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Teaching Of Fashion And Textiles Studies In Ghanaian Tertiary Institutions

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Abstract:

One of the expectations of Graduates of Fashion and Textile Studies Education in the tertiary institutions in Ghana is to enter into gainful employment with the carrier and technical training they have acquired. Lecturers' effectiveness with regards to the teaching and learning processes in tertiary institutions offering this programme is very vital. This paper therefore sought to evaluate the teaching of Fashion and Textiles Studies programme at the tertiary level and find feasible strategies that can be added to the existing strategies as complementary for the improvement of lecturers' effectiveness. The study employed the qualitative research approach and made use of observation and interview as the main research instruments for data collection. The sampling frame composed of Fashion and Textile Studies lecturers and students in Ashanti, Central and Western regions of Ghana. The study revealed among other things that, lecturers use lecture, demonstration, practical and field trips as the main method for teaching, and in order to facilitate and influence learning in students they support teaching activities with instructional materials, exercises, quizzes, test, and assignments. Other instructional techniques that the study found to be very effective, like, role play, contract plan and team teaching have been suggested and their effectiveness in teaching and learning have been discussed to draw conclusions and recommendations.

Keywords: *Effective teaching, learning, education, fashion, textile.*

1.Introduction

Education is a key to the development of every individual, the society and the nation as a whole. Barrow and Wood (1997) describe education as a process that involves the transmission of worthwhile things to individuals in a morally accepted manner. Brown, Oke, and Brown (1985) state that the main objective of education is to bring positive change to learners and the society in general. Societies expect all individuals to be educated and to use what they acquire through education to earn a living as well as contribute to the national development. In Ghana the highest terminal point of education is the tertiary level. For this reason, lecturers teaching in the tertiary institutions, especially, technical and vocational career oriented education like fashion and textiles, are expected to equip students with key skills and knowledge that will make their graduates employable. The researchers' willingness to contribute positively toward the improvement of the effectiveness of their teaching is what informed this study which seeks to evaluate the teaching of Fashion Design and Textiles Studies in the tertiary institutions of Ashanti, Central and Western Regions of Ghana and suggests feasible strategies that can be adopted to foster effective teaching and learning of the programme. The Fashion and Textiles Studies programme is vocational and technical based, therefore, the students are expected to be trained and equipped with employable skills, competencies and knowledge that will make them capable of fulfilling the manpower needs of the nation to earn a meaningful living and contribute to the improvement of the socio-economic development of the nation. To achieve this, the government of Ghana is increasingly envisaging skills development of the citizens as an important factor contributing towards enhancing productivity, stimulating economic competitiveness as well as taking people out of poverty (Amankwa, 2007).

Specialized career and technology oriented courses taught under the Fashion and Textiles Studies programme include; Pattern Technology, Garment Technology, Fashion Drawing and Illustration, Textiles, Creative Design and Working Drawings, Millinery and Dress Accessories, Clothing Production Technology, History of Fashion, Beauty Care and Culture, Fashion Marketing and Merchandizing, Industrial Attachment, Business Law and Projects (Accredited syllabus for HND Fashion Design and Textiles Technology, 2007). Currently, special emphasis is being put on the study of Technical and Vocational Education at the tertiary level with the hope that, relevant and key skills would be acquired to enable graduates from such institutions contribute to the socio-

economic development and progress of the nation (Amankwah, 2007; Ministry of Education, 2003).

Writing on concept of teaching and learning Olaitan (1994) describe teaching as an attempt to bring about desirable changes in human abilities and behaviours. Farrent (1990) affirms that teaching is a process that facilitates and enhances change in behaviour of learners adding that it requires someone with a professional skill to transfer skills and knowledge to learners. These writers express a common view that, teaching brings a change in behaviour of the individual. Studio activities such as demonstration and practical works that involves development of psychomotor skills are important examples of strategies that bring about change in behaviour of a student (Cock and Hughes, 1995). Brown et al (1985) attests that the principal stakeholders involved in the teaching and learning activities are the teacher and the learner. It is the teacher who imparts the knowledge, skills and competencies to students, and it is the students' duty to acquire these and make meaningful use of them. Hence, the teacher's ultimate task is to influence and facilitate effective learning in students.

Farrant (1990) asserts that the behaviour of teachers in the classroom finally determines the achievement of the goals of education with contention that an effective teacher is the one who adopts and uses techniques that facilitate and enhance learning in students therefore acting like a catalyst actively stimulating learning. The effectiveness of the teacher as seen by Cock and Hughes (1995) depends on the application and transfer of technical and professional skills, knowledge and competencies to the learner and the management of the learning environment. Entwistle (1996) contends that the demand for teaching in higher education involves deep-learning processes which require lecturers to set clear and precise aims and objectives with better understanding of the knowledge and skills they transfer. In lecturers should be conversant with how to transfer them to satisfy learners' needs. Blankenship and Moercher (1979) establish that, instructional strategies and materials that lecturers use account for their success. They emphasize that, lecturers who use greater variety of instructional techniques and support their teaching with instructional materials are more likely to promote greater learning among students. This suggests that lecturers' variability and clarity are what characterize higher degree of students' learning. It is noted that students are expected to have learnt when they have experienced permanent change in their understanding, attitudes, knowledge, abilities and skills. Thus, in every learning situation, the learner should consciously or unconsciously exhibit competence and capabilities which he did not possess prior to the learning

experience (Chavhan, 1991; Wright, 1991; Blege, 1986) It is evident from the foregoing discussion that, lecturers must be knowledgeable, have greater understanding of what students should learn, set clear and achievable aims and objectives, choose and use varieties of appropriate and suitable teaching techniques and materials to achieve effective teaching and learning.

2.Methodology

The study made use of interview, observation and questionnaire as the main data collecting instruments. The questionnaire, interview guide, and the observational check list were designed to collect specific information in the following areas:

- Qualification of the staff teaching the programme in the target institutions.
- Teaching or instructional methods used by lecturers for teaching.
- How lecturers influence and facilitate the learning process in students.
- Students' perception on teaching strategies used by lecturers that facilitate and influence them to learn successfully.
- Teaching strategies that can foster effective teaching of the programme.

3.Population And Sampling

The target population for the study comprises lecturers and students from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KUNST), University of Education, Winneba (UEW) - Kumasi Campus, and Cape Coast, Kumasi and Takoradi Polytechnics. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting 25 respondents for the study. The 25 sampled respondents were made up of five lecturers from KNUST, three (3) from UEW, eight (8) from Takoradi Polytechnic, five (5) from Kumasi Polytechnic, and four (4) from Cape Coast Polytechnic. In addition, it became necessary for students views to be sought and used as complementary data for the study. Hundred (100) copies of questionnaire were administered to students offering Fashion and Textiles Studies of the selected institutions out of which 96 were retrieved for data analysis. This comprised 40 students from KNUST, 11 from UEW, 13 from Takoradi Polytechnic, 10 from Kumasi Polytechnic, and 22 from Cape Coast Polytechnic.

4.Results And Discussion

The results of the study are presented and analysed descriptively with figures and tables to draw conclusions and recommendations made toward effective teaching of the Fashion and Textiles Studies programmes.

5.Qualification Of The Staff Teaching The Programme In The Target Institutions

Results in Table 1 show that, one out of the 25 respondents holds a Masters Degree in Fashion Design, one holds Master of Design in Textiles and Fashion, two hold MSc Textiles Technology, one holds MSc Clothing and Textiles, two hold MPhil Home Economics, and three hold BEd. Vocational/Technical, three hold MFA Textile Design, two hold M.Ed. Management, three hold BEd Home Economics, five hold MA Art Education, and two hold BA Industrial Art (Textiles).

The Highest Qualification of Respondents	Freq.	(%)
M.A. Fashion	1	4
M. Des. (Textiles and Fashion)	1	4
M.Sc. Textiles Technology	2	8
M.Sc. Clothing and Textiles	1	4
MPhil Home Economics	2	8
BEd. Vocational Technical	3	12
MFA Textile Design	3	12
MEd. Management	2	8
BEd. Home Economics	3	12
MA Art Education	5	20
BA Industrial Art (Textiles)	2	8
Total	25	100%

Table 1: The qualification of respondents

Source: Field Survey (2010)

It is evident that majority of the respondents had masters degrees which is the required qualification for appointment as lecturers to teach in their respective institutions. However, the current requirement that stresses on having masters and preferably doctorate degree in the area of specialization makes such qualifications not ideal for effective teaching of Fashion Design and Textiles Studies at the tertiary level. It was

noticed that, this situation has been the case as it is arguably difficult for the institutions to get lecturers with specializations in fashion and textiles courses like Fashion Drawing and Illustration, Pattern Technology, Garment Technology, Textile Design, among others, to handle these courses effectively. Hence, consideration was given to individuals with related qualifications in area of study. Arkhurst (2011) describes this situation as a biggest challenge that impinges effective teaching. Arguably universities in Ghana were not offering higher programmes, especially degrees in both bachelor and master's degrees in fashion design and textiles studies. It is quite recently that KNUST and UEW have started the MFA Textile Design and VOTECH respectively. This notwithstanding, there are still challenges as the study observed that the fashion design and textile technology areas have inadequate lecturers to teach the courses involved. The research team therefore contend that, effectiveness of these teachers will be minimal. This brings to light the assertion made by Entwistle (1996) that, the assumption that anyone with a good degree will automatically be able to impart knowledge to others is completely incorrect.

It should be clarified that the study of Fashion Design and Textiles Studies does not only involve acquisition of academic qualification, but also the acquisition of skills and competencies to produce quality products. Students are expected to have key skills in creativity and innovation, flair to produce new variants of clothing and textile designs, ability to research, absorb and synthesize ideas and skills, and the talent of being good entrepreneurs (Jones, 2002; Granger and Sterling, 2003). Being a lecturer of this programme requires you to have a complete knowledge and understanding of what to teach and the ability to teach it well to elicit your effectiveness (Entwistle, 1996). The research team therefore expect the authorities of tertiary institutions to recruit experienced lecturers with relevant qualifications in the subject areas to teach these courses for effectiveness.

6. Teaching Methods Used By Lecturers Of Fashion And Textiles Studies

Findings in Table 2 indicate that all the 25 lecturers make use of lecture method whereas 20 lecturers use discussion method for teaching. Fifteen lecturers use demonstration, while 18 involve their students in practical lessons. In addition, 7 lecturers engage students in field trips. However, students' perception on effective teaching methods differs considerably as indicated in Table 3 where only 3 out of 96 students as indicated that lecture method encouraged them to learn. Moreover, all the 96 respondents noted

that the use discussion method by lecturers encourage them to learn. Seventy students attested that demonstration method encouraged them to learn with 72 indicating that they were encouraged to learn when they are engaged in practical lessons.

Method	Freq.	(%)
Lecture	25	100
Discussion	20	80
Demonstration	15	60
Practical (Experiment and laboratory work)	18	72

Table 2: Multiple responses of methods used by lecturers for the teaching of Fashion and Textiles Studies

Source: Field Survey (2010)

Method	Freq.	(%)
Lecture	3	3.2
Discussion	96	100
Demonstration	70	73
Practical	72	76

Table 3: Multiple responses by students on teaching methods that encourage them to learn

Source: Field Study (2010)

Inferring from Table 2, it is evident that lecture is the most commonly used teaching method by Fashion and Textiles Studies lecturers. Entwistle (1996) argue that, although the lecture method is convenient for higher education as it could reach a larger number of students and provide wider range of information which may not be easily available for students at a given time, it makes lecturers the sole participants and directors of the lesson and as a result discouraged learning in students. Incidentally, only 3 out of the 96 students chose lecture as the teaching method that encourages them to learn (Table 3). This notwithstanding, the results in Table 2 show 80% of lecturers making use of the discussion method, it is therefore noticed that these lecturers combined lecture with discussion method in teaching. Only 20% employs lecture method only. However, since the students responses shows that they are encouraged to learn when their lecturers use discussion method, the combination of lecture and discussion methods used by the lecturers is commendable since effective teaching and learning can be achieved. This

affirms the fact that teachers' effectiveness is achieved through a combination of lecture and discussion strategies (Brown et al, 1985; Wright, 1991).

It also found from Table 2 that, most of lecturers did not use demonstration method for teaching. It must be noted that, in every aspect of Fashion Design and Textiles Studies, there should be high level practical lessons as the programme is career and technology oriented. Students are expected to acquire employable skills to make them fit into the fashion and textile industries. Demonstration lessons are very important in this regard, thus, while lecturers demonstrate, students see and get to know what is expected of them in the field of their own practice and products development (Brown et al, 1985). Through demonstration lessons, students are assisted to understand some difficult terms and new techniques thereby making the learning packages real to them. It also motivates students to have the desire to learn many essential skills. (Entwistle, 1996; Blege, 1986). These positive learning attributes are confirmed by students' responses in Table 3 where 73% of the students affirm that they are able to learn and understand the lessons better when lecturers used demonstration method in teaching. Demonstration must be followed by practical lesson to enable students to conduct and experience things themselves through conversion of the knowledge acquired into practicality. Dearing (1997) emphasizes that practical lesson is geared towards skill acquisition; lecturers should therefore plan their demonstration lessons clearly to capture majority of the objective set for the lessons to promote skill training. The study reveals that (Table 2) not all the lecturers incorporate practical work in their lessons though 76% of the students hold the view that (Table 3) they learn well when lecturers engage them in practical work. Dearing (1997) establishes the fact that lecturers who conduct demonstrations and assist students to do personal practical and studio works make their teaching more effective. Based on this, lecturers of Fashion Design and Textile Studies must devote greater part of their teaching periods to skill training that will assist individual student to be engaged and acquired personal and employable skills that will promote them to gain job opportunities in the world beyond the classroom. From the foregoing discussion, the research team concludes that lecturers of Fashion Design and Textile Studies who combine two or more teaching methods including demonstration and practical lessons are likely to be more successful and effective than their counterparts who use only one teaching method.

7. Techniques Used By The Lecturers To Incite Learning In Students

Table 4 shows that 18 of the lecturers use instructional materials to support their teaching as a means of influencing and facilitating learning in students. The study observed that, instructional materials such as real objects, graphs, specimen, pictures, sketches, diagrams, hand outs and magazines are commonly used by lecturers. All the 25 lecturers employed assignments, exercises, quizzes and test to influence and encourage students to learn.

Techniques used	Freq.	(%)
The use of instructional/teaching aids while teaching	18	72
Assignment, Exercises, Quizzes and Tests.	25	100

*Table 4: Techniques used by lecturers to facilitate and influence learning in students
Source: Field Survey (2010)*

In Table 5, students' views on the techniques used by the lecturers and how they facilitate and influence them to learn are presented. Eighty-one out of the 96 students chose the use of instructional materials such as pictures, specimen, magazine, mood board, overhead projectors, sketches, and real objects as tools that facilitate and influence them to understand what their lecturers teach them. Ninety-two of them ticked evaluation processes like assignments, practical tests, quizzes, and projects. Eighty three stated that, they are urged to learn when lecturers motivate them through rewards in the form of praises and show interest in checking their work as well as assisting them to make corrections of their works.

Techniques	Freq.	(%)
The use of instructional materials like pictures, specimen, magazines, mood boards, overhead projectors, sketches, diagrams, real objects	81	84.3
Evaluation processes such as assignments, quizzes, practical tests, research, writing tests, projects.	92	95.8
Motivation in the form of praises, checks and corrections	83	86.4

Table 5: Multiple responses of students on techniques used by lecturers that facilitate and influence them to learn successfully

Source: Field Survey (2010)

Comparing the findings in Tables 4 and 5, it could be noted that, when instructional materials are used to support teaching activities of the Fashion and Textiles Studies in the tertiary institutions, students are facilitated and influenced to learn successfully. This goes to buttress the assertion made by Geoffrey (1994), Blankenship and Moercher (1979) that the use of instructional materials facilitates learning processes, as they bring the real meaning of what is being taught to light. The research team take sides with Geoffrey and Blankenship and add that, for more effective results, any instructional materials that lecturers choose as enhancement for their teaching should be suitable and relevant to the teaching strategy and learning packages. Lecturers should use them to illustrate appropriate areas of the lessons in the teaching processes, and should serve as motivations to elicit effective learning in students. In addition, findings Table 4 indicated that, lecturers are able to facilitate and influence their students to learn through the use of assignments, tests, quizzes and class exercises. Students' responses in Table 5 also confirmed that they are encouraged to learn when they were assigned to undertake research and project works in addition to exercises, test, quizzes and assignments. Students responses in Table 5 also showed that they are encouraged learned to when receive verbal rewards like praises and correction activities. The researchers wish to emphasize on the need for evaluation taking sides with Blankenship and Moercher (1979) and Geoffrey (1994) that, evaluation should be used in the course of teaching to reinforce facts and mastery of skills, and as a correcting tool to prevent students from repeating incorrect ideas and methods of acquiring knowledge and skills. To buttress this assertion, the researchers contend that evaluation should also be used to give effective feedback to both students and lecturers for improvement. Geoffrey contents that the feedback for students should be given through the use of motivation, describing this as the engine that drives the learning process. Hence majority of students' responses in Table 5 86% confirmed Geoffrey's assertion.

8.Suggestions And Recommendations

Although majority of the lecturers had master's degrees, the study reveals that their areas of specialization do not make them qualified and efficient to teach Fashion Design and Textiles Studies in the tertiary level. Therefore the need for the lecturers with MPhil, MEd, and BEd Home Economics, as well as MEd Management degrees to top up their qualification with fashion design and textiles technology becomes very crucial. In addition to lecture, discussion, demonstration methods of teaching and practical lessons

used by lecturers, the researchers recommend teaching strategies like field trips, role play, contract plan, team teaching, projects, research work and work placement for effective teaching of Fashion Design and Textile Studies. The uses of field trips offer students opportunity to have first-hand information about learning packages and acquire new ideas. Light and Cox, (2001) contend that role play also gives students opportunities to act the roles of the experts in the fields of their studies, for instance through work placement in the fashion and textiles industries they get the chances to understudy the fashion and textiles designers, pattern cutters, machinists, merchandisers and retailers. After the placements the students are examined to act and play the roles of the experts they worked with, by so doing they are able to demonstrate the competencies they have acquired. Thus role play enhances their confidence level for better performance of the key skills they need for employment. Contract plans strategy on the other hand offers students the opportunities to master particular items for skill acquisition. It allows each student to work at his or her own pace; lecturers devote extra time with students on one-on-one interaction basis in order to discover each student's personal educational needs and assist each one closely to learn and improve his or her competencies.

A platform for collective thinking, sharing of ideas and skills is created when lecturers embark on team teaching. The study also stresses the need for students to conduct constant research and project works on what they are studying in order to assist them develop the ability to synthesize ideas and skills to improve students' ingenuity, lateral thinking, problem solving, knowledge and skills. Gray et al (2000) contend that, in the tertiary institutions, students build on what they know and do, for this reason any objective that a teacher set should be measurable and should cover the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning. The study therefore recommends that for successful teaching and learning, lecturers should evaluate their lessons based upon the objectives set for their lessons. Teaching becomes very effective when evaluations are properly utilized during and after teaching (Geoffrey, 1994).

Lastly, the study team recommend that lecturers should not solely direct their teaching towards attainment of good examination results. Emphasis of their classroom activities should be laid on helping students to acquire key skill that will lead them onto appropriate employment. Relevant work experience is very vital; hence the need for work placement cannot be overemphasized (Brennan, 2000). Student should be assisted by their lecturers to take up work placements relevant to their programmes of study to enable them to acquire additional competency skills from experts in the industry.

9. Conclusion

To conclude, the research team wishes to take sides with the remarks made by Holmes and Miller (2000) that, a degree is no longer enough to guarantee employment adding that, employers are now looking for additional ingredients, which demonstrate that the graduates have not only acquired academic capabilities, but have also developed the key skills that will enable successful and expeditious transition from education into employment. Lecturers should therefore, endeavour to expose students to ways that will assist them to acquire key skills and competences to maximize their potentials for successful employment.

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