HANDICRAFTS IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

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1. INTRODUCTION: TRADITIONAL HANDICRAFTS IN TOGOLAND.

The Togoland village craftsman, after planting his crops, employed his hands leisurely at his trade. To an outsider, this statement may appear very strange indeed. "What has a craftsman to do with farming"? he may ask. It must be understood that background of this topic is that of a rural community, a part of the country which was only recently connected with the outside world by a lorry road, where rapid social changes take place but indigenous cultures remain almost intact. In such a country, almost everybody owns a farm by which most of his daily food may be obtained. Real farmers distinguish themselves mostly by the size of their ~~farms~~ *farms* and also by the amount surplus produce they sell to other people. The craftsman carries out his work on a part time basis and fills his leisure hours with the skills of his hands.

In Southern Togoland, there are tribal crafts which almost every member is expected to know. The Matse and Kuma tribes are famous pandanus mat weavers. Gbis, round about Hohoe, make riffia bags; Agotimes are excellent kente cloth weavers, Avatimes are noted for simple cotton cloth weaving, and Apkafus are indigenous iron smelters and blacksmiths. Pottery is regarded as a woman's work, and it is a tribal craft in Kpandu, Anfoe, Tove and Saviefe. Any member of these tribes who fails to have some knowledge of the tribal craft is subject to public ridicule. Other minor crafts which may be found in Togoland may be basketry, wood-carving, spinning, wood carving, cloth dyeing and leather work.

These crafts, though common tribal concerns, are passed on to the next generations not by special institutions under the direction of specialists. They are merely handed down to children through the family system. A child, born in a special branch of a handicrafts community grows naturally under the influence of his environment. He follows his father or elder brother into the forest in search of the raw materials, lends a helping hand at the various curing processes and watches the techniques at work. He carries on observation for some time until one day he picks up a scrapt material and produces a miniature copy of the particular craft. His first attempt may not be very successful but he continues to play at it until his fingers gain complete control over the processes. Occasionally, he may seek the aid of his father, brother or friend who may either encourage him or throw away his work to discourage him. Sometimes, a mischievous lad may cut his work into pieces as a challenge for a fight in order to reduce the solitude of the village. The boy gradually grows into a sturdy master craftsman by the simple process of observation and imitation.

No doubt, the traditional crafts mentioned above appear to have been practiced for many years and their simple techniques seem to have been handed down from one generation to another. It is therefore astonishing why they are still manipulated in their simplest forms, lacking any great improvements either in shapes, tools or appliances. Though traces of an evolution in the crafts may be noticed yet it appears that almost the same steps

of work have been repeated and almost the same patterns were closely followed and copied for ages. The kingdoms of Ashanti and Dahomey must be regarded as exceptional cases in this respect. Both kingdoms extended over wider fields and established the foundations of a craftsmanship of an appreciable standard. There is evidence to prove that in Southern Togoland, there had been a time when craftwork attained a higher standard than it is today. Samples of old pipes and broken pottery may be found abundantly in farms on traditional village sites. A broken peice of pipe which I have kept as a curio, displays designs of even a superior craftsmanship. A good collection of some of these interesting samples had been made by the Amedzofe Presbyterian Junior School (1930-1933) but they appear to have all been thrown away when the staff was transferred.

I feel there ought to have been some reasons for the stagnant or rather retrogressive nature of these indigenous handicrafts which may be attributed to the following causes:

1. Lack of communication or isolation.
2. The favourable climatic conditions which reduced the need for complicated domestic needs.
3. The independence of the family system in the provision of its needs.
4. Animism and its beliefs.

In olden days, roads were unknown and the very few paths which connected the villages with the market centres were infested with highway men and wild animals. Travelling was an adventurous

undertaking and only few people took interest in it. Salt was the greatest commodity and other needs were very simple and generally home-made. Because of the fear of unfriendly neighbours, the villagers hid their huts as far as they could, making the foot-paths as misleading as possible. A foot-path which may appear to end abruptly on the bank of a stream may be found continuing by wading a few yards up or down stream. I know a village even today the inhabitants of which would not permit making of a short lorry road just to avoid surprise of any kind. It may not be necessary to mention here the numerous disadvantages which a secluded village could have in respect of interchange of ideas in all social aspects of life. The development of art or handicraft work suffered because the people of one village could not ~~learn~~ learn easily from another.

Another notable factor is the very tropical climate itself. People found it easy to live in huts or sheds and they were able to withstand the cold nights even without good clothing. There is a tribe in Togoland today which does not regard it necessary to worry about clothing. To them, nudity has social approval because the weather has made it possible to live without any form of bodily protection. The result was that no attempt had been made by the former generations of this tribe of Kaboure to introduce any form of weaving for bodily protection. Among other tribes of Southern Togoland, most people moved about half naked and the averagge amout of clothing was very small, and therefore it was not above the capacity of home production. The tendency to own or use very

limited furniture was a common feature and anxiety for the accumulation of finery is a recent innovation. In other words, there has been no incentives for any laborous inventions with regard to personal needs. Simple pottery solved cooking problems. The gourd or calabash provided receptacles of various sizes as one may see in the Northern Territories today. The palm wine tapper of today finds it difficult to dispense with the bottle gourd. The climate and its productions have been very sympathetic to the past generations in the peculiar conditions under which they lived.

The greatest difference between the living conditions in commercial towns and the rural areas is the dependence of the former upon goods produced in other areas and the almost absolute independence of the latter. The farther one moves away into the interior from the influence of modern civilisation the more one notices the independence and simplicity of the inhabitants. Primitive life is marked by the independence of the family in the production of all its household needs. The housefather or head of the family (sometimes assisted by his relatives) provided the house to live in, baskets for carrying food, mats, wooden spoons, food from the farm, and meat for hunting from the forest. The housemother also spun the cotton planted in her husbands farm to be woven into cloth for the members of the family by the father, and she also gathered firewood, mushrooms and snails. These domestic duties provided ample opportunities for various skills and practical work in simple forms of handicraft. The children also help their parents until they gradually grow to be simple village

craftsmen like their parents. Specialisation in the real sense of the word, was not common though certain families took greater interest in one or the other craft than others. The anxiety of meeting all the household demands engaged the attention of the whole family and kept them so busy that there was little or no time at all for detailed finishing touches. Nevertheless, these people possessed a very high sense of appreciation for their home-made articles.

Raymong Firth, writing about primitive people in his "Human Types" said: "These simple societies remain after hundreds or thousands of years still very much in the grip of their natural surroundings". This is true of Togolanders too. Many kinds of trees as well as other inanimate objects or symbols are venerated as abodes of spirits because of which they may not be used in building, fencing, for firewood or for any form of craftwork. Even in Ashanti, the stool or drum maker had to place gold dust at the foot of the tree with ceremonious incantations before cutting it. Cowries and eggs are generally used in Togoland in paying off some tree spirits before obtaining barks for medicinal purposes. This animistic belief found expression in all walks of primitive life and served to restrict the daily routine and customs of all classes of the public so much that creative work on the part of the craftsmen surely suffered great reverses. The introduction of new ideas was mostly regarded with great suspicion as the following story will show:

"About two years ago, the inhabitants of a village were busy making a lorry road on a steep side of a hill. It was being done collectively by voluntary labour. To encourage them in carrying out this enterprise, I made it a point to give personal help whenever I was free to do so. It happened one day that I took some first aid equipment along with me in order to bandage any cuts or bruises that may be received by the workmen. There were quite a number of accidents and they were satisfactorily treated. The next day, to my greatest surprise, a rumour went about that the accidents were being caused by the drugs I carried in my pockets, and they ~~they~~ were undesirable." In fact, the common medicines were regarded as containing supernatural powers which invited or caused the accidents. " No doubt, any tribe, living for ages in perpetual fear of the common objects of its surroundings, has little or no chance of progress beyond tradition.

In the same village about which the road making story is told, no brass-wares or any articles made of brass were allowed to be used because the tribal god (Gadzo)"red iron" is supposed to have brass dishes. The use of brass by any member of its adherents was believed to instigate the wrath and vengeance of this terrible supernatural power.

In short, primitive life in Togoland offered numerous opportunities for various forms of craftwork but animistic beliefs and other allied factors checked full creative development, the best examples which were found in Ashanti, Dahomey, Yoruba or

other parts of the world as described by Daryel Forde in his "Habitat, Economy and Society". The growing generation must be made to have some power to discriminate between good and evil between reality and superstition because, in spite of our contact with civilisation and education, the belief in the supernatural which affects our whole life still prevails.[1]

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1. Margaret Read - Col. Rev. September 1950.

II. HANDICRAFTS AND THE OLD MISSION SCHOOLS.

The second half of the 19th Century marked the beginning of a new age in which the Bremen Missionaries launched an evangelistic campaign on the eastern side of the Volta River. The urgent need for local preaching interpreters and evangelits forced the Europeans to establish the first Mission Schools. The natives were very reluctant to allow their children to go to these schools simply because they did not understand or appreciate that different way of life. They knew just one pattern of life, that culture which was inherited from their ancestors, and it was the only kind which they desired for all their children. To them, sitting all day under a roof or the shade of a tree was a life fit for only lazy men. On the other hand, they did not find it possible to dispense with the services of their offspring to which they felt were legitimately entitled.

The Missionaries however collected a number of displaced children and the foundations of a new culture, the concepts of Western Education, were laid. Gradually, and in course of time, parents realised the importance of "book learning" (the vernacular equivalent) and the number of pupils increased. Sometimes, compulsory selection from villages, of fixed numbers of children to be sent to school was imposed upon chiefs by the Government, the choice generally falling on the weakest or disobedient children who were not of any great use to parents at home or in their farms. Indeed, a school is a factor of change, a change of social and economic status. The few people trained in these schools found themselves in a different atmosphere of

life. They had to copy European way of life as far as possible. They had to wear clothes instead of the traditional cloths and they lived in better buildings provided by the Missionaries. They learnt to depend upon salaries instead of farms though most of them could not do altogether without them.

So anxious were these first Missionaries that once their main objective of training assistants for spreading the Gospel was achieved, they did not worry much about giving the right kind of education which may fit the individual into his own community. They rather turned his mind away because the life of the community was identified with heathenism against which their preaching was directed. However, the need for better Missionary buildings urged them to train individual adults in the "Western" crafts of carpentry, masonry or bricklaying, lumbering, metal work, and the allied trades of tailoring and shoe making. All these were taught on adult levels by the "apprentice" methods. Most of the people trained in this way could hardly read or write and therefore they had to copy from models, - observation and imitation - a system which deprived them of creative opportunity. For almost a century, these crafts spread through-out the country. Young men were apprenticed to the first men trained by the Europeans, who in turn became masters of other learners. Though the standard of their work is gradually on the decline in most cases, yet many people are earning their living by these trades today. Inspite of the Christians influence, traces of the primitive pattern of live may be found among some of the descendants of the craftsmen described above.

These men are also part-time farmers who do most of their work in the off-seasons, especially when wating for their crops to be ready for gathering. Traces of animistic beliefs may also be found among them. For instance, I have once seen a blacksmith who was very much annoyed because somebody had taken without permission a bit of the water which was kept in a pan at his shop for cooling iron. He was not angry becuase of an ordinary situation of undue interference with his work, but because the water is supposed to contain supernatural powers by which a sick man could be cured by washing his face three times with it, or healing a sick baby by bathing it with this common liquid. Even the anvil is deified and certain customs of killing fowls and feasting in the worshop in order to invoke anvil spirits, are sometimes observed. The smith himself is considered safe from the effects of the "evil eye" of suspicious neighbours. It is very interesting indeed to see how these alien crafts are also coloured in various similar ways by traditional beliefs.

As a result of modern transport facilities and the effects of Christianity, individual descendants of these craftsmen have finally broken the animistic spell and have developed creative attitudes to work. The late Mr Edward Asamany of Kpando Fessi, a carpenter and ivory carver, who carved the "African Drummer" which was presented by the Gold Coast Government to Her Majesty Queen Elisabeth on her wedding day is the best example.

The teaching or appreciation of native crafts was not encouraged in the primary schools of the old Mission Schools. The following criticisms of the methods of teaching employed by the Missionaries made by the White Paper of 1925 are very true in this respect:

"there is a widely held opinion that the results of education in Africa have not been altogether satisfactory. Education should be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations and traditions of the various peoples, conserving as far as possible all sound and healthy elements in the fabric of their social life, adapting them where necessary to the changed circumstances and progressive ideas, as an agent of natural growth and evolution. Its aims should be to render the individual more efficient in his or her condition of life, whatever it may be, and to promote the advancement of the community as a whole".

At this period, girls' education was mainly limited to elementary work, but in one central school, domestic crafts (european) including sewing, needlework and knitting were effectively taught. Wives of the Missionaries who were stationed at different places also gave private instructions to their house maids. In private classes, boys were also instructed in darning and sewing simple underwear.

It must not however be understood that the first Missionaries referred to, failed to achieve their aims because they neglected traditional cultures in their educational approach.

Their main objective of producing docile and dependent assistants and adherents was reached. It is evident that they belonged to that old school of thought which rather laid emphasis upon the training of children by a mental process of learning subjects than on preparing children for adulthood by giving them opportunities for experiences concerned with every stage of their development based upon self direction and self growth. In other words, the early teaching methods employed in the primary schools were academic, and no provision was made for practical or creative work.

A few years after the Great War I, there was a gradual expansion in agricultural, commercial and administrative fields. Many young men who passed through these schools with successful Seventh Standard Certificates have been able to find good employment elsewhere, and the financial emoluments derived from these services provided them with a comparatively good standard of living. They did not only have financial advantages over the average farmer of their tribe who had to wait for his bulk income at the time of the harvest, but they also did carry along with them an air of public prestige. Naturally ~~enough~~ enough, this way of life appealed to most parents and the demand for schooling grow greater and greater year by year. The inhabitants of many towns and villages attached great importance to the building of new schools with the sole aim of making their children legible for the Seventh Standard Certificate. In course of time, thousands of young men and women obtained this valued qualification, and more often than not, they proceeded to Accra or to other big commercial centres in search of clerical

employment. They did not find it easy to remain their natural environment to earn a living by following the traditional way of life of their parents because they have acquired a peculiar attitude which conditions of large centres only could satisfy. The influx still continued and employment gave way to unemployment. Offices were labelled, "No Vacancy". Those who were lucky to be picked among the applicants were forced to submit themselves to very low wages. The greater lot roamed about living at their wits ends under very unfavourable conditions. These young men who would otherwise have helped their parents in cultivating the land and producing more food or by improving their traditional crafts after their primary school career, found themselves battling with social maladjustment. They suffered because no adequate provision was made for these conditions in their educational career.

III. MANY PEOPLE LIVE PRACTICALLY AND SPEND LIVES DOING THINGS.

Human life is associated with numerous human activities differing according to the status and needs of communities. Primitive communities have simple modes of life centred round agriculture whilst civilized communities have complicated problems and have devised ways of reacting. The means of livelihood are matters of their deepest concern and they have almost boundless desires for material enjoyment above the bare subsistence level. In primitive life, all members of the society have almost equal chances of obtaining their livelihood. They live in caves or temporary shelters, hunting what animals they could kill with their odd implements or fishing if they lived by the sea. Other communities engage themselves in some primitive form of agriculture or keep some sheep, cattle or other domestic animals. They often have simple techniques of pottery and weaving. In short, primitive life provides some form of general education which places every member of its society in a good position of solving the daily problems almost all by himself. It is a life of individual independence and it offers few opportunities for specialization.

Civilized communities have struggled to overcome the problems of their everyday needs by the discovery of new techniques of specialization. Large concentration of communities in towns created new problems of food production, transport and other means of obtaining their livelihood. Communal life would be impossible without mass production, means of distribution

organisation, education and other social services. In such communities, it is no more necessary for the farmer to weave his own cloth, make his own domestic utensils, furniture or tools, but he could obtain them from specialists who are supported in turn by the crops of his farm. The ordinary clerk fits into the complete mechanism of the general administrative organisation without which efficient distribution for the common good would be impossible. A careful observation would reveal the fact that even the clerk who is supposed to deal with records at the office engages his fingers in doing things. He employs his finer skills in writing, typing, numbering, checking up or doing something of the sort. He is afterall, a specialist in the general set up of the community. What of the soldier, and what part does he play in the use of hands. The recent "Tatoo" held in Accra is just a display of skills as well as a proof of a complete mastery of the use of hands. Because the needs of security which is a major human needs, an army must be maintained. It must be fed, clothed, sheltered, organised and reinforced so that it might be always efficient. Its existence however, depends upon the produce of the farmers and other civil manufacturers as well as on its internal artisans, repair squads and health services. Every soldier is expected to know how to master a fairly wide range of skills.

Let us now turn to the home, a place where almost everybody retires after the day's toil. Home life imposes practical problems of all sorts on parents, children, and servants alike. The house mother must necessarily be a mistress of very

many skills. The fire must be set, and the meals must be prepared. The use of the axe or cutlass for splitting firewood or the handling of the knife in pilling yam or cocoyam may be indispensable. Fufu or corn must be pounded in the mortar with the pestle and clothes must be mended with the needle or on the sewing machine where available. Among the Ewe tribes, a woman who cannot cook or help in preparing her own meals is contemptuously called "Dzomafoalokpanudula" meaning (lit) "an eater whose hands have not been touched by fire" The general social expectation is that the hands of every woman should be busy doing things. Though a house father of a civilized community may be engaged in the social services requiring the finer manipulative skills, yet in the home too, he may be found unconsciously using his hands. There must be very few homes in which domestic birds, animals or pets are not kept. Hen-coops have to be improvised from packing cases and sheets of metal, and fences, furniture or shutters to be repaired with either proper tools or their substitutes. The young as members of the household too lend helping hands to the work of their parents or guardians and by means of observation and imitation, gradually learn to use their fingers.

Think of the teachers who have a part to play in the community's task of handing down its culture. A good Primary School Teacher must be able to handle many practical situations. He must prepare his apparatus for teaching and he must always be ready to use his creative imagination in order to make dull lessons interesting to his children. He may find himself using a hammer, saw or pincers in a moment and at another time, a

cutlass, hoe, other farming tools or carver's knives. The ideal primary school teacher must be the most practical man, the "Jack -of-all-Trades", who must spend much of his time to make things.

It cannot be denied that there are quite a number of people who cannot and will not meet the practical demands of their economic social life. There are many who cannot drive a nail straight into a wall to hand a picture, or drive a screw into a peice of furnitureto save it from a complete breakdown. A carpenter may not care to repair it at the right time even though the owner of the furniture may be ready to pay a good amount for it. The homes of local craftsmen are usually full of piles and piles of furniture requiring little repairs which their owners could have easily put right by the application of their hand skills. Some of these things never find their way back to their owners. This kind of careless neglect is gaining ground in some communities because modern life is marked by its scientific approach to the solution of its daily problems. The effect is that some people are deliberately giving up any attempts to cope with certain practical situations. It is true that machinery is gradually robbing the average man of the use of his creative imagination or hand-eye co-ordination, but it cannot be denied that strange situations requiring the use of the finer skills or the use of the hands are being created more and more every day. The rider of a bicycle enjoys his sight-seeing as long as the tyres are inflated. He experiences the reverse as soon as a puncture occurs. No sooner does he discover this than he begins to employ his hands at the spanners

and the patching outfit, which he carries along for the purpose of mending it. I have often seen market women applying screw-drivers to their sewing machines for minor adjustments. Many a typewriter have been put into good working order by typists though they have never taken courses or carrying out such repairs. Adaptation of one's self to new situations is ever on a greater demand than in the past.

Primary Education must therefore aim at developing touch and manipulative skills required in everyday life.

IV. HANDICRAFTS AS AN AID TO HAPPINESS AND CONTENTMENT.

Man works to live. He can live happily only when his needs which may either be those concerned with him as a private person or those regarding his obligation to others, are satisfied. The achievement of any or all of these aims is not only gratifying but they affect and guide the greater part of his behaviour. A hungry person eats food to satisfy his physical needs. A wronged person seeks arbitration and legal aid for the mere satisfaction of his economic and emotional security. A sad person seeks an outlet in various ways for the expression of his grief. So also a child who has no deninite control over his language may resort to other channels of self expression. Handicrafts provide a suitable means of helping the child to give expression to his thoughts. He could express his ideas of beauty in colour and design, fantasy and tragedy in form and shape and in various ways. An adult also who takes up a hobby, breaks the dull and nonotonous sentiments of his work and gains full satisfaction by it. In the same way, a dull lesson followed by handicraftwork can create similar satisfying and sedative impressions on the minds of the children.

Handicrafts is not only a means of satisfying children at school but is also a means of helping them to acquire healthy habits for their after school career. They can obtain real pleasure by taking up a hobby as a leisure time occupation which relieves them of a dull and monotonous business life. Most of our young men enjoy their school days but they look forward for their first "pay day", spending their wages over

and over again im imagination. In actual fact, their first few weeks of working life may be full of excitement but the monotony of it causes disappointment and frustration. Their outlook on life changes and they begin to feel that life is all work, a boring engagement, and they look round for some form of excitement. After business hours, they tend to go aimlessly about the street corners and cinemas in search of comfort. These avenues of obtaining satisfaction however turn to be more ruinous than anything that may be imagined. "Devil finds work for idle hands", says an old adage.

Here comes in the importance of hobbies as a recreative activity. The usual congestion in commercial centres does not permit active participation of every individual in games which offers a similar outlet for expression. It is however possible for every individual to engage himself in some form of practical activity involving the use of the hands. Many young men who would have wished to take up a hobby will not do anything about it unless they have a acquired a liking for one or the other kind at school during handicraft periods. Many teachers today are known to take up gardening or farm work because they have acquired it from their parents since their infancy, and there are a number of people who, by their association with craftsmen who are relatives find great relief in occupying their leisure housrs with some form of handicraft. The school must therefore aim at providing an opportunity for giving children more experience at handicrafts so that they will be able and willing to cultivate more enjoyable leisure time activity.

The following experience is an example of the attitude of most of the products of our schools, especially in commercial centres. It happened a short while ago that I saw a man, one of the fortunate few, standing with his wife lounging by him both watching their garden boy fencing round a bed of flowers in the afternoon. They seems to have acquired a love for flowers but the pleasure of cultivating plants by themselves did not appeal to their interests. This incident may appear insignificant but it was very striking to me because of the contrasting sight of a European, a few yards away from the house of the noble "on-lookers". Immediately after this European arrived at his house, he quickly stripped himself almost naked and with a spade in hand started digging a hole to hold a drain water which had been flooding the area. There was a steward boy in the house but he was not asked to lend a helping hand. What a great contrast there is in the behaviour of these two families! Which of the two gentlemen had a real pleasure and satisfaction in the end? The answer to this question is evident enough. Many a time, our young men seek pleasure in other illusory ways until they experience absolute disappointment, when in reality, true happiness through honest and practical living is ever close to them. The feeling of pleasure derived f rom the completion of a piece of work cannot be described in terms of words. One simply mutters to one's self, "This is a very nice piece of work. I have done it".

Handicrafts can also give the individual child a definite sense of power over his material environment. It is not sufficient to cater for leisure time absorption of his

personalities by making things for the sake of making things. The real solution lies in equiping each individual product of the school with an absorbing and intelligent interest and purpose in life. Young people are mostly anxious to find something to look for as well as something to live on. The following is an extract which supports this view:

"During the first eleven or twelve years of life, the child is learning to use the tools of education. By the time he has arrived at a certain facility with the use of these tools he is plunged into the many and various changes of adolescence, and he is busy coping with his emotional adjustment to life....... Quite often....... they reach the right conclusions, but their inability to sustain and follow any reasoned process is a definite handicap. All youthful enthusiasm is inspired by feeling and it is right that it should be so, but if constructive thinking does not follow, full adulthood is never achieved"(1) Handicraft serves as one of the best mediums by which this constructive thinking could be acquired. With this tool of constructive or creative thinking in hand, the individual would have confidence in himself, and the material environment would present us difficulties or impose limitations on him. The development of creative thinking through handicrafts is another great responsibility of the school and therefore every effort should be made to promote it right from the first day of a child's school life, and throughtout all his primary school carrier and even beyond it until such a time that he may be ready to fend for himself.

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(1) In the Service of Youth. by Macalister Brew Page 124

Handicrafts provide a good training ground for developing moral resistence to obstacles and hazards in future living. Many young people drifting from place to place and they are never settled simply because they lack courage, tolerance and patience when an impediment happens to crop up in their way. They readily give in because they have not learnt to try and to keep trying until the ultimate goal is reached. It is not unusual to find artists or craftsmen smashing their work in anger because of one reason or the other. But more often then not, they also possess the courage and determination to start afresh until the desired end is reached.

From the above we find that handicrafts properly handled by a teacher can become the source of happy living because it gives pleasure in leisure, encourages social living and stimulates effort or perservarance in surmounting difficulties and hazards of life.

"If you take leisure to mean "time off" or to mean 'having nothing to do', I do not believe that sort of leisure is of any importance at all; in certain conditions it can become a menace. What I mean by leisure is not doing nothing but doing something different. That to my mind is of supreme importance. - Harold Nicolson.

(From National Education - Vol xxxiv No 363 Feb.1 1952)

V. CHILDREN MUST BE GIVEN AN INCLINATION TO RETURN TO THE LAND

Gold Coast, including Togoland is mainly an agricultural country, and its future prosperity will depend largely on the development of its products by the application of scientific methods. In the meantime, the traditional cultivation of the land forms the chief occupation of the majority of its inhabitants, and it will remain, for a number of years, an agricultural country. Departure from this pursuit may result in social and economic maladjustment which is the source of unemployment and other social evils.

It is anticipated that the Volta River Project may include the irrigation of the Southern plains which are now almost useless because of the effects of lack of water and bad methods of farming. The success of this scheme will depend upon the skill of the farmers concerned. The present generation of farmers who are already used to primitive or traditional methods will not find it easy to adapt themselves to the new changes, techniques and the skill that will be required. "The people are nearly all subsistence farmers and very conservative with a reluctance, strengthened by their social custom, to adapt new methods". This is a remark made in the Togoland Report 1949 about the inhabitants of Kratchie, a little distance from the Project Area, but it is also very true of the people of the south who may be involved in the scheme.

Is there any hope for a rapid change in the outlook of these subsistence farmers before the irrigation may be in operation, or can the Mass Literacy Campaign defeat this

conservativeness and social custom? Because of these problems it is vitally important to educate the growing generation in such a way that they will be able and worthy to exploit these new possibilities to the full, stimulation of initiative could best be done through the schools, but it cannot be done unless the teachers themselves are willing to recognise the fact that all forms of activity whether verbal or manual are equally vital for the welfare of the community and that both can equally be potent cultural forces. The majority of teachers and indeed mostly those who have passed though the schools unfortunately regard the use of the hands as degrading. This attitude is only too easy for their children to adopt. When for example, supervision of gardening is regarded as compulsory by these teachers, they may be seen reading novels, newspapers and other books or sitting comfortably on chairs without taking the least interest in their children's activities. The result of this is that most of those who have passed throug our Primary Schools have acquired bookish tendencies and are not the least interested in the work of their parents or of the neighbourhood. They rush into the commerical centres in search of white collar jobs, and however meagre their pay or miserable their living, they desperately cling to these forms of employment.

For such a Project as well as any future kind which may be drawn up in the true interest of the inhabitants, to be really successful, more than mere capital is necessary to achieve the fullest advantages. Lacking the background of this type of interest a number of people want to work to be instructed

as talk and it may just become another "Groundnut Scheme" which may collapse in bankruptcy. The growing generation must be given an inclination to return to the land by interesting them in the use of their hands through the development of their creative abilities. This work is a responsibility of the Primary Schools.

School gardening or farming is a form of handicraft and provision should be made for it in towns as well as in the country. Work in the school gardens or farms provides ample opportunities for the use of the hands. In farm work, practical problems present themselves naturally so that co-ordinative and manipulative skills are brought into full play. The needs created in such work are natural demands which may arouse the true interests of the children.

What are the needs generally created by school garden work? A good garden requires a strong fence with a safe and lockable gate for the protection of the crops against domestic and other destructive animals. Fencing techniques must be surveyed in view of the possibilities of the environment. Nursery sheds must be erected to protect the seedlings against the direct rays of the sun and thunder storms. Climbing plants must be surpported on stakes. Hoe, cutlass or rake handles must be mended or renewed, and baskets may be required for the transport or harvesting of crops. Watering, drainage or errosion measures must be taken and grafting, layering, marcotting, budding, prunning and other scientific treatment of plants also require the use of the finer motor hand controls. Wheel barrows may be

necessary for the transport of manures from compost pits to the rotation plots. There are quite a number of other things which should be necessarily done. The keeping of livestock makes a stronger appeal to the many children who are naturally interested in keeping animals, and when it combines with gardening and handicraft, the whole forms a broad course of practical education specially suited to the needs of any agricultural country. The activities of poultry-husbandry, keeping of rabbits, pigs and sheep may create the need for sheds, styes, hen-roosts, litters and other situations in which imagination and hand-eye co-ordination cannot be ignored.

Most of the activities described above are definitely beyond the scope of the Primary School pupils, and it may be wrong to impose or expect too much from them. It was explained elsewhere how the work of children should grow within their power. The teacher must therefore be always on the look-out for any opportunities and possibilities that may naturally spring out from the interests of the childrem, but he must also be careful to avoid those projects which, judging by the age of the children, may only end in frustration, a condition which is not only undesirable but very destructive to their true development.

It has always been the custom of all the Schools in the Gold Coast and in Togoland to make school gardens or farms. They are generally made simply because the Education Department demanded it as a condition to be fulfilled. There have always been few successful schools which have produced beautiful

gardens, but there have also been far too many unsuccessful ones. The causes of their failure may be due to several reasons. Where schools have produced good results, the effect of the work on the individual children of the school may be far from being satisfactory. I have in mind a school which owned a very nice farm and yet the children hated the use of their hands in the end simply because, instead of allowing free choice of occupation, self expression, experimentation and other creative activities, the emphasis was laid on discipline, strenuous work, and a grand display of crops. These poor children performed their duties in the farm under strict supervision at the point of the stick. They were all converted into unskilled labourers under the "all wise" master whose work was final, an order which had to be carried out to the letter. The evil effects of this sort of approach are too apparent. Instead of learning through experience, the pupils cultivated hatred for all forms of manual activites and the real purpose of the whole scheme was absolutely defeated. Other schools which were rather more liberal in the treatment of therir pupils made no efforts to introduce craftwork but continued to use the age old primitive methods of the neighbourhood, sometimes producing poorer results than those generally obtained from the farms of the children's parents. As a result, the children derived no sense of achievement from their labours and they lost interest year by year when the same worthless activities had to be carried out. Other schools failed to produce any results at all. Because of bad fencing or carelessness, all the crops suffered from devastation by domestic animals and the farm or garden became an empty

space, a cause of great frustration to all the children.

It is not therefore astonishing to find so many young men and women who have passed through our Primary Schools only to lose interest in manual activites but turning their ambitions towards clerical jobs and as far away as possible from the natural occupations of the Country.

This tendency of turning away from the land is a great threat to the welfare of this country. Now that free primary education is in operation, it is hoped that the greater number of our children will have facilities of going through their primary course without any hope of receiving Secondary Education. Should the Middle Schools fade away, these children may have to face their life problems right at the beginning of their primary carreer, and unless their view point on life is directed towards the land in the proper way, this country will sooner or later be faced with a tragic economical crisis. There is already a shortage in the labour force which is required for the maximum production of food. The drifting of people into the towns is depopulating the food producing areas and consequently, the capacity of food production is reduced. As the commercial towns continue to grow larger and larger with the influx of people from the rural areas, the demand for more food is gradually becoming greater and greater day by day, and the cost of living is soaring higher and higher along with it. The alarming nature of this situation has drawn the attention of the Government and every means are now being employed to remedy it. The slogan of the day is "Grow More Food!"

The cause of this difficulty must partly be attributed to the after-effects of war. Most of the farmers who were conscripted for work in the army have learnt to live in different ways, and they would not return to their villages to carry on their original occupations when they were discharged. This condition developed other problems in the towns, the most important of which is "housing". It is very good that steps are being taken to remedy this embarrasing labour shortage by embarking upon various development schems. Special mention must be made of the experimental resettlement plan of Damongo in the Northern Territeries towards which the tide of migration may be diverted. Unless rural life is made attractive in many ways along the same lines, the tide will never ebb from the towns.

Many artisans were also sent to Europe on scholarships in order to improve the condition of skilled labour in the near future. This is also another excellent step which can help to blot out the existing wrong concepts of manual or skilled labour. Care must however be taken not to confine these advantages to the inhabitants of the urban areas but ways and means of encouraging private rural enterprise must be sought. The two schemes mentioned above are only short term development plans for the encouragement of adults; therefore the Primary schools must bear the responsibility of the long term schemes for the proper development of the new generation.

Education Authorities and every individual teacher would be doing this Country a great service by giving a new approach to this serious situation. There is a need to adopt positive

attitudes to agriculture and the children should be given a share in the planning, experimentation and specialisation according to their individual aptitudes, giving opportunities for direct application of new knowledge which could be made available to them. The emphasis should be placed on the development of the individual.

Herbert Read, in his "Education Through Art", deduced from Plato's thesis on Art that man should be educated to become what he is, and that each individual is born with certain potentialities which have a positive value for that individual and that it is his proper destiny to develop these potentialities within the framework of a society liberal enough to allow for an infinite variation of types.

VI. THE PLACE OF CREATIVE IMAGINATION IN THE TEACHING OF HANDWORK.

In the first two chapters, an attempt was made to explain the importance of creative imagination in the education of children and how no provision was made for the full creative development by primitive life or by the first European educational policies. The development of handicrafts is almost purely a mental process, the hand being the medium of its outward expression. However skilled one's hands may be, no amount of mechanical movements without imagination could produce any good results.

What then is this creative or constructive imagination? It is a quality of thinking which uses facts in solving present or future problems. The opposite of creative imagination is destructive imagination, which solves present or future problems in such a way as to harm the individual or the society. Whenever the imagination wanders away from facts and enters into a world of fantasy, then the hands may be of no use in solving problems in reality. Many of our young men today are handicapped because they have departed from concrete reality. Mere regimentation, drill and discipline of children would only tend to kill their initiative and creative interests. Believing in supernatural powers and animistic ideas only drives the minds of the children to a world of fantasy ruled by fear which is very destructive to the true development of creative imagination.

It is the duty of the Primary School Teacher to cultivate children's real imaginations which are the orderly and efficient

carrying of ideas into fruition. Imagination must be led into constructive action: Handicrafts provide a very good opportunity for the development of creative individuality. Good and progressive education must be built upon practical experience in which children can create and see for themselves in order that they may have the facts upon which to base their judgements or situations. From this background, they could check up their ideas against facts. The world of reality is the home of the "practical thinker", but the "wishful thinker" lives far away in a world of fantasy or dreamland.

The teacher must aim at helping the children to use their imagination constructively but they must learn to build it on facts. This will guide the children to live in world or reality. By living in a world of reality, they would find emotional satisfaction and they would appreciate the high ideal of honest living. Destructive imagination is the result of wishful thinking which seeks to make the impossible appear realistic. It does not ground itself upon facts or realities. It is the home of lies and dishonest behaviour. A child may tell a lie in order to make other people share his life of fantasy and he obtains wrong satisfaction in so doing. A dishonest person acts in such a way as to make other people believe him to be what he is not. He covers his short-comings by telling a bright story of himself. Care must therefore be taken to encourage the children to stick to realities basing all their actions rather upon facts. Children also tell stories and watch their effects upon their peers and adults. If they laugh at rather

than scold them and then point out the impossibility of the story, they would realise that their trick was discovered and this would help to discourage them in repeating their lies. Sometimes exaggeration of truths produce the same situations when a child makes an attempt to create greater interest in order to attach undue importance to himself.

Sometimes, children lie in order to avoid punishment or to protect a friend, and at other times they lie to cover up work not done or to gain a reward of some kind when the work imposed on them is too difficult for them. If too great an emphasis is placed upon the achievement of individual pupils, the rest may be tempted to cheat in various ways. It is not uncommon to find children buying articles from the market or asking elder brothers, sisters or other relatives and friends to make them in order to show them as their own homework for high marks or for mere social recognition, a thing which they always lacked. The teacher must therefore be careful not to create such situations by putting stars upon individual gifted children.

A child may also tell a lie or act dishonestly to gain selfish ends or to tear down someone else. He should be taught to take pride in his own work and adjust himself to the needs of other people. If he is starved for social recognition or status that he must tell a lie to win it, every attempt must be made to give him what he needs. The development of pride in "honest honour" should be encouraged in dealing with dishonesty rather than by using threatening consequences.

It is of vital importance to understand the behaviour of children such as the five or six-year-old children who play with imaginary companions when they find it difficult to play with real children. Such children isolate themselves from the group because the other individual members do not act exactly as they would wish them to behave since they have ideas of their own. The imaginary playmate is easy to manage and does exactly what he is told. As long as a child could keep hemself amused with his own imagination he may be satisfied with playing with an imaginary companion. Such introverted children should be made to appreciate the need for real companions who are able to create more fun because they have a larger variety of ideas. In dealing with such children, the use of force or punishment may not help to achieve good results. The safest method is to create a mutual understanding and co-operation between the child and his real companions. It is only then that he would discover for himself the uselessness of the imaginary companion and fit himself into the group of real mates.

Children may not only create imaginary companions but they may also have other imaginative situations. Young girls cook imaginary meals in imaginary pots over imaginary fires and boys may be seen driving imaginary motor cars over imaginary roads. To them, ordinary stones, leaves, wild fruits, flowers or roots may represent peculiar make-believe characters in their play, and the amout of satisfaction derived from such situations can be judged by the amout of interest and energy displayed in carrying them out. A handicrafts teacher must be well acquainted

with such behaviour of children in order that he might be able to lead the children along right lines of approach to the full development of their creative imaginative abilities. The mere copying of models or following rigid rules of procedure may only serve to suffocate and even kill their imagination, interest, and natural initiative which may be required in adult life and in dealing with its many phases of practical problems.

In handling tools and materials, the child is forced to think in practical situations, to realise the limitations and possibilities offered by these materials and to find ways and means of manipulating these things in order to achieve the desired ends. This process requires the realisation of a problem, judgement, experimentation and discovery of the right solutions. Handicrafts teaching along these lines can help to develop the right attitudes to situations which a child may meet in his future life.

"Genuine understanding of the difference between fact and fancy, between what is and what one wishes to be, between taking an advantage now as against curbing oneself in favour of the future-all this requires a well developed and well disciplined imagination. A sense of honour, self-control, and a vision into the future should remain a clear objective for parents and teachers in the guidance of children's developing imaginations" (1)

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(1) Child Development by Breckenridge and Vincent.

"grasping prehension" The new born baby uses the thumb only by chance but uses the "monkey" grasp by using only four fingers. "One of the most interesting things to note about the hand of the new-born baby is the complete uselessness of the thumb in hand action. Characteristically, the thumb lies flaccid in the palm of the hand, being fanned out as the fingers spread, but seeming to have no character of its own"(1) Effective use of the hand develops only after the development of eye-hand co-ordination with arm and finger muscles. The "pincer" technique which uses the thumb in apposition to the fingers in grasping is also the result of gradual gorwth or maturation.

Healthy children are naturally very active because of an innate tendency which helps them to master the muscular skills. This end may sometimes be achieved by repetion of actions after many failures, constant risks of bodily injury or they may even be involved in tragic accidents. In their anxiety to develop these hand skills, they handle domestic wares and implements including sharp knives and pointed objects. Parents and teachers who, as a protective measure restrict too rigidly the activities of their childre, do a great deal of harm because by so doing they starve their growing muscles, limit their experiences and thereby deny them the chances of proper development which may be of great benefit to them in future.

There is a common belief that there are sex differences in motor performances. It was proved that boys are superior to

girls in some types of activities, but that, when girls are given the same practice in motor control, they learn as rapidly as boys, and there is no difference in basic learning ability. Differences may occur where great muscular strength is required, but in normal work, boys and girls with sufficient interest and practice, can do equally well. It is a pity that our-culture has placed restrictions on the work of men and women, and this social limitation may influence the Primary School teacher in planning the equal development of the hand skills. He must bear in mind that these differences are purely products of cultural expectation and as practical disadvantages may be encountered by encouraging girls to do things expected of boys and vice versa.

The above is an attempt to sketch the general development of hand skills in children. When at the age of five or six they come to school, these developments continue in the process of growth and they are not complete until they are fully matured. Their ability to perform and the expectation of accurate workmanship are very limited indeed. They cannot handle with precision the handwork tools especially those requiring the use of the finer muscles of the hand and fingers So the use of the too dangerous implements, like chisels, may cause serious accidents, though their regular use may contribute to the early mastering of the required skills. The greatest emphasis must therefore be placed upon giving the children suitable opportunities for developing their creative abilities through eye-hand co-ordination in various situations. Children must not be expected to produce finished or detailed

workmanship and judged by adult standards. The secret of success lies in the amount of encouragement and suitable opportunities given to the children and also in the pleasure of achievement, satisfaction, interest and self confidence derived from them. As far as the accidents mentioned above are concerned, precautions must be taken to place the children in right and safe situations according to the standard of their hand skills. Keen edged or highly pointed tools may be reserved for higher age groups which have gained greater mastery over the use of their muscles.

Another problem which may upset a handicraft teacher in the Primary School is lefthandedness in children. The native society sanction the use of the left hand at work but, to hand something over to an elderly person or to handle prepared food with it, is regarded as bad manners. The society may not also allow or appreciate its use in writing, painting or knitting. An insight into the development of the preferencial use of children's hands may help the teacher to solve this problem.

In the first year of the life of children, handedness cannot be clearly noticed, because when they are beginning to develop the use of their hands, they appear to use either one hand or the other in otner words, they seem to be ambidextrous. The preference of the use of one hand begins only when the child has developed some skill in the use of both hands. I still remember an incident of my infancy when I was insulted by members of my family for using my left hand instead of the

right in taking my food according to the native fashion. It happened when I was still very young and ate with my hands, as many children do today, instead of using a spoon. As a result of the insults, I becaeme very nervous and was therefore careful not to incite their indignation by repeating the offence. Luckily, a scar on my left finger caused by a pocket knife helped me to indentify it from the right but not until I have washed both hands, spreading all the fingers before me for the selection. Infact, there was no difference in the use of both hands to me at that time. This behaviour also created another centre of interest before each meal but I got over it in the end. The simple fact that this incident left a permanent trace on my memory is a sufficient evidence of the effect and amount of mental strain that an actual change of established handedness could create in children's minds.

Some psuchologists claim that handeness in mainly a matter of training, and our native parents also do a lot of training in this respect. All mothers are specially keen to change lefthandedness of their daughers as early as possible by showing strong disapproval of its use. They learn to tolerate its use only after complete failure of their traditional methods. My recent speech defect work at the Accra Government Girls' School revealed that public control over lefthandedness from infancy is very great indeed. Only one case of ambidex-trousness could be observed in the whole school.

There is evidence according to Breckenridge that left handedness has a physiological basis and it is not a mere acquired habit. Mild cases can be changed by education but where the preference is already marked, an attempted changed may result in speech defects like stuttering or in other nervous symptons. Care should therefore be taken not to apply unreasonable discipline where a change in the hand is desired. A child should be allowed to use the hand of his preference in craftwork and in other activities, but he should also be encouraged to use both hands for greater advantage.

VIII HANDICRAFTS TEACHING SHOULD APPEAL TO CHILDREN'S INTERESTS.

In discussing the development of handskills, attention was paid to the importance of children's interests in the attainment of practical results in handicraft work. A school of thought firmly holds the idea that learning based on interest is more rapid, more efficient and has many valuable concomitants. This idea is gaining ground and the old method of learning by direct effort and force of will, is giving way to it. The emphasis is now placed on learning by the use of interest because it was discovered that when pupils were doing things they were interested in, they were happier, learned more and became better adjusted in their personal relationships. As a result of this discovery there was an enormous drop in the emphasis placed on discipline.

All educators did not at first understand what was meant by basing learning on interest. By mistake, they started to make a list of things children were interested in and they asked them to write down the things they wanted to know, and believing that these things were interesting to children, they began to teach them as they had taught before. There was no change in the results and the expected advantages did not appear.

To understand what is meant by basing learning upon interest, the difference between "interest" and "an interest" must be clearly understood. Interest is a state of being , a way of reacting to a certain situation. An interest is that field or area to which a child reacts with interest consistently over an extended period of time. Interest may be aroused and directed toward any number

of things for a variety of reason. The how of achieving it is of vastly greater importance than the what.

To achieve interest, the child himself must be active, and the activity must fill a need. Children react with interest in four major fields:

(1) Physical activity in which the hands and the whole body may be used.

(2) The use or manipulation of tools to satisfy a child's own needs.

(3) Mental activity in which thinking about things and solving problems that are meaningful, is used.

(4) Activities of people around in which children gradually broaden their contacts with people and become interested in vital phases of human life and environment.

In this fourth field, the growth of the child's interest is based on his interest in people he knows, the things they do and the environment they react to. Generally, the child develops within the range of these four major fields.

The growth of interest is the most important factor in learning, and it develops gradually in terms of experience, power and needs. Before a child may become truly interested in anything, he must have had experience that will furnish a background the material will be meaningless to him. The child grows in power, and the tasks should be so planned as to keep pace with it. The task must not be too difficult for him or he would be discouraged and would make no attempt to tackle it. If the work

is too easy, he would be bored and lose interest in doing it. The child also grows in regard to his needs. These needs develop socially, personally as to skills, knowledge and habits.

The first of these basic needs is security or a sense of personal worth. It may be described as a freedom from fear and anxieties of all kinds. What fears and anxieties can a school create in children? Many teachers sometimes set a standard of work, both as to amount and kind which is expected of all children. Many of the children realise only too well that they can never meet those standards to the satisfaction of their teachers. They are kicked before they start and they know it to be so. At first, they may make an attempt to do the job that is beyond them. If they only meet with criticism for not having done better, the docile ones continue to try in a half-hearted fashion, hindered by constant fear of the reproof they know is coming. The less docile rebel, and by passive resistance or active revolt, refuse to make more than a token attempt.

Very often, teachers commit crimes against children by their habit of working their pupils into a state of insecurity. They call them all sorts of names, disgrace or punish them until some of them find relief by bolting away from the class-room, only to become delinquents in the end. This situation does not exist in the classroom only but may be found in children's homes where parents unconsciously turn out their own children into the streets by denying them this vital personal need of security. A detailed study of individual differences and the recognition of the worth of the individual may save many a soul and reduce the formation of anti-social habits of children.

The second basic need of children is success. If a child never experiences failure, then it means that he is not doing a piece of work which challenges his ability. Such a child develops the impression that he can do anything. At the approach of any difficult situation, he becomes hopelessly helpless and the only possible theing he may do is to shrink from or dodge that piece of work or he may avoid or ven prevent any possible recurrence of the situation. He loses confidence in nemself and finally develops feelings of inferiority. If the teacher sets the standard of work on the average or low average of the class, the bright pupils find the work very easy so that they lose interest and the above described situation sets in when real difficulties suddenly cross their way. Continuous failure has bad effects upon the child too because it makes him to give up trying altogether. This repeated failure can destroy self-confidence and discourage the use of his efforts. Teachers should therefore be careful to provide learning experiences of proper difficulty for each child. They should be difficult enough to be challenging to him so that occasionally he has a temporary failure before he succeeds. They should also sufficiently be within his ability so that he may have every confidence and that with a little work, he may succeed. Children who do not succeed in solving the problems which they have recognised may need just a little guidance from the teacher.

Children also need recognition for something. A teacher may forget to give praise or recognition to some pupils who may rather need ti most. The explanation of this failure on the part of the teacher may be that the children did not do any of the things

that merit praise. This may not be true because no child is wholly bad. A child to whom people react favourably can do something for which a weak child may be blamed and be either praised for it or have it ignored. It happens so because the teacher expects the good child to do good and the weak child to do bad, and these expectations colour his reactions to what the children do in most respects. Children tend to repeat the things for which they were praised or received attention, and this becomes a source of great encouragement to their efforts. Praise and recognition can turn a child's attention to constructive activities because they help to strengthen his self confidence and sense of success.

The child grows in interest through experience, power and needs, and therefore the teacher should lead him to feel the need of these at the right time. Many activities satisfy these needs and are readily accepted by the child. The more he feels the need for an experience, the more interested he will be in it, If the work is relevant to current living conditions of his environment, he would certainly feel the need and his reaction will therefore be natureal and real. Care must be taken not to confuse emotional appeal or real interest with false interest or curiosity. When a person sees or hears something about which he knows little or nothing and he is stimulated to find out more about it, that is curiosity. He may lose interest in it as soon as his curiosity is satisfied. He may however develop interest in it if it gave him a feeling of success, and if it was built on his former experiences in a meaningful

way within his power, meeting his needs.

Finally, effort must be put forth in direct proportion to the interest. When the effort is forced upon the child directly or indirectly, the result is strained activity; but when self-interest is the stimulator, the child feels an annate demand for continuing and completing the problem even in the face of difficulties. When the situation is too difficult for solution, the child may decide it is not worth effort, and drop the whole thing. If the interest is strong enough, he may rely on his intelligence to make use of new means to attain his end. The amout of voluntary effort the child puts forth is a measure of his interest. Too easy problems stimulate little interest. Under this situation, a task becomes not dreaded work which must be done, but an undertaking involving difficulties to be overcome, a stimulus to thinking or creative imagination.

What are the interest of the children of this country, and how can these interest be used in teaching handwork? The best approach to the answers of these questions may be by means of a detailed study of the free play of school children and of the imaginative play of pre-school children. This should be the safest ground on which handicrafts teaching in the Primary School should be based. It may be observed that children mostly imitate in their play the occupations of the community in which they live. Other forms of alien occupation would not be meaningful to them and these would find no place in their play. No sound foundation could be built on these foreign occupations because they do not form any part of their

experiences. Children's play differs from place to place but a common trend of the imitation of the occupations of every locality may be found everywhere. It would therefore be totally wrong to prescribe a common scheme of work for all Primary Schools. In commercial centres, children may be more interested in building motor cars, trains, aeroplanes, houses and many other forms of manual crafts around which metropolitan life evolves Crude trucks made by children from waste metal and scraps of wood may be seen here and there in these large towns and villages along the major roads. It is interesting to note that in most cases, these trucks are not simply made as toys but they are generally made to fill a need. They may be one, or two or three seater trucks for the enjoyment of riding by the children themselves or for carrying buckets or tins of water. I recently came across one of these push-trucks designed for carrying firewood. Some of these trucks are fitted with simple steering devices. The complete self devotion and interest displayed by all the members of the manufacturing gang leaves nothing to be desired. In most cases, the tools of workmanship are confined to stones or scrap iron. In the rural areas, children may be seen cutting a log of soft wood all day long with blunt cutlasses until four crude wooden wheels may be obtained for the construction of a truck. Why should children be prevented from following such activities at school with proper tools? Teachers must be quick to seize every opportunity of making school life more realistic to child nature.

The aim of guiding children in carrying out these occupations is not to make them artisans or craftsmen though they may gain a certain amount of skill in handling tools. The most important object should be to develop their creative abilities.

"A large percentage of boys are interested in mechanical things and many children draw and paint so well that they seem to give great promise of talent, yet as adults they prove unable to draw simple objects and to have lost all interest in mechanical activities. What seemed to be special talent is not so in reality. Striking performance of any kind in childhood is an expression of general alertness and initiative rather than of special talent in a given direction. The gifted eight-year-old draws because drawing is the most adequate expression of his age; at ten he will in all probability interest himself in handicrafts;..... What really happens is that a general mental activity seeks out a material that is suited to a given age level, and does very well with it". (1)

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(1) Seven to Eleven. by T. Raymont. page 20.

IX. HANDICRAFTS AS AN AID TO THE TEACHING OF OTHER SUBJECTS

In the report of the Advisory Council on Education in Scotland (1946) it was emphatically expressed that hand-and-eye training should go along with oral expression, the core of the Primary Curriculum. The significance of the use of the "opposable thumb" as a distinguishing feature of man from the higher animals, making the child the heir of all ages of human development was also pointed out. It continued that there are various sticks - bats, golf clubs, hockey sticks, recquets, oars, pokers, boat hooks, fishing rods etc - for a great variety of practical uses as well as great families of tools, with different purposes, different principles of construction and used with different motions of muscles - the hammers, scrapers, knives of all kinds, axes, saws, scissors, needles, lifting tools from salt spoons to spade, carrying tools like pails, boxes and barrows, chisels, levers, wedges and nails, pliers, spanners, screw drivers, keys for doors, shuttles for hand looms, graters, and egg beaters, all sorts and sizes of brushes, musical instruments including fiddles and many other kinds that are hnd tools for the production of music, and there is also the pencil or pen used for the art of writing. It was emphasised that this wonderful tool of writing, though of supreme importance in the development of mankind is only one of an enormous number of the tools needed and fashioned by man, and that the use of this single tool should not be regarded as the only effective means of achieving desired ends in the education of children. The training of office clerks, it went on, by the use of only the pen

or pencil as a tool was an erraneous approach to the real education of children.

This criticism is not only true of Scotland but also of this Country. It may also be deduced from the above that education should be given through as many correlated channels of activity as possible. In other words, there should be a close relationship between hand skills and the core of the primary school curriculum. It is being realized more and more that if a new piece of knowledge is an isolated fragment, it could not be assimilated at all, and that it can only take its place in the manifold structure of mental content by right of knship with what is already there. Though a lesson may be taken by separate specialists, a child would consciously seek some mode of combination which will enable the alien elements to remain side by side in his mind and he may freely dismiss all the portions which refuse to find fellowship with the rest. The success of the tutor's work may not be the outcome of separate activities but the remnant of what the learner has assimilated into a unified whole.

The influence of Froebel, who believed that education can only be achieved successfully when ti was based on the child's need to actively participate in the learning process, has done much to bring to educators the value can be acquired from handicrafts, giving as it can, a more vivid insight into other aspects of the curriculum. The association of handicrafts teaching with other subjects of the school should help teachers and children to realise that handicrafts is not an

isolated subject in the curriculum but it has a bearing on the work and life of the school as a whole and also on many aspects of everyday life outside its walls. In nature study for example, there have always been attempts by man to control plant and animal life, and ways and means of gaining a closer insight have been devised. This has been the cause of need of growing plants under special conditions, in which handicrafts play a major part. Animals, insecta and other forms of life are kept on the school compounds or in classrooms by means of various contrivances, though they may be best studied in their natural surroundings. A nature table by which an attempt to provide a means of continuous study of plants and animals under conditions favourable for observation could be simply made, preferably, by the pupils themselves. A simple aquaruim may be provided in the classroom or a larger one may be constructed on the compound or in the garden. Other process of experimentation and display of charts cannot be done without the application handicrafts.

Models in paper, clay, wood, fibres and other local materials are most useful for illustrating stories, geographical features, historical events and life of the community of the neighbourhood of the school in contrast to life in other lands. For effectiveness, much of the work can be based on projects which involve physical, social and intellectual activities directed towards real problems in the neighbourhood, the solving of which a creative outlook can be developed as the children build, explore, reason and discuss in the course of their work.

Handicrafts too can provide much of the apparatus needed fo effective teaching. Children would surely enjoy more playing with skipping ropes, dumb bells, ninepins, skittle balls, fishing-game rods and various forms of bats which they have made themselves in the same way - although this should not be overdone. Various kinds of brooms, scrubbing brushes, dusters and waste paper baskets or at later stages, even latrine sheds and urinals can be made by the pupils themselves. The things so made should not be judged by adult standards. The very act of allowing the children to give self expression to the hygiene lessons through personal experience would surely leave a more permanent impression on the minds of the children than if it was merely communicated through the meduim of speech alone. There is far too much talk and far too little or no chance of doing things practically in our schools. An interesting correlation between nature study, hygiene, local studues and handicrafts could be done by first asking the children to observe little white ants at work building an outhill. A discussion of the industry of these tiny creatures may lead to the suggestion of building up something in clay, a small hen-coop or a simple incinerator. Then a local builder at work would be visited and from the experience thus gained, an attempt could be made to carry out their plans on the school compound. The process of mixing the clay with water, the carrying of the round swish balls (like the ants) to the site, and the gradual growth of the walls day by day and the final burning of waste paper and rubbish in the incinerator can be a most satisfying experience

to young children who so often are extremely interested in water and fires.

Such a project may appear too difficult for little ones, but I had the experience of the work of my children recently when they voluntarily set themselves the task of mending a broken section of a hen-coop with no previous knowledge of this craft. They worked at it all day and no amout of persuasion discouraged them from doing it. However crude the result, it was a praise-worthy achievement. Children's zeal in similar self-imposed activities is sometimes so great that care should be taken to guard against overwork by diverting their attention to other forms of recreative occupations.

Environmental and imaginative activities may provide opportunities for creative experience and self expression the teaching of geography, history, drama, religious knowledge, nature study and literature. Equipment for a stage including the making of puppets, dresses for dolls and marionettes and other forms of needlework, knitting and weaving as well as bookcraft for literature or science records must be specially noted as opportunities for creating handicraft situations at varying levels of the primary school.

Every good Primary School Teacher must be resourceful in his methods of handling all the other lessons of the curriculum because to the child, such experiences can be healthy and educative. These methodsmust equip him with a keen sense of observation, experimenting, planning and re-inventing. There are very many people who look at things around them

superficially without keen observation and they seldom take notice of changes and peculiarities caused by various natural conditions. They are less conscious of the true nature of their envirnment because they have not acquired good habits of careful observation. Accurate observation of natural surroundings can be encouraged in children by stimulating their interests in nature so that in course of time, they may cultivate good habits of observation Mere verbal communication of records facts about the environment or nature of the universe by the teacher cannot achieve any permanent results because the children would only depend upon the teacher as the only source of gaining useful knowledge. This dependence on the teacher is the reason why most young men after leaving school, fall into a pitiful state of incompetence when they are suddenly faced with different problems or situations.

Children should not only observe everything for themselves, but they must also combine their observation with experimentation. This learning process must take into consideration the conditions, the process, and the result of the experiments. It also involves a change which makes some improvement in the future actions of the children so that they may do or feel something more effective than they could have before. There must be interaction with the environment and not passive sitting and trying to remember. The pupils must do something physically or mentally with their learnings if they are to real. Failures as well as successes are equally valuable in experimenting activities because they provide the guiding principles for their future actions. In the same way, the persuit of definite

aims along preconceived channels of action in a logical sequence of operation may lead to a possible solution of problems. The tetails of every action, baseda on the past experience of the children, must be carefully laid down and noted in various ways.

The next step should lead the children patiently on, under the direction of the teacher to-invent or re-discover useful knowledge or the techniques handed down to us through many channels by right of our human inheritance.

These learning processes which require mental alerness, and which enable children to develop into fully matured and intelligent creatures, equip them with the necessary and effective tools for handling successfully any situations or for solving life's daily problems.

A scheme of work based on a topic showing how lessons be related is here with attached.

X. MY PAST EXPERIENCES IN THE TEACHING OF HANDICRAFTS AND FINAL SUGGESTIONS TO HANDICRAFT TEACHERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

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Most of the points raised in this essay have been built on my practical expirence in handicraft teaching at the Hohoe Ewe Presbyterian Senior Primary School between the years 1940 to 1945. I have not given examples from this school as the age group is much older than the ages of the children discussed here. What was true in respect of the pupils involved may not necessarily be applied to the present age range of the Primary School. However, from the readings connected with this essay I have obtained valuable background knowledge which will guide me in any future similar ventures. Looking back at my own experiences, the chief defect of my methods was my failure to relate the handicraft work with the other lessons of the school curriculum. The handicraft teaching was completely as isolated activity though it offered ample opportunity for applying mathematical rules in practical situations. The pupils worked in group situations and carried on brick and tile making, pottery, bricklaying, carpentry, weaving and painting. The school term generally ended with the firing of a clamp or the kiln. In all these activities, there was a great demand for counting which could have been developed into problems on the four simple rules, fractions, proportions, averages, percentages, wights and measures and costs of wages and materials. A lot of natural science could have been derived from the study of clays in comparison to other kinds of soil of the

area and they could have been properly combined with their effects upon its vegetation and animal life. The weaving craftwork could have been conveniently associated with the study of plants and experiments in dyeing. In fact, a good start was made but it was not found easy to negotiate with the demands and traditions of the Seventh Standard Examination, which was then an end in itself.

In spite of our failures, there was sucesses which may be attributed to the opportunities offered to the pupils to choose their own occupations. Provision was also made for changing from one activity to the other so that interese was maintained, In most cases, the pupils worked without supervision and they only called for direction when they could not solve a problem. Sometiems, they became anxious and restless whenever attention was not readily paid to them. There was, however, complete teacher-pupil relationship, co-operation and mutual understanding The work of the above mentioned groups was centred round the construction of a Domestic Science Block for the girls of the School. This project may appear to have been over-ambitious, but the free and voluntary effort exerted by all the pupils as well as the pride of achievement and self-confidence derived from it justified its operation at that particular age level. Without any hope of financial assistance from any where, the work was carried on until it attracted the attention of the School Authorities who later gave a grant of fifty pounds (£50) towards the purchase of boards, scandles, nails and cement. The house, built of burnt bricks and roofed with the tiles made by the pupils (boys and girls) consisted of three rooms -

a class-room, a store and a child-welfare room. It is really very interesting to see the engraved names of the pupils on some of the tiles which were intentionally displayed by their makers in in lasting memory of the part they have played in putting up this building. A spacious kitchen of local materials was later added to complete the domestic science accomodation. This school is still a Mixed School today. In spite of the fact that the buildings were put up during the War when no roofing materials were available, the costs were comparatively low, today, it is difficult to believe that it was as little. This enterprise attracted the interest of the general public too. There were regular visits from the neighbourhood, a thing which became a source of great encourggement to the pupils.

It is too early to judge the effects of this experiment on the after-school life of the pupils involved, but as I come across some of them, they seem to appreciate and mention how successfully most of them are getting on in life. Special mention must be made of one of these young men, then a potter but now a police-man at Accra. At school, he displayed a great talent in throwing coolers, flower pots and other wares. He told me recently that he derived much benefit from the work he carried out at school and that it helped him in performing his duty as a despatch rider. He handles a motor cycle, a practical occupation involving the use of the hand skills. It may be that he made this remark to please me, but it is also very likely that he spoke his mind because transfer of knowledge is easier when it is acquired in practical situations.

This is a very short description of the handicraft work in a Primary School, a department which is now designated as "The Middle School". Though the present Primary School is of a lower age level, yet I am convinced that handicrafts can be brought to a higher standard of attainment than it may be anticipated if properly handled.

I do not find it easy to make mention of my experiences at the Boys' Industrial Home at Swedru where I carried out observations in respect of this eassay for a fortnight in December 1951. My reasons for omitting it are that the aims persued there are vocational ones and therefore they cannot be identified with Primary School handicraft. Though it involves a certain amount of individual choice of occupation, yet it has an element of force, regimentation and an air of prison life behind it, and limitation of creative expression can be clearly seen by any keen observer. This remark is not a deliberate criticism of their methods but a contrast to methods of the Primary School. What is being done there at Swedru is a great achievement in the peculiar circumstances in which the teaching of handicrafts is being used for the reformation of the character of delinquent children.

To summarise, it is important to note that in planning the handicraft work at a primary level, the teacher must take the following points into consideration:

(a) The teacher must give the children sufficient scope for selection of activity at the proper age level by suggesting a number of things that children may be interested in.

(b) He must provide opportunities for using various tools and materials available in the locality. In the case of very young children it may be advisable to provide ready made parts-piece of wood, toy wheels, pegs to fit into holes and etc, on account of their immature motor skills.

(c) He must encourage the children to work in groups situations as far as possible in order to learn democratic living. Inter-class co-operation can be forstered by asking elderly children to provide the younger ones with simple apparatus - counters, toy parts and frames etc.

(d) He must encourage the children to appreciate their own efforts and to put the materials made into immediate use instead of piling them up in a corner. A place should be provided for keeping unfinised work which must be clearly labelled to avoid confusion and disappointment.

(e) He must not confine the work to handicraft periods alone but relate it with other lessons of the school curriculum.

(f) Equal attention must be paid to the children, especially the weaker ones who require recognition as a stimulus to effort.

(g) Childrens' work must not be judged by adult standard should be fixed.

(h) The teachers' own interest can be a great stimulus for individual effort and he should lead the children along creative channels.

EXAMPLES OF TRADITIONAL CRAFTS WHICH MAY BE INTRODUCED INTO THE HANDICRAFTS WORK OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

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How to carve a wooden ladle:

1. Cut a piece of a wild rubber tree (funtumia) which may be about four to six inches in diameter. Leave it in the sun for a week or two to get rid of excessive sap.

2. Cut into pieces slightly longer than the required length of the ladle. Make sure there are no signs of splitting of the wood at both ends.

3. Take one piece and cut two notches on exact opposite sides halfway down.

4. Hold the piece of wood with two hands, the notch nearer to you facing upward and hit the other end on lower sideof notch on a steady log as hard and as gently as you can. In most cases it will split along dotted line marked on diagram (fig 1A) By this means, two ladles can be carved out of the same piece of wood.

5. Carve them into the desired shape and scoop out the hollow with a chisel or scraper.

6. Finish off with designs. A sharp knife may be used. Allow the finished work to dry slowly in the shade.

How to make wooden sandals:

1. Repeat step 1 of the above.

2. Square up the piece of wood but two opposite sides should correspond with the width of your sole. The length must be slightly longer than that of your sole.

3. Allowing about tow inches on both ends cut down two notches leaving about half an inch at the bottom as in fig II.A

4. With one end up, cut down into the notch as in Fig.II.B reverse and cut in the opposite direction until the shape of fig.II.C is obtained.

5. Round off the edges as in D and bore three holes to hold straps as in fig II E, the required sandal.

HOW TO MAKE A FISH TRAP.

1. Prepare strips of palm ribs or bamboo about 2½ to 3feet long and half and inch wide. Care must be taken to scrape off the soft inner fibres. The strips should taper off at one end.

2. With a good twine, weave into a mat as in Fig III a.

3. Make three or two rings or hoops with strong vines about 9 inches in diameter and cover up with the mat as in fig III B & C Bind together the long ends of strips, twisting them round to form a dove-tail.

4. Make a small mat of two strings. The strips should taper very much at one end and insert into the epen end, binding it on the hoop Fig. IIIC.

HOW TO MAKE A COCOA MAT OR "BREKETE"

1. Split palm ribs into four or more equal parts and allow to dry in the sun about a week or two. Prepare strips of about ¾" to 1" in width from the dried ribs, taking care to take off the soft inner tissue.

2. Fix two tall stakes into the ground and tie a cross piece.

3. Peg down another corss piece of wood or bamboo.a

4. Tie flat fibre ropes between the two cross pieces with equal distances between them.

5. Weave the strips prepared from the palm ribs, turning them alternately (head and tail) to obtain a balance in the width of the mat. Plait the edges and cut them straight with a sharp cutlass.

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