

## Art Education In Ghanaian Schools

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### ABSTRACT

Ghana like any developing African country is predominantly a rural community with an economy supported by few industries and the traditional crafts which use some of the country's agricultural products. This paper examines the teaching of the main crafts and expresses concern about the insufficient attention given to the subject in the early years. The paper however, commends Governor Guggisberg's vision of Art Teaching in relation to the industries of the locality, and the efforts of Herman Meyerowitz to train Art Specialists in Achimota College in the late 40s and early 50s for the teaching of this subject in the schools.

Finally it recommends the re-institution of the recently abolished Art Specialists' courses in the Teacher Training Colleges, and the diversification of the B.A. (Art) courses in this University, as a measure to increase the numerical strength of Art specialists for the schools and industries.

**Keywords:** educational crusade, curriculum, art and crafts

### INTRODUCTION

The value of traditional education in the Ghanaian society which manifests itself in the effective organisation of institutions and observance of customs and oral traditions, in the apprenticeship of the crafts and general self-expression of the people is appreciated. Nevertheless, the importance of formal education as an instrument for the development of a country's wealth, through the promotion of industrial growth, improvement of health-care,

agriculture and communication through the medium of schools, is apparent.

In this connection, Ghana is grateful to the colonial masters - the Portuguese, Dutch, Danes and English - as well as the early missionaries; the Basel, Bremen, Wesleyan, Catholic, African Methodist Episcopalian, Zion, and English Church Missions, for the pioneering work they did for this country in the field of formal education. The many Primary, Middle, and Secondary schools, Teacher Training Colleges, Polytechnics and Universities which stand out are the result of their educational programmes.

### THE BEGINNING OF ART EDUCATION IN GHANA

The first school in this country based on the Western system of education is known to have existed and ran by the Portuguese in the Elmina Castle soon after 1482[1]. More castle schools were later opened and ran by successive colonial powers including the Dutch, Danes and English, as well as the Wesleyan, Basel and Bremen Missions which operated along the coast, on the Akwapim and Kwahu hills and along the Volta river. The Roman Catholic Mission, the A.M.E. Zion Mission and the English Church Mission later joined this educational crusade, and by 1914 had added three schools. However, neither the educational units nor the government of the day which had the power to enact laws appreciated the importance of art and crafts and the need for including it in the school curriculum. None of the Education Committees or ordinances of 1852, 1887 and 1920 mentioned it as a school subject. However in 1943, 450 years after the establishment of the first school in this country, and 18 years after Governor Guggisberg's 10th Principle of Education

requiring every school course to have some relevance to the industries of the locality was announced, part of the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund was earmarked for the establishment of a West African Institute of Industries, Art and Social Sciences. This project later materialised as the Kumasi College of Technology, where a 3-year and 1-year Art Teachers' Specialist courses were taught. Prior to this, a humble but vital beginning had been made in the teaching of this discipline by Mr. Herman Meyerowitz a remarkable Art Teacher and Educationist in the Teacher Training Department at Achimota College. The 3-year Art Specialist course, which he set up in this college produced few but great art teachers.

#### THE NEED FOR SPECIALIST ART TEACHERS IN THE SCHOOLS

The few specialist art teachers turned out by this institution and its successor in the College of Technology, could not cope with the large number of the primary, middle and secondary school and training college students which needed them. In 1950, for about 206,300 primary, middle and secondary school pupils and training college students, there were not more than 120 trained art specialist teachers. These figures worked out to about 1,719 students per a teacher: an alarming situation. The situation was made worse by the Six-Year Accelerated Development Plan for Education, launched in 1951 which nearly doubled the enrolment of the schools and colleges without making any provision for a corresponding increase in the already small number of trained art specialist teachers. By 1957, only about 230 specialists had been trained to handle a total of 575,691 elementary and secondary school pupils and teacher training college students (about 2,503 students per teacher).

When the Teacher Training Department of the College of Technology was transferred to Winneba in 1958, the 1-year course which was found to be too superficial in content was discontinued and the 3-year course condensed into a 2-year course for a fast production of good quality art teachers.

There was another short-lived 3-year course before the 4-year Diploma course which was instituted in 1966. Even these courses and the diploma and degree courses at the University of Science and Technology, Kumasi could not supply the numerical strength of the teaching force required for art and crafts teaching in the schools and colleges in this country at that time.

Finally, in the 1984-85 academic year, the 50,685 teachers teaching a total number of 1,464,624 pupils from 8,965 primary schools were teachers who had had very little or no specialist training in art. The reason was that the system which allowed teachers in training to major in subjects such as art and crafts, music and home science to graduate later to teach in the schools had been discontinued. Presbyterian Training College, Akropong, St. Francis Hohoe, Akrokerri, Wesley College, Holy Child, O.L.A., Cape Coast and St. John Bosco's, Navrongo, which used to offer art and crafts as a major subject, were now teaching all subjects on the curriculum with equal emphasis.

Similarly the 24,964 teachers teaching 579,856 pupils from 5,246 middle schools in the same academic year, were mostly ordinary teachers without any specialist training in art, as the Ghana Education Service had abolished the five 2-year Art Teacher's Specialist courses at S.D.A., Koforidua, Peki, Komenda, St. Monica's and St. John Bosco's Training Colleges, whose products were responsible for the organization of the art and crafts and wood-work centres for these middle schools.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE TRAINING OF ART TEACHERS AND TECHNOLOGISTS FOR THE SCHOOLS AND INDUSTRIES

The above illustrations bring into focus the second important fact: that there are not enough trained specialists for the teaching of art and crafts in Ghanaian schools, and that the facilities for the training of these specialists have not been fully provided and exploited by the educational authorities.

The following recommendations are

proposed for rectifying the existing situation:

1. The 2-Year Art Teachers Specialist courses which were recently abolished, must be reintroduced and reorganised for the full utilisation of the natural resources of the regions such as clay deposits, timber, cane and hides. This will also ensure that facilities and resources of existing institutions of art like workshops, libraries and trained skills are not wasted. It is observed that the following colleges: Welsey College, St. Louis, St. Monica's, St. Joseph's and Akrokerri Training Colleges in Ashanti and Brong Ahafo regions as well as the Presbyterian Training Colleges at Akropong and Aburi clearly stand out as potential host institutions for these courses. If this is done, there will be enough teachers for the art and crafts or woodwork centres in the various regions, and the teaching of this subject which has been on the decline in the middle schools for so long, would then be revitalised. An intake of about 60 students a year for each of the 10 colleges will yield about 500 specialists in two years (allowing for failures), and in five years time, there will be about 2,500 art teachers for the first cycle schools.
2. The Government of Ghana should embrace and develop the concept of rural art and industry which aims at the reorganization of our traditional crafts with modern machines, methods and techniques for higher-productivity. For instance in the College of Art at the University of Science and Technology, where this concept originated, a broad-loom for weaving all the intricate patterns of kente cloth, has been designed. Now research is needed into the chemistry for the production of fast vegetable dyes for adinkra printing, and suitable clay-bodies and glazes for pottery, as well as market studies leading to the promotion of the sale of the commodity. To speed up this a Council of Rural Art and Industry, the Government and the College of

Art will have to collaborate and disseminate the research information for the use of the rural industries. The advantages of this would be many. Besides raising the productivity of these industries and earning more money for them and the country through the export of some of the products, the industries will expand considerably to create more job opportunities for school leavers in the rural area where these industries are mainly located. Ultimately but indirectly it will bring about a fairer distribution of the national income between the urban and rural areas.

3. The Universities are among the institutions which must play an important role in the education of the artist in this country. Formerly some economists held the opinion that land was the source of any country's wealth. Later others thought it was labour that produced wealth. Then Karl Marx asserted that wealth was produced by capital, and by the beginning of this century, people had been made to believe that good organization and management were factors needed for the production of wealth. But today, it is education that is reigning over all these factors as the chief source of a country's wealth, and it has been statistically proved in the United States of America that about 50% of the annual increase in production per head in their economic growth is due to scientific progress brought about by education [2]. New trends of Art Education at graduate and post-graduate levels, directed towards the needs of the Ghanaian society should be adopted to guide national development. If this is done, there will be enough high calibre professional Artists for the general planning and organization of art education at all levels. There will also be all the art technologists like textilists, ceramists, sculptors, metal workers, graphic and industrial artists required in the newly established and future industries of this country. Much

effort has already been made in these two major areas of development but unfortunately this could not produce the number of trained artists and art technologists which the country needs, because of:

- i) the small intakes of students made each year for the various courses. By 1980, 22 years after its establishment, the College of Art had produced only 362 graduates, 95 post-graduates and 82 diplomates: a total of 539.
- ii) the total number of art graduates which stands at 1,006 has been seriously diminished by the recent braindrain of Ghanaian intellectuals towards more lucrative jobs outside the country.

### CONCLUSIONS

The importance of art education of the child especially at the early stages of his development, and in the socio-economic life of this country cannot be over-emphasised.

If the higher institutions of this country appreciate the crucial need for art educationists and technologists in the institutions and industries, and this University increases the intake of candidates to the B.A.(Art) course

there will be enough art specialists working alongside other professionals for a better Ghana; for the country would then be doubling its pace in her stride towards industrialisation, increased production and better life for all.

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