenticeship workshops and that the training was not systematically organised.

Acquiring knowledge in indigenous communities of practice is a learning process that follows a Community of Practice Framework propounded by Lave and Wenger (1991, in Smith, Hayes, and Shea 2017, 214). According to the framework, visual artists in indigenous communities of practice constantly, through social interactions in operational engagements, share information and knowledge; and in the process, collectively learn and create new knowledge about their practice (Wassenaar 2017, 89–90). New members are first mentored for enculturation by experienced members before they can participate in community interactivities. The interactions in the engagements in this study, involve the conversion of tacit knowledge back and forth into explicit knowledge through the Socialisation-Externalisation-Combination-Internalisation (SECI) model's stages of knowledge creation (Nonaka 1994, 18–20). The conversions produce knowledge assets as outputs at each stage of the model, which are "the accepted norms, conventions, beliefs and values" (Jyräma and Äyväri 2006) among the interacting visual artists.

The knowledge assets produced and shared at the socialisation stage in the art world are the artistic conventions. These result from the conversion of individual tacit knowledge to group tacit knowledge when knowledge is directly shared (Koehler, Bastos, and Bastos 2019, 129) among individuals and with the environment. In indigenous communities of practice in Zimbabwe, socialisation processes include the tutoring of novices on a one-on-one basis (Kinsman 2014); occupational participation (Burla 2012, 27) and engagements in "workshops, lectures, debates and film shows" (VAAB 2019).

Artistic conventions are experiential knowledge assets that include artistic know-how and social conventions. Artistic know-how encompasses rhythmic knowledge, which is used in improvisation and entrainment (Chou and He 2004, 149). Social conventions relate to emotional and aesthetic knowledge assets. Emotional knowledge consists of

care, love and trust (Chou and He 2004, 149) and aesthetic knowledge is the physical expression of an artwork (Jarvin 2017, 139). In indigenously-based knowledge domains, aesthetic knowledge includes cultural conventions (Bequette 2007, 365).

Knowledge conversion at the externalisation stage produces conceptual knowledge. The conversion entails that tacit knowledge is abductively articulated in codified form as images, symbols and language (Dhlamini 2017, 79), thereby converting it into explicit knowledge. In art practice, explicit knowledge or conceptual knowledge includes the artworks, which are a representation of the knowledge and ideas borne by the artist who produced the artworks (Riding 2017, 25). The knowledge represented is what gives meaning and value to artworks (Lawrence and Phillips 2002, 431).

Conceptual knowledge created at the externalisation stage and already existing explicit knowledge in the social environment are combined by re-organising or editing it, without any change in content, to make it more accessible at the combination stage (Dhlamini 2017, 80). The result is standardisation of best practices, which is regarded as systemic knowledge assets.

In the last SECI stage, the internalisation stage, explicit knowledge is converted into routine knowledge, which is tacit knowledge, by the embodiment in individuals (Koehler et al. 2019, 129) and by embedment in organisational routines (Dhlamini 2017, 80). This is done through learning by doing or experimentation.

Knowledge produced at each SECI stage is continuously fed into subsequent conversion stages as inputs and moderating factors (Nonaka 1994, 15) when visual artists continue interacting. The knowledge outputs/conventions that ensue will cumulate into a collective repository of resources that govern the working protocols of artists (Manta 2018, 96). However, artists use the conventions in varied ways that are depicted in the extent to which an artist balances between conventional and unconventional behaviour. Based on the variations, Davey (2019) categorised artists into four groups as follows:

- Integrated professionals: are mainstream artists who have found the right balance between sticking to and breaking with the conventions.

- Conventional novices: these are amateur artists without much experience of professional standards.

- Naïve artists or outsiders: these artists make artistically-looking artworks, but without being aware of conventions.

- Mavericks: these artists seek novelty and thus, opt to side track conventions.

The indigenous communities of practice discussed in this study are based on an instrumentalist view of the Community of Practice Framework (Buckley et al. 2019). This is because they are intentionally set-up workplaces.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to assess the dynamics of knowledge sharing in the production, distribution and consumption of the arts and crafts in indigenous communities of practice in Zimbabwe. The objectives were to:

1. Establish the nature of collaborative knowledge-sharing engagements on the production, distribution and consumption of the arts and crafts in indigenous communities of practice in Zimbabwe.

2. Examine the interactivity in knowledge communication and creation on the production, distribution and consumption of the arts and crafts in indigenous communities of practice in Zimbabwe.

3. Ascertain the knowledge shared during knowledge-sharing engagements on the production, distribution and consumption of the arts and crafts in indigenous communities of practice in Zimbabwe.

Methodology and Data Analysis

The study used a qualitative methodology and a phenomenology of practice research strategy. This strategy was likely to enable the researcher to gain a true picture of the situation under study, since phenomenology supports the gathering of information that is consciously understood pre-reflectively by the people who experience the situation (Tracy 2020, 65). The target population was visual artists involved in stone sculpture, operating currently or who had operated from indigenous communities of practice. Stone sculpture was targeted because, according to Mataga and Chabata (2011):

> Stone sculpture is synonymous with the Zimbabwean art market. … It is a form of art born out of elaborate, if not systematic production and relatively well-established institutions.

The sculptures included both big art pieces, categorised as fine arts, and small curios referred to as airport art. This is because both are indigenous products (Musundire 2011, 1).

Participants were sampled purposively, using the maximum variation method. This enabled the selection of participants that bore the characteristics of interest to the study and the inclusion of participants with varying levels of expertise (Busetto, Wick, and Gumbinger 2020). The research sites were also purposively selected.

Data were collected from three sites in Harare and one in Bulawayo, following ethical guidelines. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews conducted with seven participants and observations made at research sites, as well as an analysis of 36 documents on the biographies of six participants. The document types used included journals, magazine and newspaper articles, institutional websites, personal blogs,

pamphlets and Facebook accounts (Busetto et al. 2020). A reflexive journal was kept for memoing and audit trailing.

In terms of rigour, a conceptual framework helped to attain construct validity (Adom, Hussein, and Agyem 2018, 438). Additionally, four dimensions of quality suggested by Van Manen (1997) of orientation, strength, richness and depth (Shahbazian 2015) were adopted. Orientation entailed adopting an empathetic attitude. This helped in presenting a true interpretation of participants' experiences. Strength, which denotes data dependability, was ensured by gathering data from knowledgeable sources, adherence to axiological issues and use of published documents. Richness of data was attained by using open, unstructured and deep interviews; ensuring truthfulness and integrity by bracketing off researcher assumptions and presuppositions (Neubauer, Witkop, and Varpio 2019, 94) and by triangulating different data collection methods. Depth was achieved by continuously reflecting while writing and rewriting the research results, so as to attain a correct interpretation of what the research participants intended to portray.

Data collection proceeded simultaneously with data analysis, and both were stopped when data saturation was attained. The analysis followed a thematic analysis framework using ATLASI.ti 9.0 software. Thematic codes were devised deductively from the research objectives and the conceptual framework as well as inductively from the data set. Coding was done at the latent level and code generation was stopped at the point of data saturation. This was when new codes ceased to be identified (Busetto et al. 2020).

Discussion of the Findings

The findings are presented under themes developed from the study objectives. These include: collaborative knowledge-sharing engagements, interactivity in knowledge communication and creation, and knowledge shared during knowledge-sharing engagements.

Collaborative Knowledge-sharing Engagements

Indigenous communities of practice were found to be the primary institutions of knowledge-sharing engagements among visual artists. The engagements facilitated access to art conventions and knowledge exchange and creation through social learning, modelled along an instrumentalist view of the Community of Practice Framework. Observations on the features of the indigenous communities of practice were as follows:

- Community 1 was a private company run by an art collector. Its operations involved getting into ventures with visual artists in which the artists used the community's workshop, tools and materials in return for producing artworks for the art collector at a concessional rate.

- Community 2 was an initiative of the local municipality. Its thrust was to centralise activities of visual artists who were spontaneously setting-up shops all over the municipal area.

- Community 3 was a project of a non-governmental organisation initiated for skills training to physically challenged members of society.

- Community 4 was a project initiated by the local municipality to offer skills training to school-going children who resided in the municipal area.

Observations on the extent to which the indigenous communities of practice facilitated social learning, are as follows:

Domain: interviewed participants indicated that they shared their expertise and learnt from one another within and across communities of practice, such that there was a common understanding of issues in the field. This is shown by Participant 7, who stated how he would get details of best-selling artworks from colleagues in communities of practice in other towns, and would replicate the artworks at his local community in collaboration with other artists.

Community: collaborative engagements took place during production in workshops and studios. Community support is illustrated by Participant 10, who observed that:

> Artists learn through other artists, like in the teaching that I am doing at my studio. Similarly, many other established artists are doing the same.

Practice: this was demonstrated by the availability of similar designs of airport art in different indigenous communities of practice across the country—this indicated use of the same body of knowledge (Smith et al. 2017, 211).

Peripheral participation: new members in Communities 1, 2 and 3 were attached to senior community members for induction and socialisation. This way, new members got acculturated into the affairs of the community.

Interactions in operational engagements in indigenous communities of practice took various forms. Below is a discussion on some of the interactions.

Interactivity in Knowledge Communication and Creation

The analysis of interactions during operational engagements is framed around the SECI model's stages of knowledge creation. These include socialisation, externalisation, combination and internalisation stages.

Socialisation Stage

In the indigenous communities of practice, socialisation took place through mentorship and the enculturation of new members into artistic practices. Instructional techniques included observations, imitation and practice combined with direct instruction. This was highlighted in Communities 2, 3 and 4, which took novices for training. Among artists, learning was spontaneous in one-on-one consultations during work. Such training

fosters an understanding of cultural issues, development of manual dexterity and expressive skills (Bequette 2007, 367).

Non-governmental organisations and associations of visual artists were considered as important in mentoring artists (Kinsman 2014; VAAB 2019). However, none of the participants reported working with such organisations, except Community 3, which was set-up as a project of a non-governmental organisation.

Externalisation Stage

Learning engagements also took place through externalisation. Activities used include advertisement and marketing, artworks, branding, public presentations, participation in residency programmes, social networking, sculpting, teaching engagements and conducting workshops.

- Advertisement and Marketing

The importance of advertising and marketing for publicity was highlighted by Participant 13, who called out to fellow artists to take the issue of marketing seriously so as to survive in the sector. He observed that this would help artists "to move with the times and grow their ideas" by being constantly in touch with the audience. However, there did not seem to be much happening with respect to the pro-active marketing of sculptural works in the country from the 1980s to date. Concerted marketing efforts were associated with the founding of the National Gallery of Zimbabwe in 1957 and its workshop school in 1960 (Burla 2012, 13). The current scenario was summed up by Participant 10, who said that he did not advertise. He added that buyers who came to his studio were using their own means of getting information, or maybe advertisements that were not under his control. An example of such publicity is shown in Community 2. It had been designated by the government as a tourist resort; thus, it automatically got publicity in some of the advertisements of organisations in the hospitality industry.

- Artworks

The communicative effect of artworks comes from the fact that artworks are outward representations of artists' tacit emotions, ideas and thoughts. Thus, an artwork communicates the artist's tacit feelings.

- Branding

The effect of branding and brand equity by artists helps in maintaining the authenticity of their artworks (Heredero and Chaves 2016). The connotation of brand equity, with respect to information access, was highlighted by Participant 10, who said that in his many travels overseas he had seen works by great artists, but told himself that he should just look at the works to enjoy them and not borrow any ideas. This is because he did not want his artworks to be mistaken for someone else's work.

- Public presentations

The role of public presentations in externalisation is based on conceptual art theory. The theory makes it imperative for artists to possess both oral and written communication skills so that they could be able to issue statements about their work, hold gallery talks and interviews and respond to art criticism (Jarvin 2017). This is shown in a description of Participant 9 as:

> … an open and articulate spokesperson for Zimbabwean sculpture [which] made him an attractive ambassador of the genre in Europe and North America where he was an invited artist-in-residence on numerous occasions.

Participant 10 also highlighted the issue of public knowledge sharing by indicating that he had appeared on "television and … on international news … and even in the papers."

However, the ability to professionally handle public presentations by the majority of artists was questionable. This is because some of the artists indicated that they were not keen information seekers. For example, Participant 6, on keeping abreast of trends in the field, said that he relied on information from his father, who was a sculptor, and colleagues in the industry. He did not go out to look for information. He, however, read what came his way.

- Residency Programmes

Being in residency afforded an artist the opportunity to develop new tacit knowledge and to externalise it in the output of the residency. Participant 1 was in residency at Community 1 at the time of data gathering. Participants 9 and 13, among others, had participated in residency programmes.

- Social Networking

As a means of communication, social networking involves the use of social media that include artists' websites, Facebook accounts and blogs. Participants 3, 6 and 7 indicated that they used their WhatsApp profiles to carry details on their practice. Explaining, Participant 6 said:

> I use my WhatsApp profile to advertise and my colleagues operating in other towns refer customers to me using detail on the profile.

- Sculpting

Externalisation through sculpting involved carving while running an exhibition. Participant 2 had travelled to Germany on 17 occasions for either exhibitions or teaching. During most of the exhibitions, he would sculpt on the side-lines to demonstrate his skill. Participant 1 did the same when he travelled to Denver, United States of America, for an exhibition.

- Teaching Engagements

Externalisation during teaching engagements centred on the artist sharing his artistic mental frame (Dhlamini 2017, 80). These engagements took the form of practical demonstrations, hands-on exercises and mentoring in the study sites and artists' private workshops and studios. Examples of the engagements by individual artists include Participants 9, 11 and 12, who had hosted students visiting from overseas on a number of occasions. Participant 2 was still hosting students and professors from a university in Germany at his backyard workshop in Chitungwiza.

Participants 1, 2 and 3 had shared their expertise in the classroom. Participant 1 had travelled to California State University on an International Visiting Artist programme for 36 months and had earlier spent five years teaching art at a primary school on a part-time basis. Participants 2 and 3 had often been invited to schools for career guidance, and Community 2 was a favourite spot for students on field trips.

- Workshops

The manner of engagement in the classroom also took place in workshops/meetings with small groups of participants. The workshops provided platforms from which novices met with experts to discuss professional issues.

Combination stage

Combination activities entail making knowledge readily accessible by editing, categorising and classifying it into more comprehensive explicit forms. Engagements that promoted combination activities include art criticism, curatorship and mounting exhibitions.

- Art Criticism and Documentation

The role of art critics is to evaluate, interpret and describe art and artists in reviews that are used by the public to interpret the meaning embedded in artworks. The essence of reviews is because "objects acquire value in so far as they are inscribed in history" (Joy and Sherry 2003, 159). Different types of media were used in documenting reviews of study participants. These include newspapers, television, online publications and social media.

The use of art criticism by participants was indicated by Participant 6, who stated:

> I read documents and magazines to get information about the trends. I also watch television and read newspapers to see what is being written and said about our work.

Communities 2 and 3 had been documented in various forms like books, journals and newspapers. Communities 1 and 4 were fairly new at the time of data gathering and had no documents to their name.

- Curatorship

Curatorship is an act of interpreting the message or giving meaning to artworks through evaluation and categorisation of the artworks. The interpretation is the basis for mounting exhibitions, which depict the meaning that curation would have bestowed on the exhibitions. Participants 10 and 13 reported having been involved in curatorial work.

- Exhibitions

Exhibitions are a product of combination activities, as indicated under curatorship above. They bring artworks and artists from different places together. This was highlighted by Participant 13 in a description of an exhibition that he attended, which brought together 95 countries to Germany. He stated that:

> I met with people from all around the world, from different galleries and different curators … [with whom we] shared views and ideas.

In the study environment, exhibitions were conducted at the indigenous communities of practice and at galleries. Participation at international exhibitions was reported among integrated artists and by two of the interviewed participants.

Some of the integrated participants had their artworks exhibited in art collecting institutions. Others were included in exhibitions in documents, both hard copy and online as virtual displays on websites and social media platforms like Facebook (both institutional and personal), and blogs. At the time of the data collection, Community 2's website was under construction.

- Internalisation

Internalisation is facilitated through learning engagements that encompass experimentation, model imitation and simulation. On experimentation, Participant 14 said that his "work changed greatly …" when he became a full-time professional artist because he had "more time to experiment and explore new forms."

Equally highlighting the importance of creating new knowledge and experimentation, was Participant 10. Calling on artists to experiment with new designs, he stated that it was because of new designs that he had diversified his clientele base.

On model imitation, Participant 1 said that in Community 4 the training centred on simulating models. Participant 11 described how he had learnt the style, technique and subject rules of art by simulating one of Zimbabwe's integrated sculptors when he was under the sculptor's mentorship.

Model imitation can be viewed as part of commissioned work. This is because when an artist is contracted to produce a piece of art, the artist should understand and internalise the customer's specifications, which, through simulation, are turned into a product. Participant 3 observed that:

A customer specifies what he wants, and I have to come out of my comfort zone to fit into the other person's mind so that I can draw on his ideas to develop the requisite concepts.

Among integrated artists, internalisation led to the development of new art designs that earned the artists international acclaim. The same could not be said about some of the artists mentored in contemporary indigenous communities of practice, who simply regurgitated what they had been taught by producing poor replicates of their mentors' style.

Knowledge Shared during Knowledge-sharing Engagements

During the SECI conversions, operational engagements entailed the use of conventions as input and moderating factors during the interactivities that produced new knowledge and new conventions as outputs. The knowledge involved includes artistic knowledge, conceptual knowledge, systemic knowledge and routine knowledge.

Artistic Knowledge

Artistic knowledge is experiential or physical knowledge imparted and learnt when a trainee acquires the skill and techniques of stone carving and the social knowledge on acceptable behaviour. For example, Participant 12's artworks were characterised as bearing the influence of his training at Serima Mission.

Other forms of experiential knowledge present in the study environment included rhythmic knowledge, which could be attributed to the production of airport art as a means that artists used to withstand an adverse socio-economic climate; and social knowledge, which was indicated in professionalism. Professionalism was highlighted, for example, in how artists detested the manipulation of meaning of their artworks on the market by art dealers who would change titles of artworks in a bid to sell (Participant 12). Participant 2 raised concern about copying of his designs by his former mentees.

Social knowledge also took the form of emotional knowledge. The knowledge was demonstrated especially in the philanthropic work of some of the integrated artists like Participant 10, who was championing HIV/AIDs issues. Other examples include Participants 11 and 12, who admitted up-coming artists to their workshops who had nowhere else to go for training.

Issues on aesthetic knowledge, especially Shona aesthetics, featured mostly among integrated artists. Among naïve artists, reproducing and copying designs seemed to predominate.

Conceptual Knowledge

Conceptual knowledge is the message and ideas borne in artworks. The effect of the message to the art audience is illustrated in the words of Participant 11, who is reported

to have influenced the marketing mantra of the founding director of the National Gallery of Zimbabwe by convincing him that:

> In Shona mythology, spirits inhabited rock formations … [hence, sculpting involved] unleashing "the spirit in the stone."

Highlighting the importance of messages carried in artworks, Participant 1 described artists as storytellers that capture history in their stories and foster dialogue in society on issues that they communicate through their artworks. This makes artists custodians of a country's history. Stories portrayed by the study participants correspond to observations made by Mataga and Chabata (2011) that the earlier generations of Zimbabwean sculptors relayed messages about traditional and spiritual issues, whereas the messages by contemporary artists are on topical social issues like poverty, violence, gender, Christianity and HIV/AIDS.

Systemic Knowledge

This is standardised knowledge indicated, for example, by Participant 1, who spoke about a scheme-cum-plan that he had developed at a workshop of artists in South Africa. He used the plan to organise and run his classes. He also mentioned that he used books on design when teaching.

Participant 3 had attended an arts and crafts school. Thus, through artists like Participant 3, systemic knowledge in formal art schools found its way into indigenous communities of practice. However, on issues like copyright and intellectual property rights, it looked like the participants relied more on emotional knowledge, likely because of a harsh economic environment (Mushowe 2015), than on the dictates of the copyright laws. None of the participants seemed to be knowledgeable about intellectual property rights issues, especially with respect to sculpting work.

Some of the packaged information in the art world includes the elements of art and principles of design, catalogues of exhibitions and the guidelines and regulatory instruments from the civic order, which includes government, non-government and business organisations that support the work of art.

Routine Knowledge

The knowledge was produced at internalisation from the appropriation of European techniques of design and combining them with Shona aesthetics. Through such action, Participant 12 was said to have developed "something different, authentic and … even unique." The new knowledge created can be shared further, constituting a new chain of knowledge-sharing events.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Indigenous communities of practice were found to be central in facilitating knowledge sharing in the art world. Evidence includes the availability of similar designs of airport art in different indigenous communities of practice across the country. The flip side, however, of such a phenomenon in art practice is that mass production tends to disregard the essence of value. Without value, artworks lose their competitiveness.

In interactivity engagements, socialisation dominated the learning processes, both among integrated and naïve artists, although the learning outcomes were different. Among integrated artists, artworks were of exceptionally high quality, obtained from infusing Shona aesthetics and Eurocentric techniques. Among the naïve artists, there was rampant copying of successful designs. With respect to externalisation activities, conventional and naïve artists seemed not to have been adequately engaged. There were no reports about their involvement in exhibitions in galleries and museums outside of Zimbabwe, and they also lacked individual presence online and in the public media. Without exposure and not being able to externalise their ideas, this meant that the visual artists were not able to acquire as well as contribute to the creation of conventions in their practice.

With respect to knowledge shared, artistic and social knowledge seemed to have been commonly shared irrespective of the quality of the artworks produced. Rhythmic knowledge was largely applied in the production of airport art. Artists also shared conceptual knowledge indicated in the themes of their artworks. Sharing of this knowledge confirms the artists' role in society, as storytellers and archivists of a country's history. Hence, there is a need for the work of visual artists to carry meaning and be authentic.

On systemic knowledge, there did not seem to be much emphasis on the knowledge in contemporary indigenous communities of practice. This should, however, not be taken to mean that interactions were haphazard, because artists devised their own tools to systematise their work. For example, the scheme-cum-plan that Participant 1 had developed for conducting his lessons.

The recommendations are that artists should establish a national association that would help in harnessing their individual efforts. Also, every indigenous community of practice, through the administrator, should institute a knowledge-sharing strategy to help in identifying, obtaining and keeping information on conventions and modalities operating in the art world. The strategy should include awareness-raising activities aimed to disseminate information on the role of conventions and resources in the art world. The administrator should assist artists in their communities to use the internet by running training courses on information technology use. Marketing efforts for artworks should go beyond Zimbabwe through artists' participation at local, regional and global exhibitions, biennials and art fairs.

The administrator at an indigenous community of practice and/or the association of artists should conduct workshops on the law of copyright. Responsible authorities should enforce the law of copyright.

Suggestions for further research are that more studies should be conducted on all facets of knowledge management in art practice. This is because there seems to be a dearth of user studies on artists of the different art genres, especially from developing countries; yet, indigenous knowledge is considered as a source of competitive advantage for such countries.

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