

Constructional Value: An Appraisal of Free School Uniforms in Ghana

Mavis Koranteng^{1, *}, Victoria Doris Amankrah²,
Pamela Alikem Afua Nyadroh³

¹Department of Vocational Education, Our Lady of Apostles College of Education, Cape Coast, Ghana

²Department of Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Komenda College of Education, Komenda, Ghana

³Department of Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Ada College of Education, Ada, Ghana

Abstract

The distribution of Free School Uniforms to the public basic school pupils had saved the less privilege parents and pupils in the contemporarily Ghanaian society. There is therefore the need to appraise the constructional value of the Free School Uniforms in Ghana. The study was a descriptive survey carried out at the West Akyem Municipal Assembly in the Eastern Region of Ghana. Purposive and random sampling techniques were used to sample the schools in the circuit, teachers, parents and pupils. In all, a total of twelve (12) teachers, sixty-five (65) parents and three hundred and twelve (312) pupils were selected for this study. The data collection was facilitated through the administration of questionnaire. Descriptive statistics was applied in the analysis of data. Data were coded and quantified into frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation values. The study revealed that, the constructional value and fit of the FSUs were not in good appearances. It is recommended that, before a project of such kind starts, a brief course should be organised by stakeholders for manufacturers involved to have details of what is expected of them to update their knowledge on commercial sewing and sizing in general.

Keywords

Constructional Value, Appraisal, Free School Uniforms, West Akyem Municipal Assembly, Ghana

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1. Introduction and Background

The industrial revolution caused changes in almost every sector of industry, and created the first significant change in this clothing concept, bringing the beginnings of ready-to-wear (RTW) clothing. Cultural changes brought on by the technological revolution would also impact the popular concept of clothing. Technology sped up the pace of life, and consequently sped up the process of acquiring and wearing clothing. Due to this development, textiles were more readily available, and garments were less expensive and easier to produce. The nineteenth century began the mass acceptance of of-the-rack clothing [1]. In the early twentieth century

most significant change was seen in the technology for garment manufacture [1]. She said the nineteenth century had introduced the concept of RTW clothing, and had established such garments as acceptable, at least for men. This paved the way for the development of a market for mass manufactured clothing. By the end of the nineteenth century, women's casual clothing was also available as RTW. Technological advancement in machines for garment manufacture further reduced the time and cost of making clothing. Soon the old cornerstone of the tailor's art, cutting, was also delegated to machines [1].

In Ghana, people have believed and conclude that children who are academically weak and perform poorly in school have to end up by learning a trade. Not only that, parents who

* Corresponding author
E-mail address: bordohlity@yahoo.co.uk (M. Koranteng)

cannot afford to sponsor their wards to senior high schools as well as children whose parents are dead and don't have helpers all end up in skills acquisition. This is indicated in an International Labour Organization (ILO) (1993) report on the informal sector of the economy in Ghana [2]. A study conducted on how 72 fashion designers got their skills indicated that five (5) out of the seventy-two (72) respondents representing 7% hold degree qualification in Fashion Design and Textiles Studies, sixteen (16) of them representing 22% have Advanced Fashion Certificates, eight (8) representing 11% possess Intermediate Certificate in Fashion, forty-three (43) representing 60% had their skills going through apprenticeship to acquire training certificate in Dressmaking. This proves that most of the small scale seamstresses and tailors may not have in depth knowledge on value production of garment [3]. This confirmed the assertion made on the use of unskilled labour compromises the value standards in production of garments [4]. Most at times, these apprentices lack the requisite knowledge and key skills to come out with good garment construction details and specifications like even seam widths, neat edge finishes and neatening techniques, effective use of elements and principles of design. Small scale designers do not have enough machines which can make them produce more for export. A study on Globalization of the fashion industry and its effects on Ghanaian independent fashion Designers found out that, two (2) of the respondents representing 3% use industrial sewing machines only for production whiles forty-six (46) representing 64% making use of hand sewing machines only for production. However, Fashion education has also been improved; it is now being studied at the tertiary level of Ghana's educational institutions, where graduates are expected to acquire value demand- driven employable and marketable skills that will make them take their roles in the industrial sector, work and be economically productive [3].

For a perfect fitting and look of a garment, seam appearance and its strength have to be proper [5]. This enhances the value of the garment to meet its required end use. Therefore, fit, is one of the most important criteria consumers look for when buying readymade dresses [5]. She further explained that to get the best fit and size dimensions, manufacturers spend large amounts of money on sizing systems so as to satisfy their consumers. Again, she adds that every garment manufacturer has a target segment with certain demographic characteristics defining consumers' profile. The best range of sizing can be a key to the success factor for manufacturers [5]. To implement this, companies now are using advanced technologies and strategies to devise sizing systems and sizing categories to improve value construction of apparel. Value of a garment may also refer to the fitness for use with the level of acceptance that derives from the values of the

consumer from time to time. Value features of a garment are found in two aspects. These are the physical features and performance features. The physical features include the garment's design, construction and finish, while the performance features include aesthetic and functional performance. Consumers however evaluate the value of garment by the perceived value of different features. With these, consumers perceive value differently and this depends on the individual's desires or expectations. Value is important in all garments with school uniforms not being an exception. In Ghana, school uniforms are used at all levels except in the tertiary institutions.

In Ghana, school uniforms are compulsory in all government public schools. It is therefore a mandate for parents and guardians to provide school uniforms for the period the child is in the school. Where children are in uniforms to schools, they look neat and decent which enhance a sense of belong and makes the school pride. Pupils are to look presentable at all times in school and out of school. To do this, pupils need school uniforms that are functional, aesthetically pleasing and affordable. Clothing is not only developed to cover the body, but must fit to enhance the beauty of the individual [6]. A garment may be well constructed and have all the excellent functional and aesthetic features which may attract attention of the consumer but if it does not fit well, the consumer may not like it. School uniforms that do not fit pupils well will not make the child comfortable and smart in doing things in the school. Though children clothes are made to take care of growth, children should wear clothes that fit them and not oversized clothes. Poorly- made clothing make the wearer look sloppy and unkempt. Well-made garments on the other hand can go a long way in giving the wearer a polished, impressive appearance and also confidence. In clothing construction, the ability to judge the value of the workmanship in a garment's construction is the key. Details of construction are important, whether one is constructing or selecting a garment. Moreover, a number of construction techniques can be used to achieve an acceptable end product. The shape of clothing depends largely on the way the sections are joined. Stitches and their resulting seams are part of the crucial elements of garments construction and the construction of other articles of clothing. Other details of clothing like collars, sleeves, closures should also be off good value.

These school uniforms are washed at least once a week. Children play a lot and for that matter constructional techniques used for the uniforms must be of value so as to withstand the frequent washing and harsh weather conditions prevailing in our country. The uniforms are to help keep students in school and reduce the burden of parents. The free uniform is hoped to boost the morale of pupils who have to

wear “non-uniforms” or be in torn uniforms to schools. This provision will also hopefully help them stay in school and concentrate in the classroom without fear of the colleagues and probably even teachers making fun of them. For people to feel “good” in their garments however its constructional details are expected to be of the best value. The features (collar, sleeve, pocket,) seams and stitches, opening and fastening, and others of the FSUs must compare to international standard to give the uniforms high utility value. The purpose of this study was to assess views of pupils, parents and teachers on the constructional value and fit of the Free Supply Uniforms (FSUs). The study guided by this research question- What are the views of pupils, parents and teachers on the constructional value and fit of the FSUs?

2. Review of the Literature

For centuries most of the private and public schools around the world have made use of dress codes which entail a uniform appearance of the learners. Socialization and education are social needs that are associated with the culture they serve and school uniforms form part of the schools’ culture [7].

Notably, school uniform promotes peace in the classroom as it diminishes arguments or comparison of clothing brands over and above [8]. The clothing is supposed to protect the wearer from the weather, enhance sexual attraction and provide pleasure from the aesthetic appearance as well as status as an “extension of self” [8]. The same may be expected from the school uniforms and may specifically contribute to dissatisfaction with school uniforms because it suppresses individuality [7]. The aim of any school around the world is to have an environment that is educational in nature, with high standards that can be measured according to the learners’ performance. Learners dressed in a school uniform seem to have their attention focused on their school work and academic achievement, but when wearing casual clothing their attention seems to shift to what is in fashion and what is not. It also creates a business-like atmosphere and causes learners to have more respect for their school [9].

Educators are of the opinion that the implementation of school uniforms may help to remove other preoccupations from the academic focus of learners’ daily lives, create the best learning environment and eliminate distractions [10]. Again, school uniforms give educators a chance to recognise the potential of every learner, as they are all dressed alike and cannot be judged by the clothes they are wearing, but are evaluated by their academic achievements. Instead of limiting the individuality of learners, uniforms can help learners to stand out in this way. If learners do not wear uniforms, less affluent learners can be identified immediately

by their peers, while when school uniform is worn, it is more difficult telling which learner comes from which type of environment, making it difficult to link academic achievement to the learner’s background [10].

Parents also cite the simplification of selection and the economic benefit as important advantages to school uniforms. Besides saving parents hundreds of cedis on the purchase of school clothes, school uniforms also do away with the morning tug-of-war with children over what to wear to school. Governing bodies should think about the needs of families when deciding on school uniform policies, particularly with regard to the affordability and practicality when introducing or changing school uniforms [11]. That is if learners’ parents cannot afford the prescribed school uniform, learners might feel stigmatised. In order to prevent that in USA, school uniform policies and dress code policies were implemented in the schools. The main argument for doing so was to lower the costs of children’s clothing expenses for parents, because it would help cut down on the costs of brand-name clothing, especially for the poorer parent durability, reusability and the year-to-year consistency also increase economy.

School uniforms can eliminate mistaken gang affiliation, since some current fashions can be mistaken as gang-related clothing. Clothes such as baggy pants, coloured shoe laces, and bandannas are often mistaken as signs of gang affiliation. In addition to the above point, advocates of uniforms believe also that a further advantage of school uniforms is that it reduces gang influence, which also helps in improving academic standards. Studies in the USA showed that, upon implementation of school uniforms, academic standards rose across the school districts, violence diminished dramatically and academic achievements went up, which contributed to the implementation of school uniform policies [12].

In Ghana, the free supplied uniforms were to standardise uniforms of Government Owned Schools, stimulate the State’s economy and empower the citizens. The aims of the production of these uniforms were to create a unique identity for all students in public schools throughout the country [13]. Also, the government of Ghana used that medium to empower citizens economically through the production of local materials for the production of school uniforms. This is to encourage small and medium scale enterprises to grow. Due to that, the government of Ghana decided to procure 100 per cent of the school uniforms locally. The government committed twenty-one million Ghana cedis (Gh¢21,000,000.00) into providing free school uniforms for basic school children. The first consignment of one million six-hundred thousand Ghana cedis (Gh¢1.6 million) uniforms for children in 77 deprived districts had been distributed [13]. In the various metropolises, municipals and districts, tailors

and seamstresses were contracted to sew the school uniforms for schools in their metropolises, municipals and districts.

Apparel fit has long been of interest in clothing research because it is considered a crucial element of clothing value and customer satisfaction [14]. Due to the various characteristics of apparel, many researchers have defined apparel fit in multiple dimensions [15]. Fit is defined as the way a garment conforms to the body or the relationship between the garment and the body, and is commonly seen as one of the most important indications of the value of clothes [16]. Fit is the person's values, needs and preferences [17]. A well-fitting garment must be functional. It should allow freedom of movement, be comfortable to wear and have sufficient room for movement. It does not leave wrinkles; it is not baggy and is fashionable and pleasing to look at [18]. As such, clothing items with a good fit ought to conceal the wearer's figure faults, compliment the body and provide well-balanced proportions [19]. Therefore, a garment of the correct size, in combination with the correct body measurements, ought to result in a notable fit. "Good fit" has also been defined diversely, depending on fashion trends, standardized sizes in the fashion industry and individuals' perceptions of fit; because clothing fit are a complex property affected by fashion, style, and many other factors [20]. However, good fitting clothing should fall smoothly over body contours without clinging, pulling, binding or twisting, as well as drawing attention to the most attractive areas of the body [21]. Poor fitting clothing on the other hand tend to focus on negative features of the body, gapes easily creases, wrinkles and draws attention to the wearer. This may result in a feeling of insecurity and total discomfort for the individual [21].

fit problems are the reason for 50 percent of catalogue returns. Consumers are pressed for time and for that matter when they order a range of clothing sizes, try them on and see that the clothes do not fit they return them to the retailers. For this reason, manufacturers have come up with ways of creating a range of apparel sizes to fit their target market [22]. The Current methods of creating sizes and analyzing garment fit are:

- 1) Based on measurements of one "ideal" customer represented by a single fit.
- 2) Adjusted for additional sizes by using grade rules to define proportional increases and decreases from the base pattern.
- 3) Evaluated on the fit model visually and in two dimensions by comparing linear garment measurements to linear body measurements [23].

The school uniform is an integral element of every child's school-going years [24]. Children in different age groups

have widely varying physical, social and psychological requirements for their clothing [24]. As a result, children are expected to wear comfortable clothing for various activities in order to be physically, socially and mentally active and fit [25]. Furthermore, there is a possibility that physical changes in children could cause complications in choosing clothing especially when it comes to fit. Basing the size system on age alone also results in poor representation of actual body dimensions and shapes. Several studies have revealed that children of similar age may have varying height, shape and body proportion [26]. Research done in Malaysia demonstrated that 50% of children did not fit into clothes designed according to the age system due to poor sizing system used [27]. Also, Daily Heritage, a Ghanaian newspaper on 9th April, 2014, reported of undersized free school uniforms unable to fit pupils in schools in the Okaikoi South Education sub-metro [28]. One of the causes of sizing and fit problem is lack of standardised sizing systems [29]. A researcher, also attest to notion that clothes do not often fit children well because the sizing system used to manufacture their school uniforms is not based on a scientific understanding of body shapes and sizes of this group [30]. With the above information, one could boldly confirm that fit plays a major role when it comes to garment construction. Sizing systems is defined as a set of sizes while size category is a range of sizes that are presented in a retail situation [31]. The fit of a garment contributes, among other things, to the confidence and comfort of the wearer [32].

3. Methodology

This study is a descriptive survey. Population of this study consist of teachers, parents and pupils from 12 schools in the four Circuits in the Asamankese Zone of the West Akyem Municipality in the Eastern Region of Ghana. Purposive and random sampling techniques were used to sample the schools in the circuit, teachers, parents and pupils. In all, a total of twelve (12) teachers, sixty-five (65) parents and three hundred and twelve (312) pupils were selected for this study. The data collection was facilitated through the administration of questionnaire. Most parents and pupils who were not able to read and respond to the questionnaire, were read out and filled for them. Descriptive statistics was applied in the analysis of data. This involved the use of frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation. All data collected through open-ended items were grouped into emerging themes while those collected by the close-ended items were coded and quantified into mean and standard deviation values.

4. Findings and Discussions

Garment manufacturing processes depends on some steps and techniques. The cut pieces of fabrics are joined together to produce value construction that later results in a durable garment. Fit, on the order hand, is the way a garment conforms to the body of the wearer. A good fit is achieved when a person feels comfortable, moves freely, looks smart and wrinkles do not form on the garment. Research question sought to find out the views of teachers, parents and pupils

on the construction value and fit of the FSUs.

4.1. The Views of Teachers on the Constructional Value and Fit of the FSU's

Teachers' views on the constructional value fit of FSUs and their general comments about the construction of the FSU's can be found in Table 1. The opinions are classified as; U/I - Uncertain/Indeterminate, BE - Below Expectation, NI - Need Improvement, G – Good and VG - Very Good.

Table 1. Teachers' Opinion about the Construction of the FSU.

Specific Area	U/I	BE	NI	G	VG
	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)
General Appearance	- (-)	2(5.6)	14(38.9)	18(50)	2 (5.6)
Thread (match) and Stitching.	2(5.6)	4(11.1)	10(27.8)	16(44.4)	4(11.1)
Darts, Pleats, and Gathers.	- (-)	- (-)	24(66.7)	10(27.8)	2(5.6)
Collars.	2(5.6)	2(5.6)	6(16.7)	26(72.2)	- (-)
Sleeves.	- (-)	- (-)	24(66.7)	12(33.3)	- (-)
Placket and/ or zipper.	6 (16.7)	2 (5.6)	14(38.9)	14(38.9)	- (-)
Hems.	- (-)	6(16.7)	16(44.4)	14(38.9)	- (-)
Buttons and Buttonholes.	- (-)	6(16.7)	22(61.1)	8(22.2)	- (-)
How does the uniform fit on your pupils?	2(5.6)	4(11.1)	16(44.4)	4(11.1)	10(27.8)
Level of satisfaction in terms of the value of construction of school uniform supplied	- (-)	2(5.6)	22(61.1)	12(33.3)	- (-)

Source: Field data, 2014

Results from Table 1 with regard to teachers' opinions about the construction of the FSUs, 18(50%) of the teachers indicated that the general appearance of the uniforms were good and 16(44%) also agreed that the thread used perfectly matched the colour of the fabric. In addition, the size of the collars used for the shirts for both boys and girls were of correct size. However, majority of the teachers indicated that

darts, pleats and gathers (66.7%), sleeves (66.7%) as well as buttons and buttonholes (61%) needed improvement. For value construction, the arrangements of fullness need to be done in a way that will give shape and fit when the wearer puts on the dress. The teachers' general satisfaction with the FSUs in terms of size and fit was sought and the result can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Teachers' General Satisfaction with the FSUs in terms of Size and Fit.

Specific Area	Satisfactory		Unsatisfactory	
	Freq	(%)	Freq	(%)
Level of satisfaction in terms of the size.	8	22.2	28	77.8
Level of satisfaction in terms of the fit.	9	25.0	27	75.0

Source: Field data, 2014

Table 2 depicts that 28(77.8%) teachers saw the size of the uniforms to be unsatisfactory. They agreed that some of the uniforms were tight and others loose for the pupils. According to teachers 27(75%) of the teachers, the fit of the uniforms was also unsatisfactory. They claimed that the uniforms looked too small on some of the pupils' while others were too big for some of the pupils. This made the children not to look smart in doing things in school. This view of the teachers reflects the point made that, children are expected to wear comfortable clothing for various activities in order to be physically, socially and mentally active and fit [25]. Children in different age groups have widely varying physical, social and psychological requirements for their clothing. As such these needs to be put into consideration and not just putting all the children into three groups (small,

medium and large) as used by the manufacturers. Also, since the contracts were given to different manufacturers, as chipped in by some teachers, the manufacturers used different sizing systems to produce the uniforms. In the school set up, when a child wears oversized uniform, friends and school mates tease the child and the child does not feel comfortable [24]. To maintain sizing standards generally vary from one company to another as a way to build up a distinctive fit that appeal to their target customers. Lack of sizing standards for school uniforms may create confusion and irritation and be a major cause of consumer dissatisfaction. The use of different sizing standards may result in a preference for specific brands and specific retailers [29]. It should however not be promoted due to the confusion that may occur. Teachers explained that some of the uniforms

were given to pupils in nursery as the sizes were too small for the pupils' who the FSU's were meant for. This is confirmed by a newspaper article in Daily Heritage published in 2014, reported of undersized free school uniforms unable to fit pupils in schools in the Okaikoi South Education sub-metro [28]. This is an indication that the problem of sizing defect was not only for the pupils in the West Akyem Municipality. As teachers are always with school children, the same teachers normally see children with problems. As such they are able to detect problems with pupils' uniforms. Table 3 shows a cross tabulation of the problem's teachers identified.

Table 3. Problems with the FSUs Identified by Teachers.

Problem Identified	I have seen some			
	Yes		No	
	Freq	(%)	Freq	(%)
Armhole tear	28	77.8	8	22.2
Shirt side seam tear	18	50	18	50
Torn belt holes	18	50	18	50
Tight fit around hipline	18	50	18	50
Loose buttons	30	83.3	6	16.7
Torn pockets	20	55.6	16	44.4

Source: Field data, 2014

From Table 3, 28(77.8%) of the teachers saw pupils with armhole tear, 30 (83.3%) indicated that the pupils had loose buttons and 20 (55.6%) were of the view that there were torn pockets. With some knowledge in clothing and textiles, these teachers assessed the school uniforms based on what they have learnt, and observed that the FSUs needed to be restructured in terms of production. Their general impression was that they were not satisfied with the value of construction and the fit of the FSUs. Most of the problems identified were related to seams and stitches. This is an indication that the seams and stitches of the FSU's were not strong enough for the fabric and the daily stresses it undergoes. When long stitches are used, usually the stitches are less durable and considered to be of lower value because they are subjected to abrasion and likely to snag [33]. Again, the size of a sewing thread can also be crucial for seam value as the improper selection of sewing threads size directly affects the seam value of the uniforms. As the uniforms were sewn in a short period of time, these might be possible causes of their poor value. The findings of this study was supported by previous research conducted on quality of Construction Processes of Government Supplied Uniforms in the West Akyem Municipality of Ghana published in *the International*

Journal of Humanities & Social Studies revealed that, the manufacturers performed poorly on "making an opening/closure", "fusing interfacing" and "waist band" [34].

4.2. The Views of Parents on the Constructional Value and Fit of the FSU's

On the part of the parents, when they started repairing their wards' uniforms, the problems they encountered with the FSU's, their opinion about the construction of the FSU's, their general satisfaction with the FSU's and their recommendations on the constructional value of the FSU's supplied were sought. Table 4 depicts problems parents identified on their ward's uniforms.

Table 4. Problems with the FSU's Identified by Parents.

Problem Identified	I have seen some			
	Yes		No	
	Freq	(%)	Freq	(%)
Armhole tear	35	53.8	30	46.2
Shirt side seam tear	30	46.2	35	53.8
Torn belt holes	6	9.2	59	90.8
Tight fit around hipline	8	42.3	57	87.5
Loose buttons	31	47.7	34	52.3
Torn pockets	22	33.8	43	66.7
Other problems	15	23.1	50	76.9

Source: Field data, 2014

The study revealed that 35 parents (53.8) had problem with armhole tear, 46.2% experienced problem with side seam tear while 47.7% also had problem with loose buttons. On the other hand, 59 parents representing 90.8% had not seen problems with belt holes, 87.7% thought the fit was good for their children and 76.9% of the parents had other problems. Many of the problems were associated with poor fit and improper stitching. Problems experienced may contribute to dissatisfaction with school uniforms due to non-conformance with expectation. Other parents who did not see any problem told the researcher that their children were using the uniform in addition to others they have. Again, others also explained that the uniforms given to their children were oversized and had to keep them for years. Considering the problems identified, the researcher wanted to find out when the problems were identified. Table 5 depicts when parents started repairing their wards uniforms.

Table 5. Time that Parents Started Repairing their Wards' Uniforms.

Specific Area	No Repairs	0-6 Months	7-11 Months	1-2 years	Above 2 Years
	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)
Blouse (female)	24(36.9)	16(24.6)	17(26.2)	8(12.3)	-
Pinafore (female)	25(38.5)	20(30.8)	17(26.1)	3(4.6)	-
Shirt (male)	20(30.8)	23(35.4)	16(24.6)	4(6.2)	2(3.0)
Shorts (male)	21(32.3)	26(40.0)	14(21.6)	3(4.6)	1(1.5)

Source: Field data, 2014

Table 5 shows that, 24(36.9%) of the parents made no repairs to their wards blouses, thus 63.1% had some repair works to do within the first two years. Out of that, 16(24.6%) out of the number repaired blouses within the first six months. The table shows that, on pinafore, 25(38.5%) had no repairs done while 20(30.8%) were repaired within the first six months. For boys' shorts, 44(67.7%) had total repairs of which 26(40.0%) got repairs within the first half of the year they received the uniforms. It can be observed from Table 5 that a lot of repairs were done within the first year of receiving the uniforms.

Considering the period of time for repairs as a yardstick to determine the value of the uniforms, the value of the girls' uniforms could be said to be better than that of the boys. This notwithstanding, the usage and care of the uniforms could have also called for the repairs not necessarily because of poor value. Problems on fabrics can never be eliminated since dresses or uniforms, no matter their value will surely become out of use. But the lifespan may call for attention as durable attire or not. Parents were asked to give their general view or opinion on the uniforms of their ward. The result can be found in Table 6.

Table 6. Parents' Opinion about the Construction of the FSU's.

Specific Area	Uncertain /Indeterminate	Below Expectation	Need Improvement	Good	Very Good
	Freq (%)	Freq(%)	Freq(%)	Freq(%)	Freq(%)
General Appearance	2(3.1)	4(6.2)	8(12.3)	51(78.5)	- (-)
Thread (match) and Stitching.	- (-)	4(6.2)	15(23.1)	46(70.8)	- (-)
Darts, Pleats, and Gathers.	11(16.9)	- (-)	17(26.2)	37(56.9)	- (-)
Collars.	- (-)	1 (2.1)	17 (35.4)	30 (62.5)	- (-)
Sleeves.	1 (1.5)	4(6.2)	24(36.9)	35(53.8)	1 (1.5)
Zipper.	1 (1.5)	5(7.7)	16(24.6)	43(66.2)	- (-)
Waistline area treatment	8(12.3)	3(4.6)	20(30.8)	34(52.3)	- (-)
Buttons and Buttonholes.	1(1.5)	6(9.2)	18(27.7)	39(60.0)	1 (1.5)
How does the uniform fit on your ward?	- (-)	9(13.8)	25 (38.5)	31(47.7)	- (-)

Source: Field data, 2014

Parents assessed the constructions on the uniforms through visual inspection. Their assessment was done based on how the uniform fit the child, period the buttons and seams took before getting off. On the parents' opinion, 51 (78.5%) were of this view that the appearance of the uniforms was good.

With the stitching, 46 (70.8%) thought that it was also good. The parents (66.2%) explained that the way the zippers were fixed were good. On the buttons and buttonholes, 39 (60.0%) agreed that they were well done while 6 (9.2%) said the fixing of buttons were below expectation.

Table 7. Parents' General Satisfaction with the FSU's in Terms of Size and Fit.

Specific Area	Too Small (Tight)		Too Big (Loose)		Good	
	Freq	(%)	Freq	(%)	Freq	(%)
Level of satisfaction in terms of the size of the FSUs supplied to your ward(s)	19	29.2	16	24.6	30	46.2
Level of satisfaction in terms of the fit of the FSUs supplied to your ward(s)	19	29.2	14	21.5	32	49.3

Source: Field data, 2014

As part of the general opinions of parents on the uniforms, they were specifically asked of the size and fit of the uniforms on their wards. Table 7 shows that parents were greatly satisfied in terms of the size and fit of the FSUs provided by the government of Ghana. The table depicts that 30 (46.3%) respondents expressed satisfaction with the size and 32 (49.3%) with fit of the FSUs. There was no difference between those who said that the uniform was too small 19(29.2%) and the 19(29.2%) who said it was too big. Parents explained that when uniforms are bigger than a child's size, the child can take the uniform to the next class and also because they grow fast, the uniform can cater for the growth. The views of respondents confirm that, children grow quickly in different ways and at different rates, therefore sizes of clothing are significant in giving them the right fit which allows room for growth [25]. Other parents were of the view that since they cannot afford the purchase of the uniform, they were happy and wish

government can assist them till their children complete the school. Since the supply of the FSU's seemed to have been welcomed by the parents who benefitted from it, their recommendations were sought. Table 8 provides summary of some comments received from parents.

Table 8. Parents' Recommendations on the Constructional Value of the FSU's supplied?

Recommendation	Freq	%
Tailors should take their time to sew	3	4.6
Users should be measured before sewing	36	55.4
Materials should be given to parents to sew	3	4.6
Tailors should be given enough time	2	3.1
correct thread that matches the fabric colour should be used	3	4.6
The construction was well done	14	21.5
Stop providing the uniforms	1	1.5
Most pupils don't wear the uniforms	3	4.6

Source: Field data, 2014

From table 8 some respondents (parents) 36(55.4%)

suggested changes in the FSUs procedures, that the users (pupils) should be measured before sewing of the uniforms is done. Their reason was to value work done as well as good fit when pupils wear the uniforms. This confirmed the research done in Malaysia, which explained that 50% of children did not fit into their uniforms designed according to age system due to poor sizing system used [27]. Again, Daily Heritage, a Ghanaian newspaper on 9th of April, 2014 reported of undersized free school uniforms unable to fit pupils in schools in the Okaikoi South Education sub-metro [28]. This can cause financial lost to the state because children were not measured. Parents with this view further explained that when children are measured, the problem with sizing will be reduced drastically. Other respondents, 14

(21%), however, indicated that the construction was well done. It was only one parent (1.5%) who suggested that government should stop providing the uniforms. This indicates that the FSUs actually came to rescue parents who find it very difficult to pay school fees and at the same time provide uniforms for their wards to go to school.

4.3. The Views of Pupils on the Constructional Value and Fit of the FSU's

The respondents were asked about the maintenance of the school uniforms to establish how soon repairs were made. An indication of the type of repairs is reflected in Table 9.

Table 9. Time that Pupil Started Repairing their Uniforms.

Specific Area	No Repairs	0-6 months	7-11 months	1-2years	Above 2 years
	Freq (%)	Freq(%)	Freq(%)	Freq(%)	Freq(%)
Blouse (female)	34(25)	20(15)	24(17.6)	26(19)	32(23.4)
Pinafore (female)	32(23.5)	30(22.1)	15(11)	32(23.5)	27 (19.9)
Shirt (male)	65(38.7)	72(42.9)	18(10.7)	8(4.7)	5 (3.0)
Shorts (male)	76 (45.2)	58(34.5)	25(14.9)	5(3.0)	4 (2.4)

Source: Field data, 2014

Table 9 shows repairs that were made by users and the highest were done on shirts for boys as indicated by respondent 72(42.9%) of the shorts 58(34.5%). On the part of the girls, 27(19.9%) said that they used their pinafore for two years before repairs were made while 32(23.4%) of the girls said they used their blouse for two years before repairs. Bringing together the uniforms of the various genders, 49% girls and 84% of the boys had no repairs on their uniforms

within the period under review. Such responses were in line with the evaluation of the product value as literature had indicated that consumers continue to judge the value of the products based on their performance and services life [29]. Pupils were those who used the FSUs so they were asked to come out with specific problems they had with their uniforms. Table 10 shows the results obtained.

Table 10. Problems with the FSU's Identified by Pupils.

Problem Identified	Yes		No	
	Freq	(%)	Freq	(%)
Armhole tear	149	49	155	51.0
Shirt side seam tear	45	14.8	259	85.2
Torn belt holes	25	29.4	60	70.6
Tight fit around hipline	86	28.3	218	71.7
Waistline seam tear	69	22.7	235	77.3
Loose buttons	180	59.2	124	40.8
Torn pockets	139	45.7	165	54.3
Other problems	114	37.5	190	62.5

Source: Field data, 2014

There were 259 (89.2%) of pupils who indicated that there was nothing wrong with the side seams with 45 (14.8%) experiencing side seam tear. With buttons, 180 (59.2%) pupils experienced loose buttons while 124 (40.8%) did not. Failure of school uniforms to meet pupils' expectations will inevitably result in consumer dissatisfaction. Pupils' expectations of the uniforms were considered in terms of size and fit of the uniforms. Their views can be found in Table 11. There were 136 girls who responded to issues concerning the pinafore and 168 boys who responded to issues concerning

the shorts. They all had shirts to wear and so a total of 304 respondents addressed issues on the shirts and gave their general impression of the FSU's. With the pinafore for girls, 30 pupils, representing 22.1% said they were good. This may suggest that 77.9% of the girls had some problems with their pinafores, either they were loose or tight or long or short. The shorts were supplied to the boys. Considering the width of the shorts, 50 (29.7%) said it was good, 88 (52%) said it was big (loose). Out of the 168 boys, 43 representing 26% explained that the shorts length was good, with 77 (45.8%) of

them indicating the lengths were long. The waist of the shorts for the boys was said to be good by 75 (44.6%) with 71 (42.3%) indicating that the waist of the short were big. Taking into consideration the shirts, 48 (15.8%) of the respondents explained that the shirts were good, 108 (35.5%) said the shirts were big (loose) while 118 (38.8%) were neutral. With the length of the shirts, 98 (32.2%) indicated

that the shirts were long. With the sleeve’s length, 115 (37%) pupils pointed out that the lengths were good while 98 (32.2%) said the sleeves were long, however, 114(37.5%) were unable to tell. The width of the sleeves, 109 (35.9%) of the pupils agreed that the sleeves were good as 152 (50%) said the width of the sleeves were big (loose) whilst 7 (2.3%) pupils indicating that it was small.

Table 11. Pupils General Satisfaction with the FSU’s in Terms of Size and Fit.

What is your satisfaction with:	Good	Big (Loose)	Small (Tight)	High	Low	Short	Long	Indeterminate
	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)
--waistline level	46(33.8)	-(-)	-(-)	39(28.7)	51(37.5)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)
--pinafore (length)	30(22.1)	28(20.6)	16(11.8)	-(-)	-(-)	25(18.3)	37(27.2)	-(-)
--pinafore (width)	61(44.8)	47(34.6)	28(20.6)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)
--shorts (width)	50(29.7)	88(52.4)	27(16.1)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	3(1.8)
--shorts (length)	43(25.6)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	45(26.8)	77(45.8)	3(1.8)
--short (waist fit)	75(44.6)	71(42.3)	19(11.3)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	3(1.8)
--shirt	48(15.8)	108(35.5)	30(9.9)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	118(38.8)
--shirt (length)	44(14.5)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	48(15.8)	98(32.2)	114(37.5)
--sleeve (length)	115(37.8)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	35(11.5)	122(40.1)	32(10.5)
--sleeve width	109(35.9%)	152(50%)	7(2.3%)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	36(11.8)
--the fit of the FSUs supplied to you.	79(26.0)	128(42.1)	90(29.6)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	-(-)	7(2.3)

Source: Field Data, 2014

Looking at the general fit of the FSUs, 79 (26%) of the pupils submitted that the uniforms were good while 128 (42.1%) explained that the uniforms were big with 90 (29.6%) indicating that the uniforms were small. This points to the fact that majority (225) representing 74% of the pupils were dissatisfied with the FSUs. They gave several reasons which included: uniforms either being loose, tight, long or short. This confirms a publication in the Daily Heritage in 2014 which reported of undersized free school uniforms unable to fit pupils in schools in the Okaikoi South Education sub-metro [28]. Pupils who were satisfied with the school uniforms mentioned that the style was good, and were satisfied with the fit. Others mentioned that the school uniforms gave them some joy on what to wear for school. The reasons that pupils provided for their satisfaction coincided with those of their teachers, that is, providing a choice of what to wear to school and as a way of identification with mates. With this analysis, one could agree that, school uniform is an integral element of every child’s school-going years [24]. Children in different age groups have widely varying physical, social and psychological requirements for their clothing.

Therefore, designers must sew to cater for various characteristics mentioned above. However, basing the size system on age alone results in poor representation of actual body dimensions and shapes. Several studies have revealed that children of similar age may have varying height, shape and body proportion [26]. Also, poor sizing system used by manufacturers create more fit problems as consumers have to try on a garment before buying it or alter the garment before wearing it to ensure a good fit. These attests to the notion that clothes do not often fit children well because the sizing

system used to manufacture their school uniforms is not based on a scientific understanding of body shapes and sizes of this group [30]. This confirms the problem of fit with FSUs by pupils, where some were given over sized uniforms and others with under sized.

5. Conclusions and Recommendation

The study revealed that, the constructional value and fit of the FSUs were not in good appearances. Because, uniforms sewn in a short period of time, these might be possible causes of their poor value. Also, some pupils, were given over sized uniforms and others with under sized. The study also revealed that, the FSUs actually came to rescue parents who find it very difficult to pay school fees and at the same time provide uniforms for their wards to go to school. It is recommended that, before a project of such kind starts, a brief course should be organised by stakeholders for manufacturers involved to have details of what is expected of them to update their knowledge on commercial sewing and sizing in general.

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