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The Difference between the Skills Graduates Acquired during Training at the Polytechnics and the Performance Expectations of the Globalized Fashion Industries

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Abstract:

One of the key determinants of a dynamic and self-reliant economy is the responsiveness and relevance of the educational system to the developments required in the industrial sector of the economy. Relevance is an issue where academic institutions and their products are more obsessed with certification than with passing on employable knowledge and practical skills, and where graduates have difficulty creating or finding jobs for which they are purportedly trained to function in. The study was designed to determine the competency levels of graduates of the fashion design programme from the various polytechnics in Ghana. The sample size was made up of 20 graduates, each from the five HND-running polytechnics making a total of 100 respondents snowballed for the study. Questionnaire was used to collect data, and results were tested using Means. Based on the findings, a country-wide roll-out of the CBT programme in the polytechnics was recommended, and that trends in globalization should be made to inform instruction in the CBT programme at the polytechnics.

Keywords: Globalized fashion industries, competency-based training (CBT), globalization, competencies, economy

1. Introduction

Abbot (1996) said that relevance is an issue where academic institutions and their products are more obsessed with certification than with passing on employable knowledge and practical skills, and where graduates have difficulty finding jobs for which they are purportedly trained to function in.

As observed by other scholars in West Africa (Uwujaren in Wovenu, 2007; Omeje in Wovenu, 2007), one of the key determinants of a dynamic and self-reliant economy is the responsiveness and relevance of the educational system, in this regard, tertiary education, to the developments in the industrial sector of the economy. The relaxed approach to the development of the economy which has occasioned a myriad of private initiatives, without same happening to the educational system would in all likelihood, promote only the growth of the economy thereby aggravating the gap between industry and education (Ukaegbu & Agunwamba in Wovenu, 2007).

Uwujaren, in Wovenu, (2007) states that notwithstanding the increasing numbers of universities and polytechnics in Africa, it is apparent that the reciprocal impacts existing between higher education and industries especially in the areas of development and utilization of skilled labour have not been meaningfully investigated. Obviously, the original objective of producing graduate manpower to power and sustain apparel manufacturing industries is being compromised (Longe in Wovenu, 2007).

For example, in a cross-sectional survey conducted in selected industries, Ukaegbu, in Wovenu, (2007) found that Nigerian Scientists and engineers employed in various sectors of the economy were evidently under-utilized, and fashion professionals trained at the polytechnics were generally not seen working in the apparel industries. The reason, according to Adamtey (2004), is partly that their educational training in schools does not harmonize with the imperatives of technological achievement in the industries. More often, expatriates and technicians are preferred over graduates of higher education especially under circumstances of imported technology, and the clothing industry also relies more on operatives trained under apprenticeship programmes rather than the fashion graduates.

Different studies carried out under the structural adjustment dispensation in some parts of Africa have however, demonstrated that industries are increasingly relying on home-groomed skilled labour despite any lapses in experience and training owing to cost-benefit and on-the-job performance considerations (Adamtey, 2004). Consequently, the phenomena of re-examination of prospective graduate employees (that is, administering written examination on specialised subjects as opposed to mere oral interviews) and internal training or re-training of recruited manpower by various firms appear to have grown extraordinarily since the advent of the structural adjustment programme (Ukwu in Wovenu, 2007). This observation holds for both non-technical and technical manpower. More critically perhaps, contemporary higher education in Ghana does not seem to be responding effectively to the manpower and technological needs of the clothing manufacturing industries including the use of new technologies by higher educational institutions (Adamtey, 2004). McCabe (2010) states that training for job-entry and employability go beyond skill development. They have

implications for personal qualities and career needed by employers. Employability is not the same as gaining a job; rather it implies something about necessary attributes and capacity of the graduate to function and be successful in a job and be able to move between jobs, thus remaining employable throughout their life.

In a global economy where the most important saleable skill is the knowledge you have acquired, a good education is no more just a pathway for creating opportunities -- it is an obligation and a prerequisite (US Dept of Education, 2010). Lindstrom et al (2007) confirm that the fundamental objective of a free relevant public education is to train the youth for employment, further education, and self-reliance. Unlike in the higher educational sector where most students enroll in a course with the purpose of obtaining a qualification, in the VET sector lots of students aim at completing just some specific modules of the course with the sole objective of acquiring specific skills (Foyster, Hon & Shah 2000). Technical and vocational skills are usually defined by way of the skill standards, or those knowledge and skills required for performing competently when demonstrating responsibilities connected with the workplace (Stone, 2009). In this regard, most empirical studies on technical and vocational skill assessments have centred on workplace outcomes. These studies centred on assessments as predictors of occupational competency and earnings in industry. Much of the studies explored the relationship between individuals' assessment scores and their chances of subsequent employment, job performance, and earnings (McCabe 2010).

In a case study conducted by Warmbrod, in Wovenu (2007), it has been observed that some people pursue a vocational programme just to increase their proficiency in a job while others choose vocational programmes as a way of preparing for creation of a job. Coster & Poplin, in Wovenu (2007), in commenting on goals and evaluation claim that the objective of employability demands firstly that students who complete the polytechnic system, are equipped either to create a job, enter a job, or are prepared for further education.

The survival of society is largely dependent on work. It is not important just as efforts made, but also for what it offers to a developing society. However, Milliken, in Wovenu (2007) supports the view that the individual finds identity through work. As said by Wovenu (2007), placement of polytechnic fashion graduates in the occupations for which they were trained tangibly measures the success of the fashion education process. Miller & Budke, in Wovenu (2007) also agrees with the view that job placement is the logical outcome of vocational education at the polytechnic level.

Allen, in Wovenu (2007) states out that success of fashion instruction is, to a large extent, dependent upon the curricula that reflect and answer to the present industrial and occupational demands, and suitable instructional practices. Allen explains that it is then that the knowledge and skills needed to go into and succeed in occupations are developed. He advises that fashion education should be, in all respect, founded on task analysis of the challenges in the clothing manufacturing industry. Further, fashion education should be practically efficient and not bookish and impractical. Allen's view was that in fashion education, practice and theory must go hand in hand to contribute to the learner's immediate success in the industry, and practical skills for self-reliance (Wovenu, 2007).

Changes in the workplace have demanded a variety of skills from workers. Business and industry are concerned with the exacerbating gap between the capabilities of high school graduates and the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind that employers look for (O'Neil, in Wovenu, 2007). The US General Accounting Office (GAO, 1993) found that the youth were poorly prepared for job-launch due to limited career guidance, poor academic preparation, and virtually no work experience. The lack of a comprehensive and effective transitional system has a negative impact on many students (Charner, 1996).

The American Vocational Association (1995) offered a structural explanation for school-to-work transition programmes by defining three basic components: school-centred learning, work-centred learning and their connecting activities. The association explained that the connecting activities close the gap between school and work-centred learning and facilitate the coordination of efforts between all parties involved. The problems employers face in engaging an extremely skilled workforce were reported by the Centre for Workplace Preparation (CWP) (1994). This report made several suggestions to help the youth make smooth transitions from school to work and for further learning. They suggested three fundamental elements that school-to-work transition programmes should stress in order to be effective. These include: (a) restructured classroom instruction based on a programme of career majors that integrate substantial work experiences into the curriculum, (b) classroom activities enhanced by structured learning experiences, and (c) strong symbiotic linkages between schools and employers. Further, the report proposed that schools start to view preparation of the youth for job entry as their integral responsibility and suggested that school heads must be completely committed to programme quality and high standards of performance for both students and teachers (CWP, 1994).

According to Warnar in Wovenu (2007), vocational educators are now being requested to review their programmes to offer occupational preparation at higher standards for entry-level skilled workers. Koffel in Wovenu (2007) suggested that education must offer the kinds of skills individuals require to succeed. To do this, Carnevale in Wovenu (2007) said that a thorough understanding of the workplace is essential.

The adoption of new technologies in the fashion industry has led to increased skill requirements needed to execute a myriad of tasks in the high performance industrial workplaces (Flynn in Wovenu, 2007). To prepare workers for the high performance workplace, U.S Department of Labour (1993) pointed out that vocational educators require deep understanding of what the workplace situation is today because failure could hamper production gains and economic growth. Wooldridge in Wovenu (2007) noted the existence of skills deficit and predicted a sharp and a major increase in demand for skilled workers in the global economy.

Wirth in Wovenu (2007) claimed that two divergent value systems drive modern society in confronting the challenges of post-industrial society: one is to mechanize and the other is to inform. In the mechanizing strategy, the workplace would employ computer-mediated technology to replace manual processes and managers would employ the new technology to execute commands and to control. In the information strategy, computer technology would create and share information enhancing collaboration between

workers and managers, and adding value to products and services. Sustainable economic and social welfare depends upon the development of a critical workforce that has the capability to learn, communicate, and solve problems collaboratively.

According to Berryman et al in Wovenu (2007), the skill requirements of a globalized economy call for a policy to educate students to develop the competencies needed for industrial jobs. Their report advocated a suitable model of instruction where work-based problems determine learning situations that integrate academic concepts with practical vocational learning activities. Workplaces in a globalized economy according to Filipezak in Wovenu (2007) need broader and more creative skills than ever before. Industrial organizations have come to recognize that they must get better trained workers if they are to survive globalization. Based on this, skill providers are stepping up their training and requesting higher entry level skills for all jobs (Hamilton, Kolberg, Smith, Bottoms, all in Wovenu, 2007).

In a study funded by The American Vocational Association (1995) to identify significant trends and issues of national importance for workforce preparation and determine their implications for vocational teacher preparation, a recommendation was made which underscored the fact that the development of a well-prepared workforce is an issue of critical concern for the nation today. Krieg et al in Wovenu (2007) emphasized the need for students to acquire a new set of skills to survive economically, politically, and socially. Nonetheless, the outcomes of these studies are accepted as direct reflections of the skills progressive employers seek in their employees. Carnevale et al in Wovenu (2007) maintain that high school graduates should enter the workplace with the academic and vocational skills that support employment and sustain their longevity as productive members in today's complex work environment. Cheek in Wovenu (2007) asserts that vocational and technical education is having difficulty keeping abreast with technological advancement. Consequently, he contends, employers are having rough time transferring new technologies into the work place, since their workforce lacks the skills and knowledge on which to anchor new learning experiences.

Recent evidence indicates that trade liberalization exacerbates wage gaps between the educated and the uneducated across the world (Oostendorp, 2004). From 1991 to 1995, wage gaps deepened for six nations of Latin America which recorded good wage data. Costa Rica was the exception because of relatively high education levels. Seemingly, the combination of globalized markets with technological change is increasing the demand for skilled labour faster than the rate of supply by the educational system (Oostendorp, 2004).

The effect of trade liberalization on inequality hinges on the degree to which a nation's comparative advantage lies in jobs, and on the degree to which education has been rising and is already largely shared. With Costa Rica's excellent education where a good proportion of the poor are engaged in small-scale coffee production, trade liberalization records equalizing effects. Whereas in Mexico, where the rural poor packed themselves in food production and education levels are low and unevenly shared, income fell between 1986 and 1996 for all excluding the richest, where it improved by 15% (Oostendorp, 2004). Unfortunately, Mexico is more characteristic than Costa Rica. For the country is likely going to increase inequality in the nearest future, because educational efforts are lagging behind and because the country's comparative advantage other than in Costa Rica and Uruguay is in capital-intensive rather than job-creating production (Oostendorp, 2004).

Latest financial crises have brought to the fore the instability connected with global capital markets resulting in compounding problems of inequality in developing countries (Oostendorp, 2004). For instance, high capital inflows cause inflation and harm labour-intensive exports especially in developing countries. In this situation, the poor benefited less during the boom, and then lost more heavily with the bust. During the bust, with capital running away, countries with high interest rates are compelled to impose to save their currencies, harm undersized capital-starved ventures and their low-earning workforce most, and in effect, cut down employment (Oostendorp, 2004). The risks that developing countries face come from the globalization and the market reforms that cause their integration into the global economy, exacerbating inequality and the social tensions connected with it. The risks would eventually exacerbate as they walk down the difficult transition to more transparent, competitive, and effectively organized economic systems with more extensive access to the benefits, specifically education guaranteeing equal access to market opportunities (Oostendorp, 2004).

Cross-cultural consumption is when a product is created in one country and consumed in another (Cvetkovich, 1997). The fashion industry has found itself on the threshold of globalization within the last ten years. Global businesses have studied the patterns of global consumption, and have expanded accordingly. Luxury global retailers such as Louis Vuitton, Prada, and Michael Kors have expanded reaching Asian consumers. The target market for these luxury brands is now Asia because of their quick economic development. For our global businesses to chalk up success across the globe, cultural branding strategy must be adopted for their target markets (Temporal, 2000). As the West is struggling to revitalize fragile economies, Milan, Paris, and New York are no more the leading fashion centers of global lavish spending since these brands have taken a cue on economic situations of several countries. As the economic situation of the west has gone down, luxury fashion business dealers have moved eastwards to Asia where the economy is pacing speedily (Jean-Noel & Bastien, 2012). While the US is struggling with towering unemployment situations, the luxury industry which flourished there previously is now going through some revolutions (Jean-Noel & Bastien, 2012).

Educational reform advocacies in the early part of the 21st centuries, such as No Child Left Behind legislation and the standards-based education, focused on raising teacher quality and academic achievement (ASCA, 2004). By the year 2000, the public educational system went through a number of changes, including a strong emphasis on the importance of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which mandated a strong focus on competency-based education and testing, as well as holding schools answerable for outcomes achieved (NCLB, 2002; Dahir, 2004; Dollarhide & Lemberger, 2006; Herr & Erford, 2011; Gysbers & Henderson, 2012).

Reforms, in most European countries such as Spain, the UK, Germany, and France, had been made to adapt vocational training to the increasing needs of the job market and the employment system. Changes concerning the structure of the labour market, technological innovations and improved methods of organizing work have required new knowledge and the development of competencies to meet

the challenges of globalization. Not only these but also, contingent upon the demand for new professional positions and the higher qualifications, vocational education and training systems obviously have had to be reviewed in order to completely provide an answers to current requirements in the wake of up-and-coming global developments (Tippelt, 2003).

Governments the world over are concerned with skill shortages, skill development, and skills mismatches. As with many other countries, Australia is seeking to increase its 'stock' of skills because they are considered intrinsic to innovation, competitiveness and productivity. Skills are also considered intrinsic to social inclusion as those without skill are marginalized from work, experience lower levels of health and well - being, and have less capacity to shape the major developments in their lives (Whelehan & Woodie, 2011).

So long as competencies are demonstrable and observable, they must be written accordingly. Precision must reflect from the assessment to bring out who is actually competent and not yet competent. Determining different levels of competency may be helpful. For instance, base level might comprise everyday activities performed by all learners. Then, higher levels would specify more complex, specialized or technical skills. The tempo of the training is based on the learner's role and what is expected of them, and also on their relevant entry skills. With competency-based approach, theory and skills are integrated. Relevant previous knowledge that learners bring along with them, and what is acquired during training, supports the performance of skill. Bruening and Scanlon (2001) found, in a survey verifying the most frequently utilized methods for teaching students that constructing meaningful tasks for instruction based on real-world problems emerged as having the best effective size. They advocated for the need to introduce more practical and innovative competency-based teaching methods for vocational and technical subjects. However, vocational and technical teachers` application of technology in the teaching depends largely on the importance individuals put on it, readiness to change, and previous training in technology (Kotrlik & Redmann, 2009). It is also essential to use technology to enhance instruction, not just for the sake of implementation (Fletcher et al, 2012).

With increasing challenges of globalization, elsewhere efforts are being made to adopt and develop CBT in order to swim with the masses. In Australia for instance, between the periods from the mid-1980s to 1996, the National Training Reform Agenda (NTRA) was compelled to improve the competitiveness of the Australian industry through strengthening Vocational Education and Training (VET) (NCVER 2009; Hughes & Cain, 2009). Conceding to this demand, the NTRA had as its objectives to introduce:

- Competency-based training of high quality.
 - Broadly based, more flexible and modular training programmes.
 - Consistency in training standards and certification
 - Effective articulation of off-the-job and on- the-job training and credit transfer.
 - National recognition of competencies, irrespective of how and where they were attained.
 - Open training markets
 - Equitable access to VET
 - Integrated entry-level training systems
- (Guthrie, in Hughes & Cain, 2009).

Even though the Federal Government motivation during the early years of the CBT developments, was human capital-orientated, enshrined in the cliché of maintaining global competitiveness through skills strengthening, there is the possibility for social capital outcomes occurring from the expanded engagement which CBT promotes (Hughes & Cain, 2009).

2. Findings

Institution	Frequency	Percent
Accra Polytechnic	20	20.0
Cape Coast Polytechnic	20	20.0
Ho Polytechnic	20	20.0
Kumasi Polytechnic	20	20.0
Takoradi Polytechnic	20	20.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 1: Categories of Respondents

Table 1 indicates the categories of graduate respondents involved in the study. There were 20 graduate respondents each from the five Polytechnics involved in the study.

Skills	VC		C		A		W		VW		Mean	Std Dev
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Dart physiology	0	0.0	0	0.0	16	16.0	83	83.0	1	1.0	2.15	0.386
Dart manipulations	3	3.0	19	19.0	68	68.0	10	10.0	0	0.0	3.15	0.626
Illustrations	2	2.0	7	7.0	86	86.0	5	5.0	0	0.0	3.06	0.445
Complex adaptations	3	3.0	29	29.0	64	64.0	4	4.0	0	0.0	3.31	0.598
Marker (mass cutting)	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	5.0	95	95.0	1.05	0.219
Lay-planning (customised)	20	20.0	47	47.0	32	32.0	1	1.0	0	0.0	3.86	0.739
Complex industrial cutters	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.0	99	99.0	1.01	0.100
Scissors (domestic cutters)	33	33.0	64	64.0	3	3.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.30	0.522
Garment production (mass)	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	11	11.0	89	89.0	1.11	0.314
Garment & Accessory (customized)	20	20.0	36	36.0	44	44.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3.76	0.767
Grand mean											2.94	

Table 2: Pattern, cutting, millinery and garment skills lessons in the Polytechnics
n = 100 Key: Very competent (5); Competent (4); Average (3); Very weak (2) and Weak (1).

Table 2 indicates the skill activities in pattern, cutting, and garment production and the degree of mastery on the part of the graduate respondents. A mean score between 4 - 5 indicates that the learner is skilful. The respondents rated their dart manipulation, illustrations, complex adaptations, and garment productions skills as *average*. They rated their skills on marker planning for mass cutting, the use of industrial cutters, and mass garment production as *very weak*. But on the whole, the overall mastery of the respondents regarding pattern, cutting and garment skills was just about *average*.

Skills	Always		Few times		Once		Never		Mean	Std Dev
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Organized exhibition of products	0	0.0	16	16.0	84	84.0	0	0.0	2.16	0.368
Fashion journalism	0	0.0	4	4.0	87	87.0	9	9.0	1.95	0.359
Effective communication of methods	0	0.0	15	15.0	84	84.0	1	1.0	2.14	0.377
Application of Fashion entrepreneurship	6	6.0	6	6.0	48	48.0	40	40.0	1.78	0.811
Promotional techniques for products	1	1.0	2	2.0	3	3.0	94	94.0	1.10	0.438
Attractive product packaging	2	2.0	4	4.0	2	2.0	92	92.0	1.16	0.581
E-marketing of products	1	1.0	1	1.0	0	0.0	98	98.0	1.05	0.359
Grand mean									1.62	

Table 3: Fashion marketing lessons in the Polytechnics
n = 100 Key: Always (4); Few times (3); Once (2) and Never (1)

Table 3 indicates the skill activities in fashion marketing and the frequency of their performance on the part of the graduate respondents. A mean score between 3 – 4 indicates that the learner is competent resulting from repeated performance of the activity. The overall mean score of about 2.0 indicates that mastery of fashion marketing skills was low.

Skills	Always		Few times		Once		Never		Mean	Std Dev
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Use of hemming machine during production	0	0.0	8	8.0	1	1.0	91	91.0	1.17	0.551
Use of basting machine during production	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	100	100.0	1.00	0.000
Used of industrial buttonholing machine	0	0.0	23	23.0	3	3.0	74	74.0	1.48	0.850
Use of industrial fusing machine	4	4.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	96	96.0	1.06	0.426
Hand application of fusing materials	88	88.0	6	6.0	0	0.0	6	6.0	3.79	0.689
Operation of industrial embroidery machine	4	4.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	96	96.0	1.12	0.591
Use of industrial cutting machines	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	100	100.0	1.00	0.000
Industrial pressers (not press irons)	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	100	100.0	1.00	0.000
Grand mean									1.45	

Table 4: Equipment / Machining skills in the Polytechnics
n = 100 Key: Always (4); Few times (3); Once (2) and Never (1)

Table 4 shows equipment and machining skills of the graduate respondents. The overall skill mastery level is very low (grand mean =1.45). Majority (88%) of graduate the respondents claimed they manually apply fusing materials during garment production. None has ever used industrial cutters and pressers during garment construction in the polytechnics.

Skills	VC		C		A		W		VW		Mean	Std Dev
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Computer-based illustration	0	0.0	0	0.0	9	9.0	2	2.0	89	89.0	1.20	0.586
Computer-based pattern drafting	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	100	100.0	1.00	0.000
Application of photo manipulators	0	0.0	1	1.0	9	9.0	5	5.0	85	85.0	1.26	0.661
Computerized embroidery	0	0.0	2	2.0	7	7.0	0	0.0	91	91.0	1.20	0.651
Grand mean											1.16	

Table 5: Software application skills in the Polytechnics
 n = 100 Key: Very competent (5); Competent (4); Average (3); Very weak (2) and Weak (1)

Table 5 shows software application skills in the polytechnics. Over here, the overall mastery level of the graduate respondents is very weak (grand mean = 1.16). Only 9% of the graduates placed their photo manipulation, and computer-based illustration skills at average level.

Skills	VC		C		A		W		VW		Mean	Std Dev
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Pedicure	0	0.0	1	1.0	15	15.0	19	19.0	65	65.0	1.52	0.785
Manicure	0	0.0	1	1.0	15	15.0	19	19.0	65	65.0	1.52	0.785
Hair styling	0	0.0	5	5.0	12	12.0	19	19.0	64	64.0	1.58	0.890
Plaiting and braiding	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	2.0	98	98.0	1.02	0.141
Facial art	1	1.0	9	9.0	7	7.0	17	17.0	66	66.0	1.62	1.023
Interior and exterior decoration	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	12	12.0	88	88.0	1.12	0.327
Grand mean											1.40	

Table 6 :Beauty culture skills in the Polytechnics
 n = 100 Key: Very competent (5); Competent (4); Average (3); Very weak (2) and Weak (1)

Table 6 shows beauty culture skills of the graduate respondents in the polytechnics. Majority (98%) of the graduate respondents claimed they were very weak at *plaiting and braiding*. The overall skill level of the graduate respondents is very low (very weak, i.e., grand mean = 1.40).

The grand mean (\bar{X}) for the five main skill areas in the curriculum of the polytechnics are as follows:

- a. Pattern, cutting, millinery and garment skills = 2.94
- b. Fashion marketing = 1.62
- c. Equipment and machine = 1.45
- d. Software application = 1.16
- e. Beauty culture skills = 1.40

Therefore, the mean of means

$$= \frac{\sum (g\bar{X}_1 + g\bar{X}_2 + g\bar{X}_3 + g\bar{X}_4 + g\bar{X}_5)}{5}$$

$$= 1.71$$

A mean score from 4 to 5 indicates a mastery level necessary for success in the globalized fashion industries. Since the overall skill level of the graduates from the various polytechnics, that is, mean of means (1.71) is less than 4 or 5, it can be seen that the competency level of polytechnic graduates is abysmal and, therefore, falls below expectations in the globalized industries.

3. Discussion

The main objective of polytechnic training is to equip learners with relevant employable skills for work and self-reliance (Afeti, 2005). In the globalized fashion industries, fashion designing has become computer-based. But the survey indicates that 89% of the graduate respondents rated their skills as very weak. All of them (100%) rated their computer-based pattern drafting as very weak. Majority of the graduate respondents (91%) also rated computerized embroidery skills as very weak. On the whole, the grand mean skills mastery level of the graduate respondents is 1.16, a score far less than the 4 to 5 needed to function successfully in the globalized fashion industry. These findings confirm Longe’s in Wovenu (2007) observation that the objective of higher school training to produce graduate’s manpower to maintain industries is being compromised.

The survey has revealed that the overall performance of the graduates in pattern, cutting, millinery and garment is just about average (i.e., grand mean score of 2.94). In this survey, findings have revealed that 83% of the graduates rated their skills in dart physiology as *weak*, whereas 89% rated themselves as *very weak* in mass garment production techniques. Majority of the respondents (95%) rated their skills in marker preparation for mass production as *very weak*. Further, in the case of fashion marketing, the grand mean score of the mastery level of the graduates is 1.62, indicating that their skills in this regard in not adequate enough for the challenges of globalization. Skills in *e-marketing* was very low ($\bar{x} = 1.05$). Skills in *attractive product* packaging was equally rated low ($\bar{x} = 1.16$). competencies in *fashion entrepreneurship* were rated at a mean value of 1.78. their competencies in *product promotional*

techniques were also equally rated at a mean value of 1.10. The competition at the global level is so keen that those operatives with competencies employers want would get the job.

The global beauty industry looks for nothing but skilled labour. The skill level of the graduates was rated at 1.40 (grand mean), indicating that the graduates were not ready for the challenges at the global level yet. In the apparel industry, modern equipment features prominently and anyone seeking for engagement there must be well conversant with the equipment being used. But findings revealed the competency level of the graduates at 1.45 grand mean score, far below the desired range of 4 to 5. A large number of the graduates (95%) never used the industrial hemmer before. Seventy-four percent (74%) never used the industrial buttonholing machine before, and 96% of the graduates never operated the industrial embroidery machine before, and have never used the industrial fusing machine before. All of them (100%) claimed that they never used any industrial cutting machine or industrial vacuum irons before. Their experiences with the industrial hemmers, the industrial basters, the industrial buttonholers, the industrial fusers, the industrial cutters, and the industrial pressers were all rated at a grand mean value of 1.45 far below the expectations necessary in the globalized fashion industries. The general average performance of the graduates in the five broad skills areas in the curriculum of the polytechnics was 1.71 (mean of means) which is *weak* and not strong enough for the global fashion industry.

4. Conclusion

The competency level of polytechnic graduates was not very encouraging and, therefore fell below the expectations in the globalized industries. Four out of the broad skill areas of training in the polytechnics recorded low mastery levels on the part of the graduate respondents. These were *fashion marketing* ($G \bar{X} = 1.62$), *Equipment and machining* ($G \bar{X} = 1.45$), *software application* ($G \bar{X} = 1.16$), and *beauty culture* (1.40) respectively.

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this survey, it is recommended that:

1. The curriculum of the training institutions should strictly be based on the CBT model to facilitate proper integration of all competencies enshrined in the programme.
2. Industrial expectations must be allowed to guide instructions at the training institutions.
3. The training institutions must be fully equipped to enable the learners acquire the necessary experiences needed for industrial practice.
4. There should be a strong symbiotic relationship between the training institutions and industry to enable timely inputs based on trends in globalization from industry into the instructional curriculum of the training institutions.

6. References

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