

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ART EDUCATION IN GHANAIAN SCHOOLS AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIAL PROGRESS

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ABSTRACT

It has been Ghana's aim to achieve ultimate, individual, social and cultural development in tune with its philosophy of self-reliance. This has not been indeed possible because of the falling standard of education for the past two decades. This paper asserts that if Ghana should develop as such, then Art Education, which is one of the many facets of education, should be appraised.

The paper discusses Ghana's attempt to salvage the falling standard of education by embarking upon reforms at all levels of education. It explains the concepts 'Art', 'Education', 'Art Education', 'Ghana's Education Policy' and the 'Philosophy of Self-Reliance'. It also outlines and explains the relevance of educating people in the arts in Ghanaian schools in tune with its education policy and philosophy of self-reliance.

The paper further expounds on the various ways Art Education would impact on the social progress of Ghana if Art Education were taken more seriously in schools. It concludes by expressing concern about attitudes of parents, teachers, the government and the society at large towards Art Education, and urges strongly that if Ghana wants to develop it should do so in terms of its Art and Culture.

Keywords: Developmental Stasis, Cognitive, Psychomotor, Affective, Intranationally Graphic Symbols.

INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of education of any country should be to help transmit accumulated knowledge, values and attitudes from one generation to another. A nation's educational aim must be based on what she wants out of education. In Ghana, it is to achieve ultimate, individual, social and cultural developments in tune with the nation's philosophy of self-reliance.

However, over the past two decades or so, Ghana has been in a developmental stasis, which is strongly attributed to the fallen standard of education. It is against this background that she has boldly embarked upon educational reform at all levels of education supposedly hoped to salvage the standard of education that has fallen into the abysmal. It is envisaged that this type of reform, which is career-oriented, would make the new educated products functional in the society unlike the erstwhile grammar school, white-collared job products. Consequently, the emphasis on Art Education in Ghanaian Schools has become very crucial, as it is one of the relevant disciplines in education as far as vocationalisation of school programmes is concerned.

SOME CONCEPTS AND TERMS EXPLAINED

For clarity of this script it is important to explain some concepts and terms used in it so that they can best be related to the views the writer wants to carry across.

(A) WHAT IS ART?

Many writers have given various definitions to art. Some say Art is the presentation of forms and shapes; others say it is the unique feelings that emanate from the artist or craftsman expressed with colour, value, lines, texture, shapes, etc. Art is anything people do to please their senses. It is an imaginative device by which students grow through aesthetic expressions.

Art is the spearhead of every cultural advancement; the arts are the outward manifestations of all the inner happenings of culture. They are the symbolic touchstones of the values of culture [1]. The arts teach and help the society to learn the past of a people, and also help transmit the values, attitudes and behaviour of a people from one generation to the other.

Art is in everything that we do [2]. For instance, making a farm is not per se art but the method of clearing, the implement used, the end products and their uses all involve art. Craftsmen have carved the tools for clearing and harvesting; the seeds are sown or planted in rows; the products harvested are packaged in one way or the other. These activities are art and one could learn a lot about the philosophy, the sociology and the anthropology of a people even from the way they farm.

(B) WHAT EDUCATION IS

Education is the fostering of growth, but apart from physical maturation, growth is made apparent in expression - audible or visible signs and symbols. Education may be defined as the cultivation of modes of expression - it is teaching children and adults how to make sounds, images, movements, tools, utensils, etc. A man who can make such things well is a well-educated man [3].

If a man can make good sounds, he is a good speaker or a good musician, or a good poet; if he can make good images, he is a good painter or a sculptor; if he can make good movements, he is a good labourer or a dancer, if he can make good tools or utensils he is a good craftsman. All faculties of thought, logic, memory, sensibility and intellect are involved in such processes and no aspect of education excludes such process [4]. All these processes involve art, for art is nothing but the good making of sounds, images, movements, tools, utensils, etc. The aim of education is therefore, the creation of artists - people who are efficient in various modes of expression.



(C) ART EDUCATION

The term can be defined as education people receive by teaching them the arts i.e. performing arts and visual arts.

- i. *Performing Arts:* These include theatrical displays, musicology, choreography, verbal arts, (i.e. arts said by the mouth and are performed) etc.
- ii. *Visual Arts:* These comprise textiles, picture making, metal arts including jewellery, ceramics, basketry, sculpture, leather works, graphic design, etc.

(D) THE PHILOSOPHY OF GHANA AND GHANA'S EDUCATION POLICY

Before discussing the significance of Art Education in Ghanaian schools it is important to make clear two concepts. These are: 1. The philosophy of the nation; and 2. The policy of education in Ghana.

1. *Philosophy:* The education of every nation must be based on its philosophy. In Ghana it is Self-reliance strengthened by the concept of African Personality. Self-reliance simply means the nation well abounds in rich human and natural resources; the human resources are supposed to be used in tapping the rich natural resources - i.e. minerals, timber, rivers, etc. to produce goods and services for local consumption and for export without relying so much on foreign ones.

The concept of African Personality means the Ghanaianess and Africaness of the people i.e. Ghanaians should see themselves as Ghanaians, and for that matter, Africans; they should be able to produce and use things from their own environment which can help them develop in their own way as well as promote and transmit their culture.

2. *Policy of Education:* The policy of education in Ghana now is "Education for national development". This means the education Ghanaians receive must be functional and must promote national development. This policy is all entailed in the new education reform policy.

In the policy there is a change in the structure of basic education, secondary schooling and tertiary education. The policy, among other things, states that tertiary education must be based on the National Education Policy which is 'Education for National Development', and by this national development is considered as the capacity of a nation to improve and sustain growth in all facets of national life. The policy states also that manpower development entails all processes by which the individual is able to contribute to his own well being and quality of life, and subsequently to economic and social advancement of the nation.

The policy further states that education should focus on practical realities of life; it must be functional, vocationalised and pay attention to what is fine in the society's inheritance. Education should make it possible for the individual to develop his talents, find a productive place in society and be self-reliant and able individual who has a sense of being an agent to economic and social advancement of the nation.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ART EDUCATION IN GHANAIAN SCHOOLS

In view of the philosophy of the nation and the policy of education in the country one question that has to be

seriously addressed is - what role has art education got to play in producing a new type of man that is development-oriented?

Nature has endowed every nation with beautiful scenery in the form of landscapes, beaches, plants, animals, birds, people, etc. When one takes a look at one's environment, it abounds in many interesting natural things such as trees, flowers, fruits, stones, shells, animals, etc., which have beautiful and distinctive shapes from which many inspirations can be drawn to evolve creative and constructive ideas. One can build on such ideas to promote one's welfare and that of the society.

However, it requires the use of the human senses in collecting such ideas, which can, in no way, be done by just anybody, except the artist. It is the artist who, apart from his normal five senses, is endowed with a sixth one. He sees and touches things in his environment; he smells and moves about in his environment; he thinks and tries to discover new ways of doing things. When he observes the lovely shapes, forms, textures and colours of trees, fruits, flowers, ant hills and mounds, clouds, etc., he gets inspired, sketches them and develops the sketches into productive ideas. He uses the ideas so derived in producing tools, equipment, machines, houses, furniture, house-hold utensils, etc., for his own benefit and that of others.

It is also the artist who can identify social vices in his environment, write a play or make a film or make a poster that can discourage such vices from recurring. These phenomena are indeed education; after all the aim of education (as earlier asserted) is the creation of artists - people who are efficient in various modes of expression.

The primary purpose of Art Education in schools is to foster creativity in the students through art activities. It is in the art class that a student thinks, acts and behaves creatively at the same time. In the art class students combine ideas to make new things, break up old habits and join fragments into new ones, uncover new ideas and bring into being something that did not exist previously [5]. In this regard students inculcate in themselves the sense of creativity.

Art Education teaches students about their culture, values and the cultures of other worlds. Values are cherished ideas and ways of doing things. For instance, in Ghana time is not rigid but rather cyclical and can be seen in our rites of passage; we believe in the hierarchy of God and the gods, we respect communal life, we equate age with wisdom, we have complex rhythms in our music etc. These values and beliefs can be transmitted from one generation to another through art education.

Art Education trains the individual student to fit into the contradictions of life and makes him cope with individual inconsistencies in his life [6]. In school, Art Education promotes the development of cognitive, psychomotor and affective skills in students; it is for this reason that Plato in one of his theses emphasised that "Art is the basis of all education" [7].

Art Education permits the students to record knowledge in representational images or communication through a wide variety of forms, exciting their senses, provoking their emotions and deepening their perceptual understanding.

Art Education serves as a form of escapism permitting the student to supersede distasteful or hostile present, or it may be a vehicle for social comment embodying

the virtues of a society [8]. Studies in the arts afford students opportunities for a large range of experiences, vicarious, intimate, emotional, spiritual, sensual, intellectual and aesthetic. It also provides pleasure and diversions, commitment and fulfilment, answering the fundamental compulsions of humans to express ideas in graphic symbols.

Art Education helps the students to increase their knowledge and the appreciation of the arts of the past and the present in order to project for the future. Art objects are visual sources important for the development of sociological, philosophical, psychological, spiritual, historical, and anthropological knowledge. An art activity has an integrating effect on the student's personality and helps him release tension. It is also a source of therapy to correct growth and mental problems [9].

Finally, studies in the arts enable students to be ambidextrous and self-employed; art students can sell their skills and powers of expression to the society; in other words students of Art Education become functional in the society and can contribute effectively to the development of the nation.

THE IMPACT OF ART EDUCATION ON SOCIAL PROGRESS

Profession Impact

It is very glaring that there are a few job opportunities for people who finish school at various levels these days. This is so because the existing jobs are inadequate; also, most of the people who complete school are not equipped with careers that can make them self-employed and self-reliant as the nation would want them to be. This is a very serious problem the government of Ghana is grappling to address.

In as much as there is the need to restructure education at all levels, there is also the need for the nation to give a much wider focus on educating its people in the arts, for there are a lot of professions that Art Education would offer if a more serious emphasis and attention were given to it.

The following is a list of some of the professions that Art Education would offer:

Textile Designing, Embroidery making, Tie/Dye and Batik making, Spinning, Textile Consultancy, Textile Technology/Engineering, Weaving, Tapestry making, Fashion Designing, Sculpture, Carving, Jewellery, Black smithing, Leather works, Upholstery making, Book Printing, Book Publishing, Book Illustration, Fashion Illustration, Photography, Print making, Interior Decoration, Spray-painting, Picture making, Cartooning, News Media Printing, Graphic Design Consultancy, Book Editing, Pottery making, Animation, Cane and Rattan works, Ceramic Technology, Film acting, Film making, Theatrical Designing, Theatrical acting, Cinematography, Video making, Curatory, Art Curriculum Planning and Designing, Teaching of Art.

Most of the professions listed above are self-employable careers people studying the arts can specialise in. This goes to attest to the claim that if the nation enhanced education in the arts it would be in a position to produce people who would be equipped with various artistic professions and who would be self-employable.

Cultural Impact

As already stated, the nation's philosophy is "Self-reliance" strengthened by the concept of "African Personality". In view of this philosophy it is expected that if the nationals were educated in the arts they would comply with the societal and cultural aspects of their indigenous life - both aesthetic and abstract. In Ghana our aesthetic life is our artistic or visual development and our abstract life comprises our philosophical, spiritual and psychological life. Ghanaians as a people must be seen to develop on those lines.

After studies in the arts, Ghanaians should be able to integrate their indigenous African values and contemporary ones which reflect on their modern outlook of life; and this must be seen in their arts, music, governance, education, religion, architecture, science and technology, etc. Art Education should be able to produce people who would be able to sift what is good from their culture and foreign ones so that Ghana does not produce men and women who are culturally neither Africans nor Europeans.

Ghanaians (and for that matter Africans) believe strongly in communal life. This is evident in their deeply rooted extended family system. This shows that after the people have been trained in the arts they should be able to appreciate the value of their interdependence. The individuals should not be selfish but realise that they are in a community of which each individual's potential should benefit all.

Art Education should also produce people who would promote, preserve, sustain and also transmit the nation's culture both intranationally and internationally. Already the government has established some institutions of culture in each of all the ten regions to promote the development of culture in the country. To mention a few, these institutions are The Centres for National Culture, The National and Regional House of Chiefs, The museums and Monuments Board, The National Dance Ensemble, The Pan African Orchestra, The National Theatre, etc. But in order to promote and transmit the culture of this country it is the nationals that would do so, therefore, the establishment of these cultural institutions would further create employment opportunities and thereby ease the unemployment problem in the country.

Industrial Impact

Art Education educates artists; the artists need materials, tools and equipment to work with. The materials would be in the form of brushes, pigments, dyes, clay, fibres, gum, wood, cement, plaster of Paris, leather, cane, bamboo, metals, minerals, etc. The production of these materials must imbue in entrepreneurs to redirect their lines of production to explore the country's rich resources. Obviously this situation would help to develop and promote the country's rich resources. Presumably, entrepreneurs would tap the country's resources for the manufacture of artistic demands. They would build industries and factories and certainly employ people to work in them. Consequently, the unemployment problem in the country would be reduced.

Presently there are some artistic industries in Ghana that produce artistic items for demand locally and for export. Some of these industries are Akosombo Textiles, Juapong Textiles, Ghana Textile Prints, Ntonso Adinkra Printing,

Bonwire Kente Weaving, Brick and Tile Industries in Ashanti, Saltpond Ceramics, Kumasi Shoe Factory, etc. It is hoped that their production would let the nation enjoy its own goods and services as well as earning the nation foreign exchange that could be used for further industrialisation.

Invention Impact

Education in the arts would imbue in the people the conscience and the spirit of creativity, improvisation, innovation, automation and invention. These being the basis of mass-production would urge the people to think inventively, imagine, develop new ideas, improve upon old or existing ideas and use the ideas to create and produce new things. As producers embark on mass-production the level of productivity would rise. As the nation's science, industry and technology develop the people would enjoy variety of goods and services; workers would be paid well, the standard of living would also rise and the country could be said to be on course for national economic development.

Aesthetic Impact

Art Education would promote and enhance the beauty of the indigenous (Ghanaian or African) designs such as textiles, packaging, electrical appliances, architecture, sports equipment, medical equipment etc. Ghanaian goods would become attractive and would compete favourably with others in the world market as well as sell for high foreign exchange. Ghana would also have patentship of its own designs as it sells its skilled technology abroad.

Art Education would also promote the production of artistic items for local consumption and for export. The people need artefacts such as fabrics, toys, ceramic wares, pictures, etc. This would encourage entrepreneurs to build factories to produce such artefacts. Not only would artefacts be manufactured but also avenues for employment would obviously be created.

Skilled Man-Power Impact

In a developing country such as Ghana whose philosophy is self-reliance, there is the need to train our own people and stop the over-reliance on foreign skilled personnel and the importation of goods and services from elsewhere to be able to produce our own artistic needs. This impact should exert a positive pressure on Ghana to train its skilled personnel such as textile engineers and technologists, ceramic engineers and technologies, textile designers, graphic designers, painters, sculptures, gold and silver smiths, welders, blacksmiths, shoe makers, etc.; for in the absence of such skilled personnel, Ghana would have to import them, or import their products and this would obviously be a drain on our already worsened economy.

Self-Employment Impact

In a country where many of the working population are government-employed there is a great strain on the national budget and coffers. It becomes economically cost-effective if many of the working population are skilfully self-employed.

Art Education produces people who have been trained in the arts. These people can produce batiks, tie/dyes, ceramics and earthenware, leather wares, upholstery, embroidery, furniture etc. The people trained in the arts are therefore, self-employable. Self-employed artists could work individually, or team up to form small-scale industries. They could seek loans from the Commercial Banks to develop and expand these small-scale industries. In Ghana, as people become self-employed the strain on government budgetary allocation of having to pay salaries to many workers would be eased. Ghana would then enjoy some budget surplus and use this surplus for further development.

Edification Impact

A lot has been said about the advantages that the people in Ghana would enjoy when it embarks on educating its people in the arts. We should, however, not lose sight of the fact that apart from those advantages, Art Education offers yet another important opportunity which is to edify the mind and also give aesthetic pleasure.

For instance, after a tiresome day's work the people could go to the national theatre and similar places to watch plays, musical concerts, cinemas, dances etc. to enjoy themselves. People could also watch video, television, listen to music on the radio etc. We do not have to overlook the fact that it is the arts that edify our individual minds, it is the arts that prepare the worker's mind for the following day's work and it is that which makes people do away with the rather precarious inconsistencies of life. After all "All work and no play makes Mensah a dull boy".

CONCLUSION

The discussions so far made show significantly that if Ghana is to develop on the lines as depicted by its philosophy and its education policy, then, the importance of Art Education in the schools' curricula should not be under-emphasised. A lot of art appears in the JSS, SSS, Training College, Polytechnic and University curricula, though; but little is seen in the Primary School curriculum. Art should be emphasised at the Primary School level also, where almost all the children love to do art.

The writer feels strongly that Art Education has immense contribution towards national development. Parents, teachers, the society and the government should, therefore, change their attitudes towards art. Often, we hear some parents dissuading their children, who are deeply interested in art by saying, "Where are you going with art?; read science". Scarcely have those parents had time to ponder over who designs their clothes and shoes they wear, the furniture and the room decorations they so cherish, the tools and implements they use; the jewellery, the tea sets, the plates and other household utilities they possess.

In some schools teachers have always urged brilliant students to read science whether or not they have the flair to do so. They have put good students in the science class, the average ones in the business class and the weak ones in the arts class. This clearly suggests that if a student was "a never to do well" he was to read the arts, but this situation is rather precarious as far as academia is concerned. It has led some students to fail their final examination miserably. What we

should all note is that science is not entirely devoid of art and neither is art devoid of science; both disciplines are interrelated. After all an art student may end up reading a Bachelor of Science degree at the university and vice-versa.

Often we see on the television that when foreign diplomats visit the country they are given gifts in the form of artefacts. But the attitude of governments towards the development of the arts has not been all that spectacular. Many art disciplines have been neglected; governments have been interested in only a few which in one way or other satisfy their selfish interest. It is of late that the present government has shown some kind of interest in the arts, and even this has mainly been in the performing arts and places of tourist attraction such as the museums and the castles. This shows how callous we have been towards our arts. It is time governments realised the immense contribution the arts offer to nation building and re-channelled funds to their development.

Parents, teachers and all should realise that nature has endowed each one of us peculiar talents, and that we should allow ourselves to develop along those lines. We should also realise that the world's economic giants that have developed have done so in terms of their arts and culture.

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