The Metaphor of Ghanaian Cloth: Decoding the Symbols in Ghanaian wax prints.

I received a support of $8,400.00 from the IUSB Faculty Research and Development Grant to fund my research trip to Ghana. The money was used for airfare to Ghana, board and lodge, ground transportation in Ghana and research assistant honorarium. I was in Ghana for seven weeks (June 28 to August 18, 2011).

For the duration of my stay, I lived mostly in Accra, Ghana. I also travelled to other research sites and surrounding areas to conduct the follow up research on data obtained during the previous year when I was in Ghana. Some of the research sites I visited included Kumasi, Tema, Cape Coast, Sunyani, Techiman and Techimantia. I took pictures of wax prints at the Makola and Mallam markets and the Arts center in Accra and interviewed the wax print vendors. At the other sites mentioned [using the strategy of triangulation] I interviewed cloth vendors, elderly and middle aged women and men about the names of wax prints and their meanings. I also interviewed a focus group of youngsters and students about their knowledge of wax prints.

With ample time of seven weeks, I was able to capture enough data for the research and to identify the educational implication of the symbols in Ghanaian wax prints.

I did not encounter any problems; my interviewees (informants) were extremely cooperative. With my laptop, I was able to transfer the pictures taken with a report and critique of the names and meanings immediately (before I forgot them).

I have written up the full paper of the research with the historical and educational implications of symbols and patterns, the meanings, relevance and educational implication of Ghanaian wax prints. Most of the ideographic names have been identified to support the instructional strategy called synetics (the use of analogies and their classroom application.

I presented the full paper at the 82nd Annual meeting of the Indiana Academy of the Social Sciences on October 14, 2011. It caught the attention of so many that, it was among the few presentations selected and recorded at the conference and posted on “youtube” by the conference organizers.

I have submitted the paper for publication in the Journal of IASS.

I have also reduced the data and the report to a power point presentation for reference at the Center for Global Education and posted on the H-Drive of the School of education for use by professors who would like to add this as another dimension of global education in their classes. The power point presentation has become a new resource in my E-201 class (Multicultural Education and Global Awareness). As a resource at the Center for Global Education, teachers in the Michiana area can borrow the PowerPoint or poster board presentation for use in their classes. I also plan to present it to an art class to bring the traditional element of art to art students regarding pictographs and ideographs.

All of this would not have been possible without the support from the Indiana University-South Bend Faculty Research and Development Grant. Please accept my sincere appreciation and gratitude!