



EVOLUTION AND IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL UNIFORMS IN CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

PuneetAmarjeet Singh,

Assistant Professor, Department of Fashion Design & Technology, Delhi Skill and
Entrepreneurship University, Delhi, Email ID: pasgft@gmail.com

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Dr. ManpreetManshahia,

Assistant Professor, Amity School of Fashion Technology, Amity University Uttar
Pradesh, India

Abstract:

School years are formative, and uniform clothing is an important part of school life. This paper is a review of past studies on school uniform clothing. The paper includes literature on the evolution of school uniforms and their contribution to the academic environment. In addition to fundamental functions of clothing, school uniforms are also required to facilitate ease in acquiring education. School uniforms can address issues related to security, discipline, and substance consumption. Comparison among school uniforms of different countries and differences in the policy for school uniforms are discussed. The design and comfort of school uniforms are also part of this review paper. This paper concludes with the scope of future studies on school uniforms.

Keywords: Comfort, Education, Policy, School uniform

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1. Introduction

Education is required for the development of society and for inculcating humanitarian values in future citizens. Uniform clothing needs to be instrumental in achieving the goals of education. Therefore, school uniforms justifiably belong to the category of functional garments. School uniform clothing is required to facilitate ease of movement during all cognitive and physical activities. A uniform is a noun, that refers to a dress of a distinctive design or fashion worn by members of a particular group and serving as a means of identification (Merriam-Webster,2017). A uniform can also be considered as distinctive clothing having certain characteristics.

The evolution of school uniforms provides information regarding the sensitivity of educators towards discipline, security, and other needs that school uniforms fulfil.

Since the beginning of formal education, the receptivity towards uniform clothing has varied across people and countries. Mayer (1963) discussed disliking school uniforms in American society, it is stated that disliking school uniforms were due to restrictions on the choice of clothing. Schachter R. (2005) discussed the influence of clothing on the image of a person. This study raised the question of whether school uniforms are making students the person society expects them to be.



2. Discussion

2.1 Evolution of uniforms:



Figure 2.1: Painting of the first uniform



Figure 2.2: 19th-century image of students donning a uniform of Radcliff school at Hamlet

Horn, M.J. (1975) mentioned uniform clothing as a second skin to the students. The very first use of the learner's uniform was in England; in the early 13th Century. The clothing used as the uniform was called 'cappa clausa'. The students were instructed to use this clothing by the contemporary Archbishop of Canterbury. Later, in the 17th-century uniform clothing was introduced at a charity school run by the Christ's Hospital in England. There are different literary works mentioning the

history of school uniforms and most historians have agreed on this information about school uniforms, Scott, J. (2014). Figure 2.1 is an image of a painting that is considered one of the oldest school uniforms; this uniform is a blue coat. The use of blue colour is assigned to the easy and economical availability of blue dyes. Figure 2.2 shows 19th-century uniform-clad students at Radcliff school, (Scott J. 2014).

2.2 Importance of school uniforms:

Gouws, E. & Kruger, N. (1994), discussed the need for school uniforms and the perspective of education. This study highlighted the role of school clothing in an adolescent's life.

The 42nd president of the USA, Mr Bill Clinton supported a uniform clothing policy, especially for security reasons (Clinton. J.1996). Ohio School Boards Association, (2006), also claimed that uniforms help in the personality development of students. The board also stated that traits like helping others and team feeling also develop if uniforms are worn on regular basis. McVeigh & Brian (1997), and McVeigh (2000) also explained how uniforms play a role in inculcating certain values and practices, like helping others, teamwork, etc.

Holloman, L. O. et al.(1996) presented a holistic approach to address violence in public schools and dress-related behavioural problems. Mathison, S. and Ross, E. W. (2008) stated that violent threats were becoming common on campuses. They used the word "battleground" to highlight the gravity of the problem. They perceived school uniforms as a solution to many problems. Boutelle, M. (2008) explained the constructive use of school uniforms, this study explained that school uniforms relieve parents from clothing competition among the children and provide an academic environment with more effective learning. There are many scholars, e.g., Jones (1998); Campbell, I.D. (2001); Murray, (2002), Bartsch, (2005), Nash, N.W. and Bhattacharya K. (2009), etc. who summarized in their work that uniform clothing is in the learners' academic and security interest.

Stafford, M. E., and Wade, K. (2003) have described that uniforms help identify and deal with the presence of

gangs on school campuses. Sommers N.L. (2001) and Gentile E. (2010) also insisted that uniform clothing helps in reducing discipline-related problems. Murray, R. K. (1997) surveyed the impact of school uniforms on school climate at two schools and his conclusion was popular with the name CASE, i.e., "Comprehensive Assessment of School Environments". He explained that uniforms are instrumental in providing positive feedback on climate. This study suggested that school uniforms help to create and enhance the academic environment. Brunsmma, D.L., et al. (1998) studied the effects of uniforms on academic achievement and regularity in attending school. They also discussed the association of school uniforms with reduced substance use. They found school uniforms supportive in addressing behavioural problems among students to some extent.

Bonami F., et al. (2000) discussed the need for uniform clothing, they explained the merits of applying uniform policy along with the implications of strict imposition of uniform policy. Daugherty, R. F. (2002) advocates uniforms, as it makes the path of poor and weaker people to reach education easier. White, K. (2000) in his work discussed school uniforms from the viewpoint of fitness for the purpose. This study emphasized how uniforms must be a means for achieving academic and personality goals for a better society.

Gentile, E. &Imberman, S. (2009), have a positive approach to school uniforms as they used the phrase "dressed to success" in their work. This study propounded that school uniforms have the potential to influence discipline and performance for good.

Bodine, A. (2003) in his work also accentuated that uniform clothing could help students to perform better. Firmin,



M., et al. (2006), had analysed the utility of uniforms through interaction with the students and other adult stakeholders. One of the primary intents of implementing uniform clothing is to remove distractions, parents and adult stakeholders share this opinion while children hold a contrasting belief. Cumming, V. (2004), stated that uniform facilitates a special image to a group in his work, he discussed uniform in the context of the history of fashion.

M. (2006) has questioned whether credit for improvement can be assigned to uniforms only. Yeung, R. (2009), suggested that uniform is not the remedy to all ills associated with the education system and school campuses.

2.3: Policy for uniform clothing in the global scenario

The acceptance of uniforms was not very high in America, Myers, M. S. (1963). This was considered a dictate, curbing freedom to choose one's clothing. The policy for school uniforms is not the same globally. Some countries have a compulsory uniform policy like Japan, some countries like Germany have no such policy and some countries like France have a flexible uniform policy. India has uniform clothing mandatory in all high schools. Nawani D (2021) perceived mandating uniform clothing as an attempt to homogenize the environment of the schools.

Evans, D., et al. (2008) explained that in Nigeria number of enrolled students in schools has increased as a result of the free distribution of school uniforms. The sentiment for the country is an integral part of the culture of some nations like Japan and the Japanese uniform policy is strict, Yoneyama, S., (1999). Tamura, Y. (2004) performed a Blumerian study on changes in school uniforms in the Japanese education system. This study stated that decades-

old rules for school uniforms may be changed because students and parents both want things to change. Shimizu, H. (2002) informs that Japanese education policymakers project uniform clothing as an instrument to develop a mindset that is required to contribute to national development. He also adds that the uniform clothing in Japan is not considered a status symbol, it is above sociocentrism and individualism.

2.4 Design elements and comfort in school uniforms:

Fussell, P. (2003) explained that a uniform affects the personality of the wearer. The school uniforms' colour and design play a vital role in the acceptance and liking among students. The comfort of school uniform clothing has different needs, climate and geography are obvious factors those influence clothing comfort. School uniform clothing being functional wear should facilitate ease of accomplishing the purpose of occupation. De Klerk, H.M. & Lubbe, S., (2004) studied that the liking for aesthetics of clothing has increased with time among youngsters, this study also mentions that the school uniform confines choosing clothing for students. Cho, H.S., & Lee, J. (2005) explained children's increasing sensitivity towards fashion and trends. These studies suggested that school uniforms must fulfil students' expectations of visual aesthetics to increase acceptance of uniform clothing among students (Alleyne S. et al., 2003)

Many societies also put some cultural and religious demands on school uniforms. Now school uniforms are getting higher acceptance in the USA (Study international staff, 2015). Proctor, Tammy, M. (2002) studied the clothing of scouts and guides and discussed the appearance of these clothing from a visual



aesthetic viewpoint. The school management deals with minor mischiefs as well as major crimes, often experiencing that clothing and fashion work as catalysts to many problems. This issue may be sorted by adding fashion elements to the uniform clothing of students' choice. European and American countries use trousers and shirts (with or without a blazer coat) as school uniforms.

Colonial influence is found in the uniforms of many countries. All over the world many countries use western outfits as school uniforms, Figures 2.3 and 2.4 show Mexican (mexicofile.blogspot.com) and Korean (amorq.com) students in uniforms respectively. In the recent past, UAE allowed traditional Kandura Emirati dress as school uniform (Khaleej Times, August 2022).



Figure 2.3 Mexican students



Figure 2.4 South Korean student

In some schools in African countries like Tanzania, Uganda, Sudan etc. boys wear skirts as school uniforms. Figure 2.5 shows Sudanese students wearing skirts (talkofjuba.com 2021).



Figure 2.5 Sudanese students



Figure 2.6: Bhutanese student

Bhutan always kept traditional costumes as uniform clothing (figure 2.6, amorq. com,2022). The girls' clothes are called "Kira" and the boys' are called "Gho". Students used to carry all textbooks and school supplies in their clothes, now many students have started using bags.

Uniform clothing needs to provide an adequate amount of thermophysiological and tactile comfort to students for performing their cognitive and physical activities. Armand V. Cardello (2005), attempted to find a relationship between exam performance and perceived clothing comfort. This study suggested that comfortable clothing helps in performing better and more formal wear leads to a lower score.

Textile material used in making uniforms play a role, Singh, P. A., et al. (2022) found that uniforms made from twill-woven fabrics can offer better tactile comfort.

Improvement in the standardisation of comfort measurement would help reduce subjectivity in evaluating the comfort of a clothing system. The need for the development of a rating scale on the basis of variables pertaining to the wearer. The rating scale on the basis of age, gender and type of activities can be developed and used to provide students with comfortable clothing.

Students are required to perform many tasks, including cognitive skills and

physical movements. Some schools in Europe have allowed students to put on shorts in summer replacing trousers (bbc.com/news/uk-england-devon-480557259, May 2019)

3. Conclusion:

There are several studies discussing different aspects of school uniforms. Some studies explained the benefits of school uniforms from a security and disciplined point of view. Such studies emphasize the prohibitive and controlling characteristics of school uniforms. There are many studies analysing the constructive characteristics of uniform clothing. These studies examine whether uniforms and clothing contribute to improvement in academic and extra-curricular performance, and in most studies, uniforms were found helpful. School clothing is required to offer ease in acquiring education. School uniform clothing offers easy identity to the students of an organization, this results in the formation of an image of the educational organization. There have always been many issues of discipline that caused damage to the academic environment of the campuses. The need for uniform clothing has been discussed maximum in this respect almost in all American, Australian, and European countries. The school management and other stakeholders may analyse the scope



of enhancing its acceptance and improving technical features associated with uniform clothing.

An extensive exploration of studies on school uniforms enabled us to conclude that there is a potential for research work on school uniform comfort. Students are the future of society, and school years are the formative years, school uniform is a vital part of school life. School uniforms must be instrumental in achieving the goal of education, i.e., holistic development of the students so that they can contribute to the development of their country and prove they're useful to humankind.

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