

CORPORATE IMAGE IN THE UNIVERSITIES AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE KNUST LOGO

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ABSTRACT

Every institution needs to be recognised through its logo. This study has put the logo of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi in the spotlight. A critical analysis has been made to highlight the many inconsistencies in the form and use of the logo both officially and unofficially. The study has also established that there is no record to show how the logo came into being, neither is there any trace of the original logo design. Different interpretations of the logo are currently in use. This is quite disturbing because it lends the logo to various forms of abuse and misuse. Appropriate recommendations have been made to enable KNUST enhance its corporate image through its logo.

Keywords: Corporate Identity, Logo, Logotype, Corporate Image, Corporate Design Standards Manual, Artistic Elements.

INTRODUCTION

It is rather unfortunate and regrettable that some notable organisations and institutions in this country do not pay particular attention to certain vital aspects of their corporate image, specifically the use of their corporate identity symbols, commonly known as the Logo. It is even more worrying if such an institution or organisation has an academic department, within it, which trains students to design, among others, logos and other symbols, and handle identity programmes for corporate bodies.

The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) sited in Kumasi, Ghana is one of such institutions which, unfortunately, pay less attention to the application of its corporate identity. This may go a long way to adversely affect the corporate image of the University. This paper seeks to critically analyse the Logo of the University in detail, and suggest the need to place optimum premium on the proper use and application of the Logo.

What is a Logo?

The word 'logo', since the mid-20th century, has been the shortening of the words "logogram", and "logotype." (Aldrich-Ruenzel and Fennell, 1991)

The Cambridge International Dictionary of English (Encarta.msn.com, 2003) defines a logo as "a picture, pattern or way of writing its name that an organisation uses as its symbol and puts it on its products. A logo is thus a unique symbol or design that represents an organisation." Another definition from the internet (www.al-logodesign.com, 2003) states that "a logo is a graphic representation of an organisation's identity which is usually composed of a symbol, illustration and/or typography (sometimes called the 'logotype')." Yet another source (www.woohoo.com, 2003) defines a logo as "a design used by an organisation on its letterhead, advertising material, and signs as an emblem by which the organisation can easily be recognised". From the foregoing definitions, it can be deduced that a logo is simply a symbol which identifies an organisation or institution differently from another. It is also evident that every institution or organisation which believes in maintaining a unique identity must of necessity have a logo. A logo is the cornerstone of corporate identity of any organisation or institution (www.knust.edu.gh, 2003). It is usually the most charged design element of a company, organisation or institution. It is a fact that every academic institution has a logo of a unique nature which identifies it uniquely.

The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology no doubt uses a symbol which it calls its logo, and which identifies it uniquely as shown in Figure 1, and as used on the official Journal of the University of Science and Technology Vol. 15: 2, 3 of 1995. Figure 2, however, gives another variation of the KNUST logo as used on another edition of the University Journal Vol. 19: 1, 2, and 3, of 1999. Figure 3a is yet another version of the logo as used on the official letterhead of the Registrar of the University. A quick glance at all the three versions of the logos brings out differences. The question one may ask is that which of the three versions is the "authentic" logo design of the University?



Fig. 1: Logo on one KNUST Journal



Fig. 2: Logo on one KNUST Journal



Fig. 3a: Logo on official letterhead



Fig. 3b: Part of Logo showing the banner

This paper makes reference to a few other logo designs of foreign Universities including those of Diversity University [Fig. 4], Saint Louis University [Fig. 5], WooHoo University [Fig. 6], Saint Mary's [Fig. 7], and University of Bradford [Fig. 8] for comparison. The logos of these institutions are consistent in their applications and use. A statement from the University of Bradford on the use of its logo vividly explains the point. It states that "Everything we do and produce should reflect the University of Bradford's identity very clearly and consistently. Everything we produce using our logo - from business cards to exhibition stands should reinforce our identity". (www.du.org/images/logo/DUlogo, 2003). Any variations of the logos are not permitted whatsoever, otherwise the documents on which the logos appear cannot be validated.



Fig. 4: Logo on Diversity University



Fig. 5: Logo of Saint Louis University



Fig. 6: Logo of WooHoo University



Fig. 7: Logo of Saint Mary's University



Fig. 8: Logo of University of Bradford

The Qualities of a Logo

Every logo must be a unique symbol, so unique that it must stand out from the crowd. It is not simply a graphic device to denote one business from another, but like a national flag, a charged symbol of corporate philosophy. A logo design should attract attention, leave an impression, and reflect the overall 'feel' of the organisation or the institution it represents. Every organisation or institution has its own 'personality', and just as human personalities are complex, so too are product and organisational personalities.

The reason for developing a particular mark or symbol is often based on research into the institution or the organisation's mission, and the synthesis of its ideals into a symbol. The logo of Saint Louis University [Fig. 5], for example, is a stylised "fleur-de-lis" containing artistic elements unique to the University and its Catholic, Jesuit heritage. The artistic elements include a crown which represents the crown of Saint King Louis IX of France, namesake of the city and the University, and the cross within which are found the letters "IHS", being the first three letters of the name Jesus in Greek, and which are also traditional Catholic symbols. (www.buildingbrands.com)

The logo of WooHoo University [Fig. 6] also has four symbols. They each have meaning and serve as a representation of the purpose and vision of the University. They include a Graduation Cap which signifies the ultimate goal of the students of WooHoo University – learning as a change in behaviour. The others are "Lightning Bolt" which symbolises the spirit of creativity and inspiration, and the Hand which serves as the reminder of whom this institution was built for. The last symbol represents the marriage of learning and fun at WooHoo University (www.slu.edu/newslinks, 2003) In effect, there should be a meaning to every artistic element used in a logo.

All the logos of the foreign Universities referred to in Figures 4 to 8 spell out details of the meaning of the elements. This description is normally provided by the artist who designed the logo and documented, as the institutions listed above have done.

Unfortunately, in the case of the logo of the KNUST, it appears that there is no found document stating the identity of the original designer, the meaning of the artistic elements used in the logo design, and the dimensions of the logo itself. Enquiries from some past officers of the University have not helped in solving the problem. This is a very serious omission which ought to be addressed. It is very important that the meaning of all the elements used in every logo design is properly documented for posterity to know and understand. The information has to be made available for the public to know. This is not so in the case of the KNUST logo.

The KNUST Logo – An Analysis of the Artistic Elements

For any meaningful analysis of the logo to be carried out, the reader must understand the meaning of its elements. An attempt has, therefore, been made by the author to identify some of the elements used in the KNUST logo [Figure 1] and give some meaning to them. These, however, may differ from the meaning the original designer might have given to each of the elements, but it is a starting point to unravel the meaning behind the logo design. It is not known whether the logo design was based on the mission of the University, part of which is to provide an environment for teaching, research and entrepreneurship training in Science and Technology for the development of Ghana and Africa. (www.knust.edu.gh, 2003).

From the point of view of the author, the logo is made up of the following elements, with suggested meanings given to each of them. The elements and their suggested meanings are as follows:

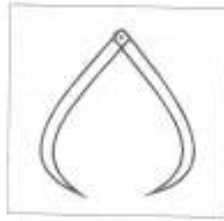


Fig. 9: Calipers

This is a tool for measuring widths or distances. It may have been used by the designer to represent Engineering or Technology.



Fig.10 The Flaming Traditional Ghanaian pot

The pot is a receptacle for storing important items and also for cooking. The pot may have been used to represent a storehouse of knowledge with the flame representing the quest for knowledge to be kept alive and burning.



Fig.11 A traditional Ghanaian stool

This is a traditional symbol of authority and royalty. A stool basically has three parts: the seat, the middle portion, which normally contains a motif, and the base. It may have been used to symbolise the fact that the University is the highest level on the educational ladder. It could also symbolise the University's authority in Science and Technology in the country.



Fig.12 A bird, believed to be an eagle, with outstretched wings and perched on a traditional stool

The eagle is the highest-flying bird and is believed to see a lot from up in the skies. The bird with outstretched wings may have been used to represent the fact that the University is ready to 'fly' to or reach the highest heights, and have a wider view of the many problems in the country to solve. The fact that the bird is perched on the traditional stool may be interpreted to mean that, even though the University is a symbol of high education, it aims at achieving excellence.

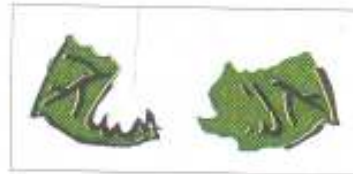


Fig. 13 Two leaves flank the bird on either side

The leaves may have been used to represent or symbolise vegetation.



Fig.14 A motif in the middle section of the traditional Ghanaian stool called "nyansapo" which translates as "the knot of wisdom".

The meaning of this symbol is further expanded in the motto of the University "Nyansapo wosane no hadwemma" which translates as "the knot of wisdom is untied only by the wise."

Colours used in the KNUST logo as shown in Fig. 1 are not different from those in the National flag, namely red, yellow, green, and black. Each may have symbolic meanings.

- a) Red may have been used to symbolise the blood the founders, literally, shed to get the University started.
- b) Yellow may have been used to symbolise the wealth of knowledge.
- c) Black may have been used to symbolise the black man.
- d) Green may have been used to symbolise the rich vegetation of Kumasi and its environs.

With this analysis of the artistic elements used in the KNUST logo, it can be noted that the original designer of the logo may have taken great pains to do a thorough research before coming out with the finished logo design.

As stated earlier on, since there is no official documentation on the form and use of the KNUST logo, it becomes very difficult, if not impossible, to determine the "genuine" one from others. Indeed, there have been many variations of the KNUST logo used on different official publications and stationery of the University. Figs. 1, 2, and 3a are only three of the many variations of the KNUST logo currently in circulation and used by the University on some of its official documents, and by student groups and individuals. If this trend is not checked now, the abuse of the logo will go on indefinitely.

The differences come in the form and shape of the artistic elements, and in the value of the colours used. This is a very serious development because the logo is exposed to abuse, forgery, and misuse. There are differences in every aspect of the KNUST logo, from the flame to the motto. It must be stated clearly that "a strong and consistent mark should be the anchor of any corporate identity". Without consistency in the form and use of the KNUST logo, any one at all can reproduce it without proper reference to the original design, and this can cause great damage to the image of the University.

Comparing two, (Figs. 1 and 2), of the three versions of the KNUST logo referred to above, the following observations were made:

- The flames are blowing in different directions.

- The pots are also of different shapes.
- The birds look different from one another.
- The wings, the heads, and the beaks are all different in shape and in size.
- The colours in each of the versions are of a different value.
- The motto of the University is written differently on each of them. The logo in Figure 1 has "NYANSAPO WOSANE NO BADWENMA" written as the motto of the University. Figure 2 has "NYANSAPO WOSANE NO BADWEMMA." The difference comes in the spelling of the last three letters in the last word of the motto.

Fig 3b shows part of the logo shown in Figure 3a with the motto written "NYANSAPO WOSANE NO BA GYREMB". The last word is wrongly spelt. Incidentally, the version in Figure 3a is what is used on the official letterhead of the Registrar's Department. It is, immediately, evident from the illustrations that there are three versions of the motto. It must also be pointed out that different fonts were used in writing the motto. These anomalies and inconsistencies buttress the point made earlier that the University does not pay much attention to its corporate identity.

One may not value the magnitude of the problem and rather gloss over it. However, the differences indicated above are so serious that, it is high time the University took an urgent decision on solving the problem without further delay. On the website of the University, it is stated that the University logo is a registered trademark. From the simple analysis done so far, it would be difficult to determine the one which has truly been registered as the official logo of the University. All these point to one fact that the KNUST logo is flawed and must be properly designed and managed. Every institution or organisation has a corporate image which it must guard jealously. When it is properly designed and managed, the corporate image will accurately reflect the organisation's commitment to quality, and excellence, and its relationships with its various constituents. An institution may be assessed by the way it projects itself through its corporate identity. The KNUST is an enviable and important institution which must protect its corporate identity and image at all times.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is an undeniable fact that the University does not have any serious corporate identity programme in place. The logo, which is the basic element of the programme, is being used carelessly by different people and printers at different times. No serious attention is paid to the form and use of the logo. It is also a fact that there is no document kept by the University, which gives details on the KNUST logo. There are no guidelines whatsoever for users of the logo to follow when applying it.

It is, therefore, recommended as a matter of urgency that the University launches a new corporate identity programme. In view of that, the logo should be redesigned and/or reappraised. The author has chosen one of the often-used versions of the logo, reappraised and refined it (Figure 10). This reappraised or refined logo could be the starting point for re-launching a new corporate identity for the University. It must be emphasised that the logo should be properly documented and published for the whole world to know. It is a very important exercise which must be carried out to protect and enhance the image of the University.



Fig. 10: Recommended version of the logo

As is done in most of the foreign Universities, the KNUST should document every aspect of its corporate identity programme. The specifications in the document must be rigidly adhered to, to maintain consistency. A corporate design standards manual which documents every aspect of the logo, its use, and applications must be produced for the University. This will spell out the artistic elements used, the dimensions of the logo, and the approved

ways in which the logo must be used. The approved fonts and their sizes, which must be used together with the logo, should be indicated. The colours and their values in the logo must also be indicated in the manual.

There is no doubt that a logo plays a key role in the life of any institution or organisation. It may be a small symbol, but it is very important and must be given attention at all times. It is the hope of the author that the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) will accept and implement the recommendations. This will go a long way in enhancing the image of the University.

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