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Improving the Skill Component of Clothing and Textiles among Students in Second Cycle Institutions in Ghana and its effect on the Polytechnic Fashion student. A Case Study of OLA Girls, Mawuko Girls and Mawuli Senior High School in Ho, Ghana

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Abstract
For a nation like Ghana to develop, it is necessary to pay much attention to Vocational and Technical Education. This is so because school programmes that place emphasis on theory courses or humanities are no longer useful to the nation.Graduates who offer such programmes find it very difficult to secure employment in the Ghanaian job market leading to a lot of frustrations on their part in the quest of seeking for non existing jobs. A clarion call therefore from the government of Ghana to all educational institutions in the country to pay particular attention to Vocational and Technical Education of which Clothing and Textiles is a component has become a necessity.
The problem therefore arises when this all important course is not given serious attention during the teaching and learning processes in the second cycle institutions making the students who pass out from those institutions deficient in practical skills.The researchers therefore sought to find out the causes of the production of unskilled graduates from the institutions and measures to be taken to solve the problems.The research design adopted was descriptive (qualitative) method. Data were collected from second cycle schools offering Clothing and Textiles in Ho Municipality and Ho Polytechnic fashion students in Ghana. The second cycle schools are: OLA Girls, Mawuko Girls, and Mawuli senior high school. Questionnaire and interview were used to collect data from the various students and their teachers.A total of 85 respondents based on the purposive sampling technique were used for the study. Out of this, 65 respondents were made up of students from the second cycle schools, 20 being teachers from the various second cycle institutions and Ho Polytechnic fashion department.Findings from the research revealed that though the Clothing and Textiles course is aimed at skill acquisition, not much attention is given to students at the second cycle level of education in Ghana to enable them gain such skills. This is due to insufficient teaching and learning hours allocated for teaching practical courses in Clothing and Textiles and lack of adequate teaching and learning materials at the second cycle institutions. This makes the students lack much skill when they enter the Polytechnic to offer the Fashion programme.
Keywords: Vocational, Technical, Education, Skills Acquisition, Second Cycle Schools.

Introduction

Clothing is one of the basic needs of mankind. As such, it is very important for learning institutions teaching Clothing and Textiles to pay particular attention to the skill attainment of their graduates to enable them produce suitable clothing to meet the demanding needs of the Ghanaian society.

The wearing of clothing is exclusively a human characteristic and is a feature of most human societies. The amount and type of clothing worn depends on functional consideration such as need for covering of one's nakedness, warmth, safety, modesty and to reflect cultural and social meaning not forgetting portraying the aesthetic values of clothing.

On the other hand, textiles has traditionally meant "a woven fabric."The term comes from a Latin word" textere" meaning to weave. A textile is therefore a cloth which is either woven by hand or machine.

Fibers are the raw material for all fabrics into which cloths are sewn. Some fibers occur in nature as fine strands that can be twisted into yarns. These natural fibers come from plants, animals and minerals. For most of history, people had only natural fibers by chemical and technical means.

Some years ago sewing became part of the Home Economics programme. This is done by developing sewing skills, whether for fancy work or practical purposes. By the1960s, learning clothing construction skills was an important part of preparing young students particularly women for occupations related to Clothing and Textiles as well as for home making roles.

In the 21st century an emphasis on sewing skill has continued within exploratory or introductory courses at Junior and Senior Secondary School, and in advanced or career development courses at the tertiary levels in Ghana.

Despite the desire of the profession to eliminate the stereotype image of sewing, sewing from a technical perspective continues to be a predominant part of Clothing and Textiles course in the classroom. It is

essential therefore to reflect upon how learning experience such as sewing supports educational goals.

One major objective of Ghana's educational system is to equip individuals with employable skills to enable them contribute meaningfully towards the development of the nation. Consequently, the main aim of teaching Clothing and Textiles is to train students to acquire knowledge and skills in clothing production and management. Thus the Clothing and Textiles syllabus aims at providing students with the necessary experience that will develop their competencies in textiles selection and the use of clothing production and management (Ministry of Education, September 2008). Skills are the ability to do something expertly and well. It is an organized sequence of action, proficiently executed and usually displaying flexible but systematic temporal patterning (Orkorie, 2000). A skill or talent is the learned capacities to carry out pre-determined results often with the minimum outlay of time or energy. Knowledge is information processed by humans and put together contextually. Its proper use is always beneficial to human beings. The distinguished factor between knowledge and skill is that knowledge is contained in the head and skills are those that are done by the hand.

The study of clothing and textiles at the Senior High School level requires foundational study in Basic Design and Technology. The general objective of Clothing and Textiles studies is aimed at helping students to become aware of career opportunities in Textiles and Clothing and to be self employed.

Learning sewing construction skills is viewed as important to job preparation in the Clothing and Textiles industry. Practical learning experiences are emphasized as students apply the skills or techniques to make sewing samples or Textiles projects.

Teachers are considered as sewing experts who transmit knowledge to students. Curriculum model relies on direct instructional approaches in which the teacher describes or demonstrates the skill to be learnt and then lead students either as individuals or as a group through most of the instructional experiences.

However, many students who offer Clothing and Textiles at the second cycle institution and gain admission into the Polytechnics to pursue fashion lack certain basic skills in sewing. These first year students spend much time to learn the basic sewing skills all over again at the Polytechnic in order to be well prepared for the Fashion programme. This study therefore seeks to find out the causes of the production of unskilled graduates from the second cycle schools and measures to be taken to solve the problems.

Literature Review

According to the syllabus for teaching Clothing and textiles in the Senior High schools (2008), the Clothing and Textiles programme has been designed to offer skills that are terminal and can be put into immediate personal and business use. The programme covers the following areas:

- Career opportunities in the Textiles and Clothing industry.
- Study of fiber and fabrics.
- Selection, use and care of clothing and furnishing
- Sewing processes
- Repair and customizing
- Clothing design and construction
- Creative craft
- Consumer education
- Entrepreneurship

Functions of Clothing

Functionality is the primary purpose of clothing. Cloth enhances safety during hazardous activities, provides a barrier between the skin and the environment by keeping toxins away from the body and limiting the transmission of germs.

Furthermore, clothing performs a range of occupational and social functions. A uniform for example may identify civil authority figures such as police and military personnel or it may identify team group or political affiliation. (Flugel, 1976)

Cultural and Gender Differentiation of Clothing

In most cultures, gender differentiation of clothing is considered appropriate for men and women. The differences are in styles, colours and fabrics. In western societies, skirts dresses and high heeled shoes are usually seen as women's clothing, while neckties are usually seen as men's clothing. Trousers were once seen as exclusively male clothing but are nowadays worn by both genders. Male cloths are often more practical (that is they can function well under a wide variety of situations) but a wider range of clothing styles are available for females. (Hertig, 1969)

Social and Religious Aspects of Clothing and Textiles

According to Balter (2009), history provides many examples of elaborate sumptuary laws that regulate what people could wear. In societies without such laws which include most modern societies, social status is instead signaled by the purchase of rare or luxury items.

Some societies use clothing to indicate rank or status. In ancient Rome for example, only senators were permitted to wear garments dyed with Tyrian purple. In the traditional Hawaiian society, only high-ranking chiefs could wear feather cloak and palaoa or carved whale teeth. In China, before the establishment of the republic, only the emperor could wear yellow.

Religious clothing might be considered a special case of occupational clothing. Sometimes it is worn only during the performance of religious ceremonies. However, it may also be worn everyday as a marker for special religious status.

Sewing Process

Anawalt (2007) defined sewing as the craft of fastening or attaching objects using stitches made with a needle and thread. Sewing is a fundamental process underlining a variety of textiles arts and crafts, including embroidery, tapestry, quilting, appliqué and patchwork.

For thousands of years, all sewing was done by hand. The invention of the sewing machine in the 19th century and the rise of computerization in the later 20th century led to the mass production of sewn objects. But hand sewing is still practised around the world. Fine hand sewing is a characteristic of high- quality tailoring, haute couture fashion, and custom dressmaking, is pursued by both textile artists and hoppyists as a means of creative expression.

Pattern and Garment Technology

According to Aldrich (1950), technology is defined as a technical method of achieving a practical purpose or the systematic treatment of an art in clothing industry. To her, garment requires technology to convert it into a finished product.

Humans have shown extreme inventiveness in devising clothing solutions to various environmental needs. Some examples include space suit, air- condition clothing, diving suit, swimsuit, bee-keeping gear, high visibility clothing and other pieces of protective clothing.

In the thousands of years that humans have spent constructing clothing, they have created an astonishing array of styles, many of which have been reconstructed from surviving garment, photos, painting, mosaic etc as well as from written descriptions.

Cookling (1991) stated that garment construction is a traditional technique and appreciates the construction of well- proportionate attire ensuring a better understanding of the mechanical development. Different cultures have evolved various ways of creating clothes out of fabric.

Aldrich (1950) also viewed pattern drafting as an existing craft. It is simple if the basic techniques involved in drafting are well-fitted and proportionally connected to block pattern along with adjustments and adaptations of these patterns to create stylist and fashionable apparel. Pattern represents a garment developed in various sections including shapes. Shapes include seam and hem allowances, grain lines, sizes, notches, placement for buttons and button-hole and pockets etc (Holman, 1991). From Bray's (1986), point of view pattern must be planned against the background of many practical considerations such as size, shape, posture fabric weight, texture and width for the purpose.

Fashion lllustration

According to Danto (1950), fashion illustration is a form of stylish drawing. It seeks to communicate not only an artist's representation, but sense of style. This helps to develop the ability of a designer to draw in a variety of angles and poses. lreland (1992) emphasized that fashion illustration is to promote design in skill sewing.

Methodology

The research was conducted among three public Senior High Schools and a tertiary institution in Ho in Ghana namely: Mawuli, OLA and Mawuko Senior High Schools.

Mawuli Senior High school has a population of 132 students offering Home Economics out of which only 15 are offering Clothing and Textiles. In OLA Senior High School, 60 students are offering Home Economics. Out of this number, 10 are offering Clothing and Textiles. Mawuko Girls has 28 students offering Home Economics out of that figure, 10 are offering Clothing and Textiles. Ho Polytechnic is one of the tertiary institutions located in Ho. It has a student population of five thousand (5000) out of this figure 216 students are offering fashion and out of the 216 students, 30 are in the first year.

A total of 85 respondents were used for the research. Sixty-five (65) respondents were made up of Clothing and Textiles students from the second cycle institutions and twenty (20) being teachers from the various institutions

used. Purposive sampling was used to select the respondents. The research generated both qualitative and quantitative data with results presented in tables and percentages form. In all, 85 questionnaire copies were administered and 83 were retrieved.

The questionnaire was structured for respondents to provide information on:

- Tools and equipment needed for teaching and learning the Clothing and Textiles course at the second cycle institution.
- Whether teachers in second cycle schools are very knowledgeable to teach the practical skills in Clothing and Textiles.
- Whether students are taught the requisite skills in Clothing and Textiles in the second cycle institution.
- Whether or not the first year Fashion students at the Polytechnic possess the requisite skills needed to undertake the Fashion programme.
- How to improve skills acquisition in Clothing and Textiles course in the second cycle institution.

Results and Discussions

Table 1: Democratic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Gender		
Male	4	4.8
Female	79	95.2
Total	**83**	**100**
Age		
15-20	47	56.6
21-30	30	36.1
30 and above	6	7.3
Total	**83**	**100**
Level of Education		
Second cycle Education	33	39.8
Technical	-	
Vocational	-	
Tertiary (Polytechnic)	30	36.1
Teacher	20	24.1
Total	**83**	**100**

Source: Field Data July, 2015

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of respondents used. More female (95.2%) participated in the study than males which points to the fact that more females are interested in the Clothing and Textiles than males. The result also points out that majority of the respondents were in the age bracket of 15 to 20 years which belongs to the youthful category. This is not surprising since the youth are the core group that needs to be well equipped with skills to enable them engage in youthful employment. In addition, most respondents were students of the second cycle (39.8%) and Polytechnic institutions (36.1%) and the rest are teachers of those institutions representing (24.1%).

Table 2: Students response whether they have enough personal tools to undertake the course in the Senior Secondary School

Response	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Yes	82	98.8
No	1	1.2
Total	**83**	**100**

Source: Field Data July, 2015

The table above shows that 82 respondents have personal basic tools to undertake the course which represents 98.8% and 1 said no which represents 1.2 %. This means majority of the students have the basic tools to enable them undertake the course.

Table 3: Types and Quantities of Tools, and Equipment Available at the Second Cycle Institutions

Tools and Equipment	Frequency
Sewing Machine	40
Pressing Iron	5
Ironing board	25
Mirror	2
Dummy	1
Cutting Table	10
Scissors	56
Seam Ripper	20
Tracing wheel	3
Cutter	4
Computer	0

Source: Field Data July, 2015

The table above shows the equipment the institutions have to enable students undertake the course. Majority of the respondents agreed that they have equipment at their institutions but not enough to cater for every student and mentioned the following equipment: sewing machine 40, pressing iron 5, ironing board 25, mirror 2, dummy1,and cutting out table 10, scissors 20, tracing wheel 3 and cutter 4 computer 0. According to the table, majority of the students are of the opinion that the students have equipment but some of the equipment are insufficient for each student to have one to herself for a meaningful practical lesson and they also lack modern equipment like computers.

Table 4: Indications of What Students Can Do in the Skill Component of Clothing and Textiles

Skill Component of Clothing and Textiles	Frequency	Percentage
Stitches	5	6.0
Seams	15	18
Facing	10	12.1
Edge Finishes and disposal of fullness	10	12.1
Opening and Fastening	3	3.6
Specimen work	35	42.2
Fixing collars sleeves/Pockets	2	2.4
Pattern drafting	1	1.2
Use of Commercial Patterns	2	2.4
Cutting out skills	-	-
Total	**83**	**100**

Source: Field Data July, 2015

Table 4 above indicates what students can do as far as skill component of clothing is concerned. 35 representing (42.2) which is the highest can do specimen work while 15 can work on seams. Those who can work on facing, edge finishes and disposal of fullness are of the same number forming the same percentage which is 10 (12%). Those who can work on opening and fastening had the 3.6%. Pattern drafting, usage of commercial pattern and cutting out skills had the lowest percentage of 1.2, 2.4and 0% respectively. This shows that more attention should be paid to those areas that had the least percentages to improve on the skill component of the teaching of Clothing and Textiles in the second cycle institutions in Ghana.

Table 5: Students' problems in Clothing Construction

Problem	Frequency	Percentage
How to handle sewing machine	35	42.2
Pattern drafting	43	51.8
Stitching	5	6.0
Total	**83**	**100**

Source: Field Data July, 2015

From table 5 above it is very clear that the problematic area in the learning of Clothing and Textiles in the second cycle institution is the handling of the sewing machine and pattern drafting which are all practical skills which need to be acquired in order to produce a successful garment.

Table 6: Areas respondents think should be given more attention

Areas	Frequency	Percentage
Use of Commercial Pattern	3	3.6
Cutting out Skills	12	14.5
Pattern Drafting	30	36.1
Drawing and illustration	15	18.1
Garment Construction	20	24.1
Good Grooming	1	1.20
Millinery and Accessories	2	2.4
Total	**83**	**100**

Source: Field Data July, 2015

According to table 6, thirty (30) respondents forming the majority indicated that pattern drafting should be given much attention 20 also said garment construction should be paid attention to and 12 and 15 respondents mentioned cutting out skills and drawing and illustration to be given attention respectively. Only one respondent said good grooming needs attention and 2 agreed to the fact that millinery and accessory need some attention. This confirms the fact that pattern drafting and garment construction which form the major skill component of Clothing and Textiles is not given much attention as such students lack skills in those areas.

Table 7: Taking accurate body measurement before preparing pattern.

Body Measurement	Frequency	Percentage
Students Knowledge on taking body measurement	22	26.5
Avoiding waste of fabric	30	36.1
Ensuring proper garment construction	20	24.1
Cutting out skills	11	13.3
Total	**83**	**100**

Source: Field Data July, 2015

Twenty-five (22) respondents demonstrated their understanding in taking body measurement. Thirty (30) respondents stated that taking accurate body measurement avoids wastage of fabric. Twenty-two (20) respondents said taking accurate body measurement ensures proper garment construction. Eleven (11) respondents said cutting out skills must accompany taking accurate body measurement to ensure good garment construction. The table suggests that only 22 out of 83 respondents have any knowledge on taking body measurement. This supports the fact that most of the students in the second cycle institutions are not knowledgeable in taking accurate body measurement.

Table 8: Students' skill in pattern drafting and garment construction.

Skills	Frequency	Percentage
No skill in pattern drafting	45	54.2
No skill in garment construction	25	30.1
No skill in pattern marks	13	15.7
Total	**83**	**100**

Source: Field Data July, 2015

The study revealed that most respondents constituting (54.2%) can theoretically define pattern drafting but cannot demonstrate any skill in it. Concerning garment construction, 25 respondents stated that they cannot construct garment properly and thirteen (13) cannot transfer pattern marks. This implies that students need to spend more practical hours in those areas to improve on skills acquisition in the Senior High Schools.

Table 9: Recommendations from teachers about how to address problems of skills acquisition in Clothing and Textiles at the Second Cycle Institution.

Recommendation	Frequency	Percentage
More theory lesson hours	2	10
More practical teaching hours allocated for skill content of pattern drafting and garment construction.	18	90
Total	**20**	**100**

Source: Field Data July, 2015

According to the table, two (2) teachers found that the theoretical aspect of the Senior High School syllabus is inadequate. Most of the teachers however would like more hours to be allocated to the teaching of skills content of the subject.

Table 10: Views from Higher National Diploma (HND) Fashion students about the level of skills acquired in Clothing and Textiles in Second Cycle Institutions attended

Views	Frequency	Percentage
High Level Skills	18	21.7
Low level Skills	65	78.3
Total	**83**	**100**

Source: Field Data July, 2015

The table above shows that 18 (21.7) said skill levels of students are high, 65 (78.3) said skill levels of students are low. This points to the fact that level of practical skills acquired in Clothing and Textiles at the second cycle schools is very low which means that they were not well prepared for the HND Fashion programme.

Table 11: Recommendations from HND Fashion students on how to improve SHS Clothing and Textiles syllabus

Recommendations	Frequency	Percentage
Less Theory	5	6.0
More Theory	4	4.8
Increase Teaching Hours	56	67.5
Increase practical Hours	17	20.5
Less Practical work	1	1.2
Total	**83**	**100**

Source: Field Data July, 2015

According to the table above, more practical work and increased teaching hours were recommended to improve upon acquisition of skills in the Clothing and Textiles programme at the Senior High School.

Discussion on findings

The sample used for the study was divided into three groups of respondents. They were:

- Senior High Schools offering Clothing and Textiles in Ho Township.
- Teachers who teach Clothing and Textiles in Senior High Schools in Ho.
- Higher National Diploma (HND) students offering Clothing and Textiles in Ho Polytechnic.

The findings were discussed on the above mentioned categories according to responses.

Senior High School Clothing and Textiles Students' Response

The results indicated that most of the Senior High School students offering clothing and textiles did not have the basic knowledge about the programme before entering the Schools. Also, majority did not have the basic tools and equipment for learning the skills. Although they know them, they do not have some of them.

The students also agreed that in addition to theoretical knowledge, they were not taught enough sewing skills which involve how to handle sewing machines in making the following: stitches, seams, disposal of fullness, edge finishes, fixing of sleeves, collars, pockets, working of opening and fastening. The acquisition of the skills mentioned above will surely equip students with employable skills to enable them contribute meaningfully towards the development of the nation which are the major objectives of teaching Clothing and Textiles at the Senior Secondary School level.

The level of skill acquired in Clothing and Textiles in the Senior High Schools is another best way of upgrading students to acquire marketable skills and to provide the foundation for further studies in areas of Clothing and Textiles.

Furthermore, the findings indicated that skills in pattern drafting, cutting out and the use of commercial pattern is very low but these areas happen to be the key foundation in garment construction. This supports what Chutter (1995) said that pattern drafting is a practical skill in which theory provides the least help.

Response from teachers teaching Clothing and Textiles in Senior High Schools

The teachers pointed out that skill content of Clothing and Textiles syllabus is inadequate. They recommended that practical teaching hours in pattern drafting, garment construction and cutting out be increased. They also said that courses like millinery and accessories and fashion illustration be introduced into the syllabus. According to the teachers, when more hours are allocated for more practical skills, teachers will have enough time to take students through practical work because teachers are considered experts to transmit knowledge to students. From their point of view, there is the need to acquire modern equipment like computers to help them teach the computer aided pattern drafting. The teachers also mentioned that as time goes on, there is the need for them to go for refresher courses to be abreast with modern methods of teaching.

Response from students offering Higher National Diploma (HND) Fashion at Ho Polytechnic

The response from first year students offering HND Fashion at Ho Polytechnic showed that they were not adequately prepared in the acquisition of skills in Clothing and Textiles at the Second Cycle Institution before entering the tertiary level. This was due to the fact that, limited time was allocated for teaching them practical skills like pattern drafting and garment construction. As a result of that they find it difficult to understand pattern technology, garment technology and Fashion illustration at the Polytechnic which are the major courses that lead to skill acquisition in the Fashion programme.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that effective teaching of the Clothing and Textiles subject in the Second Cycle Institutions enhances the understanding level of the newly admitted HND fashion students to a large extent. It is therefore recommended that adequate preparation is given to such students to facilitate their easy understanding of the basic principles of fashion when they are admitted into the Tertiary Institution. Additionally, practical teaching hours in drafting, garment construction and cutting-out components of the Clothing and Textiles syllabus should be increased. When this is done, the teachers will have enough time to take students through practical training. Also, there is the need to acquire modern equipment like computers to help teach computer aided pattern drafting.

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