

Career Perceptions in Fashion and Design Technology Programmes among TVET Students and Teachers in the Northern Region of Ghana

Alfredina Saana

Department of Technical and Vocational Education,
Bagabaga College of Education, Tamale-Ghana

Isaac Abraham

Akenten Appiah-Menka University of Skills Training
and Entrepreneurial Development, Kumasi-Ghana

Joyce Asobayire

Department of Technical and Vocational Education
St. John Bosco's College of Education, Navrongo-Ghana

ABSTRACT

The goal of vocational education worldwide is to provide students with employable skills and better sharpen their career prospects. In Ghana however, several students have gone through Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes with little prospects to show. This study therefore sought to examine the perception of students and teachers on career prospects in the fashion and design technology programme of TVET in the Northern Region of Ghana. The study employed an institution-based cross-sectional study design. A stratified random sampling procedure was used to recruit 320 participants, who questionnaires were administered to. Data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings showed that, the fashion and design programmes were not well structured by policymakers to equip students with employable skills. Respondents stated that there were low career prospects in fashion and design because teachers mostly taught theory rather than practical oriented. It was revealed that the fashion and design programmes provided specific job skills that made it difficult for career progress in an ever-changing environment. Respondents also identified fashion and design to be meant for academically weak students. In conclusion, the respondents perceived career prospects in the fashion and design programme to be limited and recommended that institutions should reconsider redesigning the programme to reflect current needs of employers.

Keywords: Career prospects, Fashion and design technology, Students' perceptions, Teachers' perceptions, TVET programmes.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, the aim of the fashion and design programmes is to equip students with the creative and technical skills required for employment in the fashion industry and to facilitate the economic development in nations. The programme provides detailed training on academic and liberal studies, with notable emphasis on practical application (Caves et al., 2021). Recent

reforms in vocational education have been influenced by students' and teachers' perceptions of career opportunities in fashion and design programmes, aligning the education with labour market needs (Gyadu-Asiedu et al., 2020). Technological shifts and advancements in market demands require new industry-relevant skills often absent in the existing education system. Researchers report emerging strategies for vocational training and career guidance in the fashion industry to enhance students' outcomes (Aryal, 2020).

Similar concerns are echoed at the continental level, especially in sub-Saharan Africa where many graduates find that the programmes fall short of the expectation of the fashion industry. Students lack the skills required to meet market standards, making it challenging for them to secure jobs or establish businesses (Ogur, 2023). The fashion and design programmes are more than creating aesthetically pleasing curricula (Shi & Bangpan, 2022). It is a competitive field that requires a combination of technical skills, creativity, and industry knowledge for success (Edeigba et al., 2022). Academic success in fashion education is measured not only by grades (Meta, 2022) but also by the ability to establish contacts, communicate effectively, and demonstrate readiness in the industry. The teaching and learning of fashion and design have many setbacks in Africa. Students in general have a negative perception of the programme (Gyimah, 2020). Despite the numerous opportunities the programme offers, evidence suggests that students associate it with illiterate persons (Caves et al., 2021; Gyadu-Asiedu et al., 2020).

In Ghana, teachers' attitudes are important factors in the educational impact on career prospects in the fashion and design programme. Challenges including inadequate infrastructure, limited access to training materials and unqualified teachers have militated against fashion and design programmes (Ahmed et al., 2021; Gyadu-Asiedu et al., 2020). Nonetheless, studies have identified a range of career prospects in the fashion and design programme (Makinde & Bamiro, 2023). These include fashion journalism, costume designing, textile designing, page designing, and fashion buying (Ohagwu et al., 2022). Students' self-perception of competence is crucial as it directly affects how trainees evaluate the effectiveness and impact of TVET programmes in Ghana. Trainees who see themselves as highly competent are more likely to view TVET programme contributions to socio-economic development positively, believing that their skills can be effectively applied in real-world situations. On the other hand, those with negative perceptions of competence may have a less favourable view of the programme, potentially underestimating its value (Otchia & Yamada, 2021).

Although Agordah (2016) explored the perspectives of students and teachers on career prospects in fashion and design programmes, little is known about the views of industry practitioners in Ghana (Ohagwu et al., 2022). Design is the usual basis upon which the processes of the manufacturing chain and marketing can be brought together to think and respond in a harmonious way using the same framework or system of thinking and action (Ogur, 2023; Shi & Bangpan, 2022). Therefore, the perception of students and teachers on career prospects in fashion and design programmes plays a major role in the success or failure of the delivery of any curriculum in universities (Otchia & Yamada, 2021; Ohagwu et al., 2022). Hence, teachers' perceptions have a great influence on what students learn, and as such, students' perceptions are a reflection of those perceptions held by their teachers. Reports suggest that lack of facilities, training materials, inadequately trained instructors, and financial constraints have contributed to the waning of interest in the study of fashion and design among TVET students in Ghana (Gyadu-Asiedu et al., 2020).

In Northern Ghana specifically, fashion programmes face unique challenges due to the structure and focus of technical education. Earlier reports proposed that the curriculum, facilities, faculty expertise, and industry alignment of fashion programmes require reform to provide relevant, high-quality education for students (Gyimah, 2020). Gyadu-Asiedu et al. (2020) found a disconnect between the course content in fashion degree programmes and the practical needs of the fashion and apparel industries. Most curricula focused on basic garment construction and theory but lacked opportunities for developing industry-specific skills in areas like production planning, quality control, supply chain management, and product development. Furthermore, many graduates with National Higher Diploma in Fashion and Textile Design, eventually transition to unrelated careers, raising concerns about relevance of the programme and career guidance. These concerns require recommendations on the nature of the programme to increase its effectiveness (Omar et al., 2022).

A survey of the literature revealed limited research on how students and teachers view career opportunities in fashion and design within TVET institutions. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the perceptions of both teachers and students in order to develop effective solutions for the issues they face. Furthermore, the relationship between students' skills acquisition and career prospects in fashion and design programmes in TVET institutions in the Northern Region of Ghana has not been extensively studied. This limitation makes it difficult to explore innovative strategies such as industry partnerships and curriculum reform that can enhance the career prospects of fashion and design technology among students. Therefore, this study sought to bridge this knowledge gap and provide baseline data to inform policy and trigger a paradigm shift in the fashion industry.

METHODOLOGY

Study Area

The study was conducted in the Northern Region of Ghana. The population of this study is defined as all TVET students in the region who were enrolled in the fashion and design programme. The study also included teachers from these institutions as part of the research. The Northern Region of Ghana has six TVET institutions where the fashion and design programme is offered. The study considered the six schools because they are the only schools available in Northern Ghana currently offering fashion and design programmes. The TVET is a public institution that provides vocational training to students who have completed basic education and are looking to develop skills in various trades, including fashion and design. The head of each target institution granted permission to conduct the study with the respondents. The participants were entitled to voluntarily decide whether to accept the invitation to participate in the research. The researcher obtained informed consent from the participants. Participation was strictly voluntary. No compensation was rendered as a direct incentive to the participants. No respondent suffered any harm or discomfort.

Research Design

The study employed an analytical cross-sectional study design. This type of study design involves the collection of both exposures and outcomes variables from one point in time. This design used described and interpreted the relationship among the variables in the study setting at a single point in time. The advantages of this study design are that it is relatively inexpensive, takes up little time to conduct and it can estimate the prevalence of an outcome of interest

because sample is usually taken from the whole population. However, the study design cannot establish causality (Bernard, 2000).

Study Population

The study population included all students and teachers in the fashion and design programme offered in all of them. The TVET is a public institution that provides vocational training to students who have completed basic education and are looking to develop skills in various trades, including fashion and design. It is estimated that the six TVET Institutions in the region have a total of 1500 students with 200 teachers (MoE, 2020). According to Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2019), for a population size of 1500, a margin of error of 5%, and a confidence level of 95%, a sample size of 320 participants would be appropriate for the study. Thus, 300 respondents were used for the quantitative data and 20 respondents were selected to participate in the qualitative data collection.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Based on the estimated population of 1500 TVET students and 200 teachers enrolled in the fashion and design programme in the six TVET Institutions in the Northern Region of Ghana, the study adopted the stratified random sampling technique to select a representative sample of participants for the study. From each stratum, the researcher randomly selected a proportionate number of participants based on the population size of each TVET Institutions. This was to ensure that the sample is representative of the entire population, and that each TVET institutions is equally represented in the sample. The sample size was determined based on appropriate statistical calculations to ensure that the results are reliable and representative. The Sloven's formula (Yamane, 1967) was used to calculate the sample size. This is explained as;

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where;

- n= Sample size
- N= estimated number of students and teachers
- e=Precision desired

Therefore;

- N=1700
- e= 0.05

$$n = \frac{1700}{1+1700(0.05)^2}$$

$$n= 323.0$$

Based on the above estimation the sample size was thus considered as 320 participants.

The study employed structured questionnaire and interview guide for the data collection. The structured questionnaire includes closed-ended and Likert-scale questions. The questionnaire

was administered in English and translated into local languages, such as Dagbani and Gonja, as needed. And the interview guide was administered in the local language. The use of both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods provided a comprehensive understanding of the perceptions of TVET students and teachers on career prospects in the fashion and design programme in the Northern Region of Ghana.

The initial draft of the quantitative instrument was subjected to face validation. The essence of validating the instrument was to ensure that it would elicit the information it was designed for. According to Creswell (2014), validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of a concept under consideration. The relevance of the items to the purpose of the study was checked, clearly stated and confirmed to be capable of eliciting for the right response from the respondents. To determine the reliability of the instruments, the research instrument was tried and pre-tested using 7 randomly picked students and teachers in Tamale Technical University. Additionally, to ensure validity in assessing the perception of TVET students and teachers, the data collection instruments were developed based on the objectives of the study. This required careful design and refinement of the questionnaires (Dykema 2010). On the notion of ensuring reliability, Cronbach's alpha was adopted (Tavakol and Dennick, 2011).

Data were analyzed using the SPSS software (version 22.0) and excel 2013. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to present the results. A correlation analysis to establish the relationship between the variables under study was conducted and all statistical tests were performed using two-sided tests at the 0.05 level of significance. P-values were reported to three decimal places with values less than 0.001 being reported as < 0.001. P-values less than 0.05 were considered significant. Also, the qualitative data collected through interviews were analysed using a thematic analysis approach by employing the NVivo software (Bazeley, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-demographic Characteristics

The study was conducted among 320 respondents and table 1 shows their demographic characteristics. Respectively, majority of the participants 185(57.2%) were female, 137(42.8%) were male and a greater proportion (53.1%) were between the ages of 15-18 years. Also, a higher proportion of the respondents (41.3%) were in form two (educational level) followed by form 3 (Table 1).

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics

| Variable | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------|-----------|---------|
| Sex | | |
| Male | 137 | 42.8 |
| Female | 183 | 57.2 |
| Age | | |
| 18 ≤ | 207 | 64.7 |
| 19-22 | 83 | 25.9 |
| 23 and above | 30 | 9.4 |
| Level | | |
| form 1 | 72 | 22.5 |
| form 2 | 132 | 41.3 |

| | | |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| form 3 | 116 | 36.3 |
| Total | 320 | 100.0 |

Source: Field survey, 2023

TVET Students' Perceptions of Career Prospects in Fashion and Designing

From table 2 below, majority of the respondents do not have positive perception toward the career prospects in fashion and design ($M = 3.87$ $SD = 0.584$). While respondents generally disagreed that TVET fashion and designing is for academically weak student's ($M = 1.52$), they overwhelmingly agreed that most TVET fashion and designing students are not able to further to tertiary level ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 0.580$). More so, the results showed that respondents disagree to the assertion that TVET fashion and designing does not give one the opportunity to be employed by the public sector ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 1.553$) (Table 3.2).

The negative perception toward TVET programmes was revealed when respondents admitted that TVET education courses are intended for children from poor family's ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.192$). It was found that majority of respondents shares similar opinion as can be ascertained the standard deviation value. Furthermore, respondents also perceived that students who attend higher education get higher pay as compared to those who attend TVET $M = 4.26$, $SD = 0.447$ (Table 2).

Table 2: Perception of TVET Students on Career Prospects in Fashion and Design

| Variable | Mean | SD |
|---|-------------|--------------|
| TVET Fashion and design is for academically weak students | 1.52 | 0.509 |
| Most TVET fashion and design students are unable to further to tertiary level | 4.48 | 0.580 |
| Fashion designers can become prominent like any other profession | 4.70 | 0.465 |
| TVET fashion and design does not give one the opportunity to be employed by the public sector | 2.56 | 1.553 |
| Fashion and design programmes only equip students to be self-employed | 4.64 | 0.480 |
| TVET education courses are intentioned for children from poor families | 4.04 | 0.192 |
| Students who attend higher education get higher pay as compared to those who attend TVET | 4.26 | 0.447 |
| Graduates from TVET can easily pursue further education | 4.74 | 0.447 |
| Composite score | 3.87 | 0.584 |

Source: Field survey, 2023

The study showed that the fashion and design programme was not properly designed to give students employable skills as revealed by 60% of respondents. These views corroborate that of Hodges and Karpova, (2009) where they reported that fashion and design programmes were designed as a general business without focusing on careers related to garment production and thus not capitalizing on prospective student's interest in the sector.

Furthermore, majority of students (74%) believed TVET programmes were not recognized by most tertiary educational institutions. Even though they think TVET is not recognized by most tertiary educational institutions, most of them (73%) aspired to higher levels. These assertions indicate a shortfall in the programme formulation. To increase the career prospects of TVET students, technical universities that are practical-oriented in fashion should be established so that fashion students who aspire to high levels can continue to develop their skills and increase

their career prospects. This seems congruent with the findings of Lang and Liu, (2017) where majority of respondents in their study indicated the courses in fashion and design were mostly theoretical with few practical sessions where basic sewing is done. Lang and Liu (2017) therefore concluded that fashion programmes must continually be re-examined and refocus their efforts as the industry needs change. In addition, the findings revealed that while information on career development in fashion and design were provided to fashion and design students, majority (76%) believed that fashion and design programmes do not lead to higher education because it is more practical-oriented. These findings however contradict that of Pambudi and Harjanto (2020) who consider TVET programmes as a form of education designed to develop skills, abilities, understanding, attitudes, work habits and appreciation, encompassing knowledge and information needed by workers to enter and make progress in employment. This conclusion of their study suggests that the concept of TVET has either been miss-communicated or misunderstood by the students. The characteristics of TVET is skill-oriented education. However, the findings suggest students were more interested in acquiring higher education and getting employed in other fields rather than gaining skills that can make them self-employed.

These findings clearly indicate fashion and design students did not understand the idea behind the TVET programme by the Ghana Education Service. According to TVED (2008), the study of fashion design in the Technical and Vocational Institutes is intended to provide young persons with the requisite skills as a predisposition to technical pursuits at the advanced levels. Young persons who could advance can also be self-employed. The course offered the trainees the chance to acquire valuable technical and vocational skills that will open up a wide range of opportunities for productive work.

Based on the findings of this study, the idea behind the fashion and design programme cannot be attained as the career prospects of fashion and design students is affected by the lack of training materials and equipment coupled with the mirage of students been taught by teachers who transfer practical knowledge to students while teaching. In essence, the idea behind the TVET programme as stipulated by the Ghana Education Service (CTVET, 2021) in itself has been defeated.

Factors Affecting Career Prospects of TVET Fashion and Designing Students

The dominant factor that affects the career prospects of TVET fashion and design was the fact that the fashion and design programme is not well structured by policy makers to equip students with employable skills ($M = 4.99$, $SD = 0.352$) (Table 3.3).

Respondents disagree to the assertion that TVET is not recognized by most tertiary educational institutions in Ghana, even though they had divergent views ($M = 1.33$, $SD = 1.201$). They also disagree that TVET is an alternative educational choice ($M = 1.55$, $SD = 0.517$). More so, they disagree TVET is more practical-oriented and does not lead to higher education ($M = 2.01$, $SD = 0.841$). Other factors that were found to affect the career prospects of students include: TVET students aspire to high education levels ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.322$), however, they are unable to go far because their schools were not well resourced like senior high school ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.133$) and the fact that teachers mostly teach theory than practical $M = 4.17$, $SD = 0.749$ (see Table 3).

Table 3: Factors affecting career prospects on TVET fashion and design students

| Variable | Mean | SD |
|--|-------------|--------------|
| TVET fashion and design education is not properly design to give studies employable | 4.57 | 0.022 |
| TVET students aspires to high education levels | 3.10 | 1.322 |
| TVET is not recognized by most tertiary educational institutions in Ghana | 1.33 | 1.201 |
| Information on career development in fashion and design are provided to us. | 3.87 | 0.519 |
| TVET is more practical oriented and does not lead to higher education | 2.01 | 0.841 |
| TVET fashion and design programme is not well structured by policy makers to equip students with employable skills | 4.99 | 0.352 |
| There low career prospects in TVET fashion and design because teachers mostly teach theory than practical. | 4.17 | 0.749 |
| TVET students are unable to go far because their schools are not well resourced like senior high school | 3.87 | 0.133 |
| TVET is an alternative educational choice | 1.55 | 0.517 |
| TVET provides specific job skills that makes it difficult for career progress in an ever-changing environment | 2.22 | 0.088 |
| Composite score | 2.70 | 0.570 |

Source: Field survey, 2023

The findings of the study revealed a mixed perception of students on the career prospects of fashion and design students. While a majority of respondents disagree that fashion and design programmes are designed for academically weak students and also disagreed that most TVET fashion and designing students were unable to further their education up to the tertiary level, majority of them did not know fashion designers could become prominent like any other profession.

Approximately, close to 24% of respondents thought fashion designers could become prominent like any other professions. These findings are consistent with that of Chuang et al (2009) who revealed that fashion and design students were not confident their choice of career would allow them to be successful like other professions. These perceptions reflect the lack of knowledge on the career prospects of the fashion and design programme. Fashion and design programmes are perceived to be about sewing clothes just as it is done by tailors and seamstresses in their communities. Thus, when the programme is compared to other programmes in terms of acquiring jobs in the public sector that can give good salaries, fashion and design students may feel less demanded. McMillan (2022) made similar assertion when he found that, when individual rely primarily on environmental factors, they are less likely to be satisfied.

While majority of students believed fashion and design students can pursue higher education, majority believed TVET fashion and designing graduates were often not well paid. The findings of this study agree with the Hodges and Karpova (2010) model on stages of major selection. The model explains that industry related factors such as perceived earning potential and job opportunities influence decision making process in the choice of programme of study. The possibility of fashion and design students diverting to other programmes will be higher if students feel fashion and design is less lucrative compared to other possible careers. This finding however contradicts that of an earlier study in Ghana whereby it was found that most people believed TVET is an avenue for students who cannot function within an academic

setting; this perception is compounded by a lack of progression routes from vocational and technical education into higher education (Kissi et al., 2020).

The perception of respondents on the career prospects of TVET fashion and design could be associated with the experience from past students of the programme and the fact that the programme is not well equipped to develop students for industries. Similar assessment was made by Darvas and Palmer (2014) who noted that focusing on skills to undertake a particular job serves to short-change students, preparing them for minimal job options and limiting their future opportunities. To alleviate these negative perceptions about TVET fashion and design, Bandura (1986) suggested that decision making process can be refined through role models, faculty advising and inspirational talks on the programme from successful individuals in the industry. This is very important in the Ghanaian context considering the high level of unemployment. Fashion and design student could be coached to develop themselves to become entrepreneurs where they can employ others to work for them instead of searching for jobs.

Skills Acquisition and Career Prospects of TVET Fashion and Design

In assessing the relationship between skills acquisition and career prospects of TVET fashion and design students, data demonstrating the degree to which the respondents agreed with the suggested items in the questionnaire were gathered using a 5-point Likert scale. On a 5-point Likert scale, 1 meant you agreed with it the least and 5, the highest, meant you agreed passionately.

From table 4, respondents generally agreed to all the statement as the composite score $M = 4.48$, $SD = 0.744$ is close to 5 which meant they passionately agreed to all the statements. TVET programmes been designed to be able to inculcate leadership and administrative skills in students had the highest score $M = 4.77$, $SD = 0.517$ signifying the skills acquisition through TVET is related to career prospects. The standard deviation of $SD = 0.517$ also implies all respondents shared similar views. While the mean $M = 4.04$ indicate all majority of respondents agree that TVET leads to professions that were highly demanded in the labour market, the standard deviation $SD = 1.190$ implies respondents have divergent views on that.

Table 4: Relationship between Skills acquisition and Career Prospects of TVET Fashion and Design

| Statement | Mean | SD |
|---|-------------|--------------|
| TVET leads to professions that are highly demanded in the labour market | 4.04 | 1.190 |
| TVET programmes enable students to continue with further studies and can afford better jobs | 4.26 | 0.447 |
| Innovation (TVET programmes produces creative and innovative graduates through practical oriented training) | 4.74 | 0.721 |
| Practical skills (TVET provides combination of academic and practical skills which are necessary for career growth) | 4.59 | 0.844 |
| Leadership skills (TVET programmes are designed to be able to inculcate leadership and administrative skills in students) | 4.77 | 0.517 |
| Composite score | 4.48 | 0.744 |

Source: Field survey, 2023

A regression was performed with career prospects as dependent variable with factors such as the Innovation, practical skills, profession of high demand and leadership skills as independent variables. Practical skills were significant with R^2 of 26%, followed by Leadership skills with R^2 of 33%. All things being equal, practical skills produces R^2 of 26% and when leadership skills are added to the practical skills the R^2 goes up by 8% and reaches 33%. The influence of the other variables on the career prospects is negligible.

Practical skill acquisition is one of the major premises based on which the TVET programme was developed. The findings of this study revealed that TVET fashion and design students acquires adequate skill that can boast their career prospects. Similar findings were made by Thite, (2022) who asserted that human development through enhancing skills for work could be promoted through TVET. On the contrary, Williams and Ford, (2009) noted that TVET policies face a substantial challenge of improving the skill and career readiness of students and job seekers. The difference between the findings of the current study and that of Williams and Ford, (2009) could arise from the objectives of the studies. While Williams and Ford, (2009) assessed the contribution of the TVET programmes and policies in providing employable skills to students, the current study examined the career prospects of TVET fashion and design students which is just a section of the TVET programme.

The findings further revealed that TVET fashion and design programme produces creative and innovative graduates through practical oriented training as close to 62% of respondents indicated. This implies TVET fashion students are well prepared with practical skills to progress in their career. This finding however cannot be generalized for all TVET Institutions as the study was conducted in a few selected schools in the Tamale Metropolis, the case may not be same in other institutions. It was also revealed that TVET did not just equip students with employable skills but also provides a combination of academic and practical skills which were necessary for career enhancements and that TVET programme were designed to be able to inculcate leadership and administrative skills in students. Thus, the findings of this study support recommendations by Darvas and Palmer (2014) who proposed that a realistic way of dealing with unemployment is vocational education as students were not only given practical skills but also leadership and administrative skills to become employers.

These findings however contradict that of other studies. For instances studies by Durham and Bragg, (2019) and Kincheloe (2018) argue that, although TVET does provide students' knowledge, it is of the mundane kind, which can only be applied to specific contexts and events, not the powerful esoteric knowledge which can be transferred and applied to different settings. They emphasised that the increasingly globalized world makes it imperative to expose students to esoteric knowledge for competitive advantages in the workplace. Regardless, the positive findings for skill acquisition in the TVET fashion and design support the rationale set by TVED (2008) of the Ghana Education Service (GES).

Dominant Relationship between Skills Acquisition and Career Prospects of TVET Fashion and Design Programme

The t-values for both practical skills and leadership skills are significant at 1% level because they are more than 2.33. Thus, the major factors influencing career prospects of TVET students are practical skills and leadership skills of the perspective students.

Table 5: Dominant Attributes influencing the Career Prospects of TVET Students

| Model | | Standardized Coefficient | T | Sig. |
|-------|-------------------|--------------------------|------|-------|
| 1 | | Beta | | |
| | (constant) | | 6.81 | 0.001 |
| | Practical skills | 0.50 | 6.76 | 0.000 |
| 2 | (constant) | | 3.03 | 0.004 |
| | Practical skills | 0.40 | 4.46 | 0.000 |
| | Leadership skills | 0.34 | 3.77 | 0.000 |

Source: Field survey, 2023

The findings of the study as revealed in Table 5 shows a very significant relationship between skill acquisition and career prospects of TVET fashion and design. Using five statements, the results showed a composite score of ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 0.744$). To establish the significance of the relationship, a regression was conducted. Practical skills were significant with R^2 of 26%, followed by Leadership skills with R^2 of 33%.

The findings of this study disagree with that of Darvas and Palmer (2014) who found that TVET programmes are focused on acquiring specific skills to undertake a particular job, therefore short –change students by preparing them for minimal jobs and limiting their future opportunities. These differences may result from geographic differences as different nations adopt different forms of education. For instance, Pambudi and Harjanto (2020) found that the stratified nature of the German vocational education system makes it different from other vocational education systems. The forms of vocational education in industrialised nations may be structured in a way that students are trained in specific fields to occupy specific areas in the industry. In the United States for instance, vocational education was established as acceptable training for certain future professionals who would not need bachelor’s degrees to do their jobs, such as plumbers, mechanics, and factory workers. They completed their training in focused vocational programmes associated with high schools (Pambudi & Harjanto, 2020).

On the study hand, the Ghanaian vocational system was designed to provide students with skills that will make them self-employed. As such leadership and administrative knowledge is required to be self-employed. This could be the reason why practical skills and leadership skills were found to be the major factors influencing career prospects in TVET fashion and designing. These findings are in line with the career construction theory and life design paradigm. According Swanson and Fouad, (2015), individuals move through their career paths, transitioning from actors to agents and finally, authors. At the author stage, leadership skill becomes paramount to the individual’s success.

Suggested Innovative Strategies that can Enhance the Career Prospects of the Fashion and Designing Programme in TVET

To ascertain the strategies that can enhance the career prospects of fashion and design, four themes were identified: Improvement in practical experiences and use of modern tools; reforming fashion and design programme to help students to be more self-employed; Resourcing TVET with relevant equipment; Staff in-service training to meet up with fast changing fashion world.

Improvement in Practical Experiences and Use of Modern Tools:

When the respondents were asked to state their views on what they think can be done to enhance the career prospects of fashion and design programmes for students, most of the responses revolved around improvement of practical experience and mastering the tools and trade in the industry as some of them narrated:

".....i think the best way to enhance the career prospects of fashion and design students is to make sure they are given more practical experience while in school. When students are made to master the tools used in the industry especially the modern ones, they leave school far more equipped and ready to take on any assignment" (teacher 1).

Another teacher had this to say

".....most of the technical and vocational schools in the country lack advance tools and equipment. So, the student's complete school with only theoretical knowledge just as those in the senior high school. No industry will want to engage someone who does not know how to use the tool and machines he or she is supposed to work with" (teacher 2).

While some respondents think giving fashion and design students training on modern tools and equipment usage is the way to enhancing career prospects, others were of the view that assisting fashion and design students to develop a signature style and unleashing creativity to embrace sustainability is the way to go.

".....while it is good to teach students different styles and models in school, fashion is dynamic and therefore students should be coached to develop their own styles. For them to thrive in the industry, there is a need for them to be creative, this will attract prospective employers to them" (teacher 3).

Reforming Fashion and Design Programme to Help Students to be More Self-employed:

Teachers were asked what they would have done differently if they were given the opportunity to coordinate the reforms of TVET fashion and design programme. While diverse suggestions were given, most of them were geared towards empowering students to be self-employed after school as some of the narrations indicate:

".....if I have the opportunity in reforming TVET fashion and design, I will restructure the industrial attachment to a full-term programme where students will be attached to well established firms and textile industries. This will sharpen their practical knowledge in a way that they start on their own after completion" (teacher 5).

".....i will suggest two reforms in the fashion and design programme given the opportunity. First, the programme should be reformed in a way that will nurture creativity and innovation. Secondly, students should be trained to develop their own blog and collections to attract employers and clients if they want to be self-employed (teacher 4).

The responses thus appear the teachers were of the view that fashion and design education in its current structure is focused on training students for jobs that are not very practical and for which reason they are unable to be self-employed. This was how one respondent kept it:

"..... career prospects are not just about getting employed by an industry or an individual, the programme should be reformed in a way that students will be trained to be their own masters. To chart their own path in the world of fashion and design (teachers 2).

Resourcing TVET with Relevant Equipment:

When respondents were asked what they think government should do to enhance career prospects of fashion and design students, all the respondents pointed to resourcing the school with the relevant equipment for effective teaching and learning.

".....my sister as you can see, this is our practicals hall, look at the sewing machines, it is the same for all the TVETs. Government has to procure current machines and tools that are used in modern day fashion industries. That is the only way we can improve the prospects of the programme. With these machines if you are to sew certain styles you have to give it out for them to do the finishing... (teacher 6).

"..... we are teachers we have the knowledge to teacher the students, but the resources. Sometimes you have to use your own money or make the students to contribute for you to buy textiles for practical. How do we then grow with this? The reality is that, were are poorly resourced... (Teacher 4).

As the two narrations above indicate, all respondents lamented over the lack of equipment, tools and textiles for effective practical sessions. It thus suggests most of the fashion and design lessons are often theoretical as teachers complain of not having the necessary logistics for practical sessions.

Staff In-service Training to Meet Up with Fast Changing Fashion World:

Respondents were also questioned what they think TVET should do to enhance career prospects of fashion and design students. Two major suggestions came up; some respondents were of the view that fashion and design who are in the field for some years now have difficulty in sewing modern days' styles, thus suggested in-service training for teachers.

".....it will help if TVET can have training sessions for teachers. For example, teachers can be assigned to major fashion institutions for them to be equipped with the modern styles. This will go a long way to improve the practical knowledge of students" (teacher 5).

The second suggestion was that, TVET should have a cut off point for students who want to pursue fashion and design as a profession. Most teachers felt majority of students who are pursuing fashion and design were pushed into the schools because they did not have the requirement for senior high school programmes. All the teachers interviewed lamented over the poor nature of some of the students admitted into the TVETs as one narrated.

“..... you see it is too worrying and most difficulty to teach a student who cannot express him/herself in English. The sad truth is that, any students who fails the BECE and cannot be admitted to study SHS programmes is pushed to us. TVET should not allow that. TVET should not be like a dumping ground for people who are that bad” (teacher 1).

Similarly, another teacher lamented as she narrated.

“.....can you effectively teacher a student who cannot speak English? You see some cannot even construct a simple sentence. You give them notes they cannot read; they write you the teacher cannot read. In that case it affects the good ones, because you have to take time to carry the bad ones along” (teacher 6).

The findings revealed several strategies that can be employed to enhancing career prospects of TVET fashion and design students. The dominant factors among the strategies mentioned were equipping the schools for proper practical sessions. It was noted that even though the provision of practical training is central to the TVET policy, the schools lack the basic logistics to perform this function. These same challenges were also cited by the Ghana Education Service Review Commission (2003). The commission indicated a deficit in the Ghana vocational education system because of the ostensible desertion of the vocational and technical education sub-sector, as the reforms ignored it. The commission further noted that the neglect led to poor condition of the infrastructure and training facilities of the institutions, an inadequate number of institutions, and outdated training content. The findings revealed that most TVET fashion and design lessons are taught using obsolete tools and equipment. The fashion industry is very dynamic and industry players needed not to stay outdated if they wished to succeed in the industry. Thus, using outdated tools in teaching students who are aiming at progressing in the fashion industry becomes an obstacle in itself.

Consistent with this study, Fletcher and Dumford, (2021) indicated that, because vocational students receive hands-on learning before entering their fields, vocational students may find a job more easily relevant to their experiences. This implies, vocational students need to have knowledge on the tools and equipment used in the field. The findings of this study however disagreed with that of Fletcher and Dumford (2021) and Simoneau (2018) where it was found that TVET programmes include school-based and work-based learning through supportive business partnerships. They found that vocational education programmes use new technologies and web resources, such as online classes, to help their students excel in school and the workplace. The difference in the findings of these studies and the current study is accounted for by the difference in the educational systems of the study areas and the level of advancements in the study settings.

Also, it was found that compulsory industrial attachment for a full term with well-established fashion industries would increase the career prospects of fashion and design students. It was noted that attachment will aid students to nurture creativity and innovation which will consequently help them develop their own blog and collections to attract employers and or clients if they want to be self-employed. It was also revealed that students are sometimes admitted for the TVET fashion and design programme even when such students are unable to

read and write. These findings in a way relates with the history of vocational education in the developed world, as O'Banion (2019) found that the creation of vocational education programmes solved significant problems such as overcrowded classrooms and the demand for a skilled workforce. Lastly, the findings revealed that in-service training was necessary to keep them abreast with modern fashion and design so as to impact same on students. Teachers who have been in the classroom for years may not have much knowledge on what is in the fashion industry in terms of new machines and styles. Regular training will keep them abreast and equip them to be effective in lesson delivery.

CONCLUSION

The present study assessed the perception of TVET students and teachers on career prospects of the fashion and design programme, identified the factors that influence these career prospects, examined the relationship between skills acquisition and career prospects of TVET students, and explored innovative strategies that enhance the career prospects of students. The results showed that most TVET students perceive that the TVET programmes are not properly designed to give students employable skills. Most students also indicated a huge number of the TVET graduates are unable to go far in education because the schools are poorly resourced. However, some respondents indicated they do not think the programme was only associated with the academically weak; neither do they believe TVET students were unable to further to the tertiary level. It was also revealed that TVET students believe graduates of other higher educational institutions earn higher pay than those of TVET programmes. The respondents suggested that improving practical experience and mastering tools and trade in the industry was the best way to enhance the career prospects of fashion and design students. It was also reported that reforming the TVET programme to empower students to be self-employed after school could enhance their career prospects. Finally, the respondents proposed that resourcing the TVET schools with the relevant equipment for effective teaching and learning could positively impact the outcome of the programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- The Ghana Education Service (GES), Ministry of Education (MoE) and the TVET institutions should collaborate in equipping these institutions with modern fashion and design tools and equipment to enable students gain hands-on experience and become abreast with tools and equipment in the job market.
- Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) should support students to be able to established effective and sustainable businesses after completion of their training.
- Teachers should motivate students to study hard and commit to the programme in order to emerge successfully with the required skills needed in the job market.

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