



ISSN 2278 – 0211 (Online)

Textile Surface Pattern Designs as Medium of Promoting Educational Policies in Ghana

Robert Ahiabor

Lecturer, Department of Fashion Design and Modelling,
School of Applied Art Design and General Studies, Wa Polytechnic, U/W, Ghana

Charles Frimpong

Senior Lecturer, Department of Industrial Art, Faculty of Art,
Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi – A/R, Ghana

Bernard Edem Dzramedo

Lecturer, Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, Faculty of Agriculture,
University for Development Studies (UDS), Tamale – N/R, Nyankpala Campus, Ghana

Abstract:

Surface pattern designs have the potential of communicating with the viewer so far as the motifs and the patterns in the design are well understood by the viewer. This can be achieved through the use of design concepts that make meaning to people at a glance. It is for this reason that this paper seeks to promote educational policies and programmes implemented by government in the Ghanaian society and beyond through the use of concept-oriented printed textile designs.

Motifs have been developed based on the selected educational policies and programmes in this study. Additionally, sample of designs produced have been printed on fabrics so as to demonstrate the usefulness of the designs. The printed textile designs produced when printed on fabrics and worn would go a long way to promote the government economic policies and programmes as well as the textile printing industry in general.

Keywords: *Textile Designs, Motifs, Education, Government policies and programmes*

1. Introduction

Textile designing as a process of creating surface pattern designs which can be rendered in printed, woven or knitted materials has been the backbone of the textile industry to date. The organization of motif which is the subject matter, the style in which the motifs are rendered and the arrangements represent the layout of the motif. When those elements are combined well with colour look of a pattern, a textile design is created (Yates, 1996). The aesthetic qualities possessed by a finished textile product are apparently dependent upon the careful organization of textile design elements and principles by the textile designer. A design which could be a process or a product; as a process, involves planning, organizing to meet a goal, carrying out according to a particular purpose whilst a product is the end result. It is translating ideas into reality. A good design would appeal to the viewer depending upon the personal judgement of beauty irrespective of the designer's representation of the guiding principles involved in designing (Davis, 1996). Textile designs in the form of printed, dyed, woven and knitted materials are considered to be communicative because the motifs in the design sometimes have philosophical meanings and carry a particular message to the viewer if well understood. In order to achieve this aim, the designer has to exhibit a high level of creativity in the rendering of the design. An original product design is the essence to the key of being the best, and in order to produce an ingenious creation one must attain a talent of being original and creative.

A design is a key element for preparing a new marketing foundation by raising the value of a product and its competitiveness. A design is also an outcome of a functioning human brain, which means that a process of designing is a process of thinking. On top of that, a design is an act of a model creation, which allows it to be the epitome of creativity. On the other hand, a designer as well as being an "inventor" who displays creativity must have a starting point with regard to knowing the current trends of designing and redefining them to meet consumer's needs and taste. To reach this kind of goal, creativity is certainly an essential ability that a designer must attain and definitely should be an area that has to be developed in order to come out with best results in any field of design (Warr, 2005; Watson, 2003).

Clothing design as well as printed textile designs provides a mark of identity and also means of communicating non-verbally. Clothing plays varied functions in the life of human beings. In African societies, clothes 'speak' that is clothing functions almost as a language of a society or an individual that can indicate a person's age, gender, marital status, place of origin, religion, social status, or occupation (Dzramedo, et al 2013; Omtseye & Emeriewen, 2012). In modern industrialized societies, clothing and clothing design are not so rigidly regulated and people have more freedom to choose which messages they wish to convey. Nevertheless, clothing can still provide considerable information about the wearer, including individual personality, economic standing, and even the nature of events attended by the wearer.

This research was carried out by way of presenting concept-oriented ideas derived from government policies and programmes on education in the form of printed textile designs so as to stimulate the public. This exposure in the form of designs on printed fabrics when worn on the body will frequently remind Ghanaians of the content and practices associated with educational policies and programmes.

1.1. Idea Development in Design

Design concepts are essentially ideas for solving design problems (Abercrombie, 1990). This ideology of design concept is supported by Stoll (1999) as developing concepts which are crucial for solving design problems in applied design fields. Linking design concept development with visual communication has implications for the process by which the designer communicates with self. Design concept is more specific than an idea, but less specific than a layout or drawing of a product. This presupposes that the designer must preconceive an idea and develop the idea through concepts by the use of drawings or layouts. Usually concepts are best described by the use of annotated sketch (Salustri, 2002). According to Benedict (1996), drawing and drafting techniques are essential in the context of concept development.

1.2. Communication in Design

Communication design is a mixed discipline between design and information-development which is concerned with how media intermissions such as printed, crafted, electronic media or presentations communicate with people. Apart from creating aesthetics in the media, it also relates to creating new media channels to ensure the message reaches the target audience by motivating, inspiring, creating desires and attracting people to respond to the message being put across (Asante and Nyarko-Hibson, 2008). Communication is about sending information (Malcolm, 2002). He explains further that, communication can be verbal or non-verbal. Verbal communication can be done by the use of words and speeches whereas the non-verbal communication can be done through the use of gestures, symbols, clothes and colours.

Visual communication in design relates to the production of visual objects through designing aimed at communicating specific messages. This is done with a view towards having an impact on knowledge, attitude or behaviour of specific sectors of the public. Visual communication designers' co-ordinate research, conception and realization, hiring specialists and using information related to the needs of each project (Frascara, 2004).

1.3. Mass Media Communication

Communication is the process by which messages are sent and received. It is a universal, essential process that encompasses an enormous range of methods including reading, writing, talking, listening, graphics and non-verbal behaviours (Ryder, 2005). Effective communication by ruling government and other institutions is to inform, educate and motivate the large group of people living in rural and urban areas, with special attention to those who are residing beyond the range of newspaper and outside radio and television network about their policies and programmes as well as different development activities. As a result, people get a clear idea about activities of the government and they can associate themselves with the development of the country. Theories of mass communication have always focused on the "cause and effects" notion, i.e. the effects of the media and the process leading to those effects, on the audience's mind.

Laswell (1948) formulated a model which includes a variety of factors considered to determine the impact of a communication. These include the communicator, the message, medium and the audience as shown in Figure 1. In this model of communication as applied to a work of art, especially textile design, the communicator represents the designer, the message represents the design concept, the medium denotes the paper or fabric whereas the audience represents the viewer of the finished work.

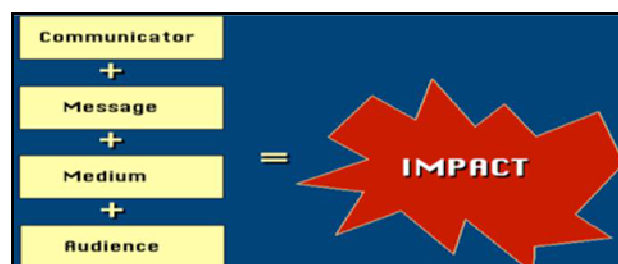


Figure 1: Laswell's model of communication

2. Materials and Methods

The researchers employed the descriptive and experimental methods of qualitative research. The descriptive method was chosen so as to vividly describe the various components of the textile designs produced in terms of significance of colours, appreciating the arrangement of motifs and textures in the designs. The experimental was also employed to manipulate and explore different kinds of variables such as motifs, colour schemes, textures and design techniques. Random sampling was used by the researchers to randomly select objects from the physical environment that convey peculiar messages relating to educational policies in Ghana. The vital educational policies and programmes such as school feeding programme, free school uniform programme, one laptop per child policy and free exercise book policy were also identified and textile designs generated to educate the general public.

2.1. Production of the Textile Designs

The creation of the textile designs began with the idea development based on the policies and programmes formulated and implemented by the government on education. Adobe Photoshop 7 suite which is suitable for image editing and manipulation was employed in the generation of the concepts leading to the production of the textile designs. Basically, the Photoshop program is ideal for manipulating pictures, creating and modifying images to come up with diverse effects. With Photoshop, it was possible to change the colour, size, and scale of graphics among others to generate new design ideas. The production of the designs was based on selected educational policies and programmes under consideration by the researchers. The following are the procedures employed in the designing process:

1. The development of the concepts from various educational policies,
2. Arrangement of the motifs on the working area,
3. Application of special effects to enhance the beauty of the textile designs and
4. The addition of textures to the designs.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. School Feeding Programme

The school feeding programme is one of the programmes formulated and implemented by the Government of Ghana in 2006 to provide a meal every day at basic schools in all the regions in Ghana for every school going child. This initiative by government is simple but a concrete way to give the poor child a chance to learn and thrive; considering the adage, “an army does not march on an empty stomach”. When hungry, the pupils become easily distracted and have problems concentrating on their school work. They become better pupils when their bodies are well nourished and healthy. The incentive of getting a meal also reduces absenteeism and school drop-out rates and most importantly improves performance.

This idea was developed based on the various activities pertaining to serving of the food by the caterers and the eating movements of the school children. These motifs were selected so as to depict the serving procedures (students in a queue) and excitement exhibited by children during eating as shown in the sketch and the coloured motif in the Figures below.



Figure 2: Students eating their food with excitement



Figure 3: Students in a queue for their food

The printed textile design in Figure 4 represents the concept-oriented design on the school feeding programme. The design consists of two concepts; students in a queue going for their food as well as students in a seated position eating their food after being served by the caterers. The motifs have been arranged in a half drop layout and enclosed with crescent shapes filled with textures. This technique was employed by the researchers to inculcate variations and to enhance the aesthetic qualities of the design. The design is composed of three different textures in combination with wax effects applied at selected areas. The colours used in the design include turquoise blue, golden yellow, reddish brown and dark brown. The choice of colours for this particular design was highly influenced by the original colours used by the Ghanaian child in the basic level of education so as to communicate the programme effectively.



Figure 4: Final design on school feeding programme

3.2. Free Exercise Book Policy

The free exercise book policy is in fulfillment of the 2008 campaign promise of President John Evans Atta Mills of blessed memory which seeks to make education affordable. This initiative seeks to provide 42 million exercise books to basic school pupils across the country. The free exercise book policy aims at retaining and improving on the current school enrolment and also bring on board a number of school-going children who are currently out of school just because their parents cannot afford the cost of buying exercise books. The distribution is carried out at the school premises and every Junior High School student is entitled to receive fifteen exercise books per term while the Primary School level students are also entitled to receive eight to ten exercise books per term.

This concept was derived from the actions involved in the presentation of an item. In order to fully convey the message about the policy, the designer found it prudent to use the activity of distributing exercise books in conjunction with an inscription as shown in the sketch and the coloured motif below in Figure 5.



Figure 5: Distribution of exercise books by government official

Figure 6 is a concept-oriented design on the free exercise book policy. It depicts a woman government official presenting exercise books to a school child. The designer seeks to portray the active participation of women in governmental roles in the Ghanaian society. The motif was arranged in a half drop pattern and enclosed by ovals filled with horizontal linear textures. Two different textures were used on the background with wax effects in two different colours. The colours used in the design include cream, golden yellow, green and brown.



Figure 6: Final design on free exercise book policy

3.3. Free School Uniform Policy

The free school uniform policy is an initiative by the Government of Ghana to provide school uniforms for school children at the basic level education. This policy formulated and implemented by the government seeks to alleviate the burden of parents who cannot bear the cost of buying school uniforms for their children. The target of this policy is to boost basic education, especially in the rural areas since these areas are the most under privileged in the country.

The concept generated on the free school uniform policy was based on the “motif labeling method” whereby the designer combined images and words to effectively convey the message. In this case, the designer used male and female school uniforms with the “*free*” inscription on them in the sketch and the coloured motif as illustrated in Figure 7 below.

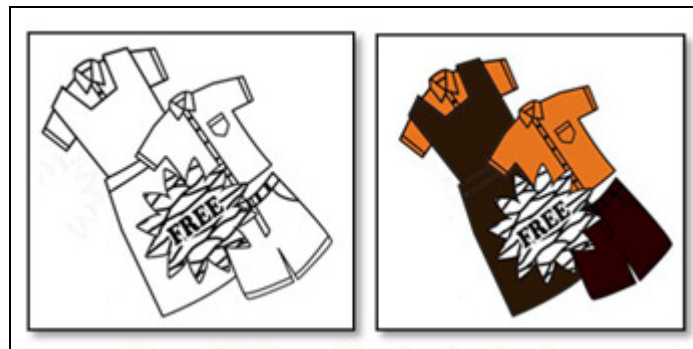


Figure 7: Male and female school uniforms

Figure 8 represents a surface pattern design developed from the free school uniform policy. The motifs (school uniforms) of the design are arranged in a half drop layout with some of them turned in the opposite direction to bring movement into the design. The original colours (golden yellow and brown) of the uniforms used by government schools in Ghana were adopted for the school uniforms in the design in order to convey the intended message about the policy. Both male and female school uniforms were used for the design concept so as to have a fair representation of both sexes as it pertains to the distribution of the uniforms. The colours used include cream, golden yellow, green and dark brown.



Figure 8: Final design on free school uniform policy

3.4. One Laptop per Child Policy

The one laptop per child policy is another policy formulated under the educational sector of the economy by the government of Ghana to provide every child at the basic level of their education with a laptop. This policy is aimed at improving the information and communication technology knowledge of school children at an early stage of their education. This will also afford the school children the opportunity to have a firm foundation in the use of computers as it is used in teaching and learning activities in the classroom.

The motif for the one laptop per child policy was derived from the classroom activities of students in the use of laptop computers. This idea was chosen so as to conveniently convey the agenda of the government pertaining to the policy. Figure 9 depicts the sketch and application of appropriate colours to the motif.



Figure 9: Students using laptop computers in the classroom

Figure 10 shows the design generated on the one laptop per child policy implemented by the government to introduce the school going child at the basic level to the use of the computer. This design depicts school children behind their laptops in a classroom environment. The motifs are arranged in a full drop pattern. In order to enhance the design through variety, two different textures were used in the form of dots and lines. The colours used in the design include cream, golden yellow, violet and brown which are highly influenced by the colour of uniforms worn by the students in Ghana.

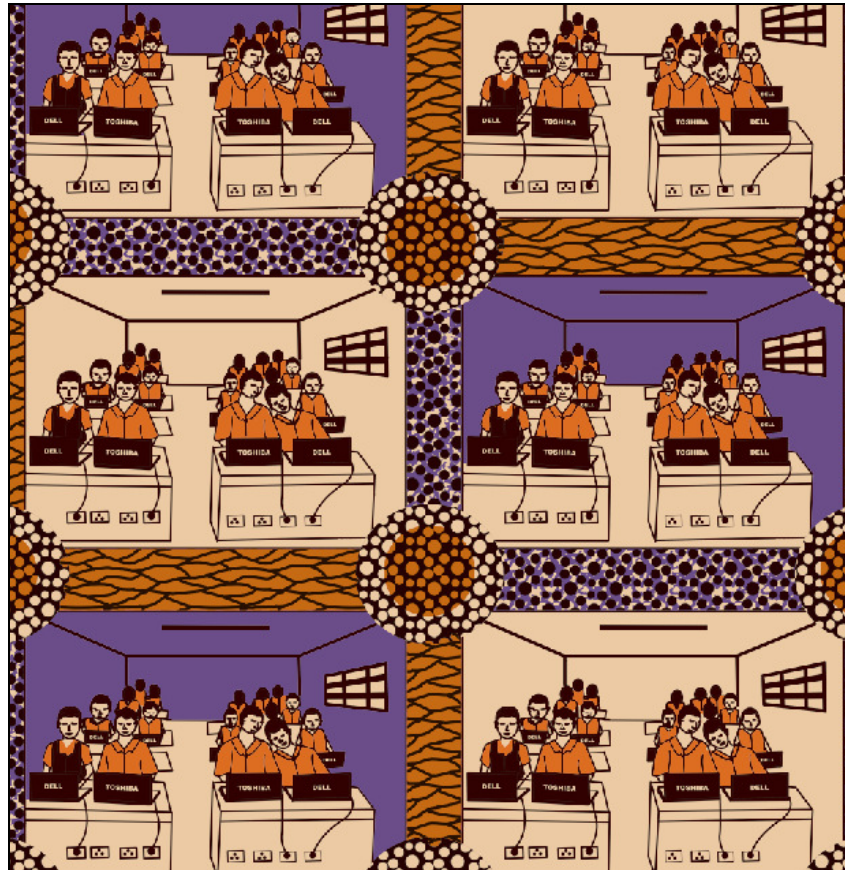


Figure 10: Final design on one laptop per child policy

4. Conclusion

The outcome of this research has shown that printed textile designs can be developed from verbal themes by converting them into visual images. This can be achieved by the use of concepts as a result of intensive idea development procedures on a particular theme. Communication in general as well as in design is said to be complete when the message being carried across is understood by everybody. In order to achieve this form of communication which was the main objective of this research, it called for using images that have direct meaning and relationship with the educational policies and programmes in Ghana. Majority of the images generated and used for the textile designs were obtained by the researcher as a result of brainstorming and employing other sources of inspiration so as to expediently convey the message associated with the policies and programmes under education.

The results obtained will be useful because concept-oriented textile designs were produced to educate the general public on selected educational policies and programmes in Ghana. It is also worth mentioning that these conversational designs produced will provide a greater range of printed textile designs available for the consumers and Ghanaians at large.

5. References

- i. Abercrombie, S. (1990). *A Philosophy of Interior Design*. Harper & Row: New York. p.45.
- ii. Asante C.K., Joe Nyarko-Hibson, A. (2008). *Graphic Design for West African Senior High Schools and Colleges*. Rock of Salvation Publishers: Kumasi. pp. 1, 13, 17, 112.
- iii. Benedict, W. M. (1996). *Beliefs for Creating More Inclusive Beginnings*. Presentation, pp. 7, 8-18.
- iv. Davis, M. L. (1996). *Visual Design in Dress*, Prentice-Hall, Inc. upper Saddle River, New Jersey-USA. pp 38-39.
- v. Dzamedo, E. D., Ahiabor, R. & Gbadegbe, R. (2015). *The Relevance and Symbolism within Traditional Institutions and Its Modern Impacts on the Ghana Culture*. *Journal of International Institute for Science Technology and Education, Art and Design Studies*. Vol. 13, pp. 1-13
- vi. Frascara, J. (2004). *Communication Design: Principles, Methods and Practice*. Allworth Communications, Inc. New York. pp. 3, 12, 13.
- vii. Laswell, H. (1948). *The Structure and Function of Communication in Society*. In L. Bryson (Ed.), *The Communication of Ideas*. Harper: New York. p. 117.
- viii. Malcolm Barnard (2002). *Clothing as a Means for Communication*. Routledge. USA. pp. 21,22.
- ix. Omatseye, B. O. J. & Emeriewen, K. O. (2012). *An Appraisal of the Aesthetic Dimension of the African Philosophy of Cloth*; *Journal of Language, Technology & Entrepreneurship in Africa*. Vol. 3, Issue 2 pp 1-11.

- x. Ryder, C. (2005). *Visual Communication in Fashion and Textile Design*. John Moores University: Liverpool p. 16.
- xi. Salustri, F. A., et al. (2002). *Design Principles and Practices: An International Journal*, Volume 3, Issue 3, Design Collection. Retrieved: <http://ijg.cgpublisher.com/product/pub.154/prod.225> on 29th October, 2015.
- xii. Stoll, H.W. (1999). *Product Design Methods and Practices*. Marcel Dekker, Inc. New York. p. 3.
- xiii. Warr, A., O'Neil (2005). *Understanding Design as a Social Creative Process*. Proceedings of the 5th Conference on Creativity & Cognition Association for Computing Machinery, ACM Press: New York, NY. pp. 118-127.
- xiv. Watson, J. R. (2003). *A Survey of Design Elements and Principles and the Development of Design Components*, Edmond.
- xv. Yates, M (1996). *Textiles; A handbook for Designers*. New York, London. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. pp 38-39.