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Challenges and prospects of traditional crafts: the role of higher professional education

Abstract. The article examines the problems faced by traditional craft industries and the possible solutions offered by the higher education system. The author considers the impact of funding shortages, weak advertising support, competition from mass industrial production, the risks of losing traditional skills, and the negative perception of manual labor. The prospects associated with the introduction of digital technologies, collaboration with designers, development of specialized training programs, technical support, professional development and public awareness, as well as the creation of an intellectual property protection system and increasing the value of products are discussed. Emphasis is placed on the importance of partnerships between universities, enterprises, and trade associations for effective interaction between theory and practice in training future specialists and reviving unique cultural heritage.

Keywords: traditional crafts, higher education, digital technologies, innovation and design, certification, partnership, cultural economy.

Traditional craft industries in Burkina Faso face several challenges including insufficient financing, weak advertising support, competition from mass-produced imitations of handmade goods (“craftwashing”), outdated skills in modern conditions and a negative perception of manual labor. However, there are also promising opportunities that lie in adopting digital technologies, collaborating with designers, gaining access to specialized training (higher education), product innovation through blending traditions and modernity, raising awareness among young people and promoting cultural heritage [1].

Higher education must meet these needs by offering specialized training programs that bridge the gap between academic theory and practical realities within the sector of traditional crafts.

In the first part of my presentation, I will discuss the main challenges (I); in the second part, I will outline the prospects and solutions provided by higher education (II).

Main challenges

The challenges facing the industry are numerous, here are just some examples:
sources of financing and management: credit is not always accessible and stakeholders often lack managerial expertise.

impact of modernization and innovation: outdated equipment and traditional manufacturing techniques, such as pottery-making, struggle to keep up with changing times. It seems that modernity undermines the ancestral knowledge skillfully developed by our African forebears.

- promotion and art market: unfair competition and counterfeiting of craft products lead to low sales. Works of art are frequently poorly represented online.
- image and recognition: education in crafts is perceived as less prestigious than general education, especially among younger generations.
- knowledge transfer: knowledge in the field of art continues to be transmitted primarily orally, which carries the risk of losing intangible skills and fosters individualism, hindering cooperation.

Prospects and solutions offered by higher education

Higher education can offer the following prospects and solutions for the development of traditional crafts:

- implementation of digital technologies, which may require learning how to use digital tools for marketing and sales (e-commerce).
- innovations and design: joint programs for masters and designers to create competitive, contemporary products.
- development of specialized educational programs: creation of undergraduate and college-level curricula focused on crafts and traditional industries (management, design, new technologies).
- technical assistance: support from technical experts to train relevant parties in innovative practices.
- promotion and certification: establishment of protected trademarks (such as those confirming quality and origin) to distinguish genuine products and enhance their value.
- raising awareness: organization of campaigns aimed at attracting younger generations and changing perceptions about the value of craftsmanship. Current national policies focus on promoting and revitalizing indigenous knowledge and traditional practices, preserving memories of our African ancestors.
- partnership: expansion of collaboration between universities, enterprises, and trade unions to align education with the needs of all stakeholders.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the connection between traditional crafts and higher education plays a crucial role in transforming challenges into opportunities. This transformation requires modern approaches to organizing activities in order to preserve cultural identity and the unique heritage of traditional crafts.

References

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