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The word *perception* has been defined severally from different perspectives. The Longman Dictionary of contemporary English (2007) defines perception as "the way you think about something and your idea of what it is like". Mueller (2009) also likens perception to public opinion and refers to it as the "attitudes, perspectives, and preferences of a population toward events, circumstances and issues of mutual interest." Regrettably this phenomenon has been perpetuated negatively against the arts and culture industry in Ghana for decades. In fact the etymology of this negative public perception towards the industry can be traced from the colonial era when formal education, public service and Christianity were introduced in Gold Coast by European missionaries and slave masters.

Amenuke et al (1993) assert that before the Europeans came to Gold Coast our forefathers had already developed complex tangible and intangible cultures which they used to serve many purposes in their societies. These include

ancestral veneration, animism, magic, sorcery, rites of passage, taboos, morals and values, technology, ruling and arbitration systems, laws, security systems, creative arts, mythology and others. Unlike European art and culture that were based on classical aesthetic principles and Christian religious beliefs, indigenous Ghanaian arts and culture were based on African values and belief systems. However, the Europeans out of ignorance misunderstood them and branded them idolatrous and primitive.

This negative perception did not encourage the colonialists to promote the indigenous art and culture through formal school education but rather imposed their curriculum and culture on us through acculturation. This form of exotic education was promoted in the Gold Coast for decades whilst the indigenous Ghanaian art and culture were suppressed. Christianity is another powerful instrument the colonialists used to perpetuate their brainwashing agenda in Ghana which has contributed to generation of this massive negative public perception towards Ghanaian arts and

culture up till now. The disapproval of ancestral veneration, animism, rituals, sorcery, clairvoyance, polygamy and others that form the foundation of our belief system, protection, wisdom and family systems by Christianity compelled Christian converts to denounce these belief systems and practices and adopted the dictates of the Bible which is based on European and Jewish belief systems. This form of brainwashing made the indigenous people opposed their belief systems and practices vehemently and branded them as idolatrous and abomination to God. This Euro-Christian propaganda decline the acceptance of the true virtues of our beliefs to satisfy their whims and caprices.

In the public service all the senior staff such as lawyers, accountants, doctors, engineers, managers, and so on were expatriates from Britain whilst the clerks, artisans and labourers were Ghanaians who had had some basic, secondary or technical school education. It must be pointed out that the differences in the conditions of service of the colonial British management and the junior staff (local people) were extremely wide. The well paid British management lived in separate community bungalows with beautiful landscapes, utility services, recreational centres and restaurants. They owned vehicles with personal drivers, security personnel and enjoyed other privileges.

This form of extreme discrimination between the white management and the black workforce psychologically influenced the black workers to perceive their white bosses

as special human beings and very important in their society. It must also be emphasized that the local people developed interest in the professions of their white bosses and encouraged their children to pursue those programmes in school so that they could gain a managerial position upon graduation and enjoy such privileges. Since none of the white bosses was a successful artist, this mind set, has affected the reputation and patronage of the creative arts in Ghana to date. In fact Ghanaians have branded the creative arts as non-lucrative and irrelevant in society, but something that can be pursued as a hobby but not as a lifetime career.

In order to confirm or disproof this negative public perception towards the Ghanaian arts and culture, I conducted a field study in some schools in the Mfantseman Municipality in June, 2012 to seek public opinion on which SHS programmes, and professions in Ghana are most important, lucrative, respected and preferred. Purposive sampling was used to select 80 respondents for the study which consisted of 45 students and 35 teaching and non-teaching staff.

The findings reveal the biasness towards Science, Business and General Arts programmes that has translated into the Computer School Placement System. Most of the BECE candidates who score high aggregates are placed in those programmes and those who obtain relatively low grades and are presumably dull are placed in the technical and



vocational programmes. One would like to ask why can a nation take such a position that very intelligent students must be made to pursue science, liberal arts and business programmes and dull students be made to pursue vocational and technical programmes at the senior high school level? The obvious reason is that there is a general disregard for the study of the Creative Arts which has narrowed our attention towards the development and promotion of those programmes since independence. The preference for those programmes is because they lead to professions such as medicine, law, banking, journalism, management and administration, accounting and others. This kind of idealist educational philosophy have over the years created extreme desire for programmes that lead to the acquisition of white-collar/pink-collar (nonmanual jobs) and developed a negative attitude towards technical and vocational programmes which include the creative arts that are skill-oriented and lead to self-employment.

The analysis also revealed that more than 50% of the respondents believed that medicine is the most respected profession in Ghana whilst art is the least respected. This finding further confirms my claim that there is general negative public perception towards creative arts in Ghana. It was also found out that majority of the respondents think art is the least important profession in Ghana and the least preferred SHS programme by parents and students whilst science, general arts and business are the most preferred programmes. Ironically, the analysis revealed that majority

of the students and the staff agreed that art is lucrative. Perhaps this awareness is being created because people are realizing the benefits of the creative arts in comparison with the liberal art professions due to the massive unemployment situation in Ghana. Maybe, they have also realized that proactive creative artists in Ghana have used their skills profitably to establish businesses and even employ others. I wish this realization is made across Ghana so that it can re-orientate the psychic of the masses towards the arts and give it maximum attention, respect and patronage.

Furthermore, the imposition of European educational curricula by the colonialists in the Gold Coast decades ago based on European aims, objectives and content made most of the literate population live in absolute ignorance of the nitty-gritty of the rich indigenous traditions and cultural elements such as mythology, philosophical and proverbial sayings, religious beliefs and practices, music, dance, medicine, crafts, anthropological history, stories, festivals, ethics and so on. Pathetically, this perverse ignorance was deliberately orchestrated and perpetuated by the exotic educational curricula so that they could train our minds as Europeans so as to lose our innate African intellectualism and true identity. A system I refer to as "mental slavery".

The historical antecedence of this negative phenomenon towards Ghanaian arts and culture and its subsequent effects on the development, promotion and preservation of the arts and culture from pre-colonial times till present has



been very detrimental. For instance, if majority of the public especially the educated youth and graduates who have the potential to assume leadership positions as presidents, ministers, parliamentarians, directors in Ghana have negative perceptions towards Ghanaian arts and culture how would they have the political will and the enthusiasm to resource the industry to develop by providing adequate infrastructure, finance and train skilled human resource for effective management and preservation of the industry? The infrastructural base of creative arts programmes, departments and faculties in our basic, senior high and tertiary institutions are very poor, as compared to the medical science, engineering, business, social sciences and others. Typical examples are low infrastructure base of the Graphic Design and Art Education departments in UEW, the College of Art at KNUST and others.

Surprisingly, government has made no effort in developing a new Creative Art and Basic Design and Technology (BDT) syllabi for the colleges of education, who train teachers to teach at the basic level. Visual arts and performing arts have not been made compulsory at all levels of education. This is why there is low enrollment in the entire creative arts programme at Senior Secondary and tertiary institutions. Even in some Senior High Schools and tertiary institutions, visual art students are ridiculed and undermined as less intelligent students by their colleagues who are pursuing science, general art and business. In some cases, other subject tutors do same. Theatre arts students at the

University of Ghana are ridiculed as 'Dondolgy' (literally means the art of drum beating) students. Some parents prevent their wards or relatives from offering creative arts in school.

The University of Cape Coast has not developed creative art curriculum for their post diploma programmes in basic education as in other subjects such as Social Studies, Mathematics and Science. The scope of Senior High School visual art programme must be broadened to embrace performing art subjects like music, drama, and dance where performing art students would be allowed to major in two of the three performing art subjects and a compulsory elective literature and General knowledge in Art. Those who would specialize in visual art must be made to major in one two-dimensional and one three-dimensional art and a compulsory General knowledge in Art. However, the present name of the visual art programme must be changed to creative arts.

The lukewarm attitude towards the creative arts and culture in Ghana has attracted the reaction of many prominent people who believe in the development and sustainability of the industry. Notable amongst them is Honourable Alexander Asum-Ahensah who said on 2007 at a workshop organized by Ghana Association of Phonographic Industry (GAPI) in Accra that "Ghana's cultural policy must be reviewed to give it a clear sense of direction". He emphasized that the time has come for Ghana to give the

patriotism, and African consciousness so that they can help advocate against neo-colonialism and mental slavery.

Government must empower individuals and state institutions in charge of arts and culture to review the 2004 cultural policy to be more responsive to our current national aspirations and developmental pattern. Ghana museums and monuments board must develop a proposal for the establishment of district museums in all district capitals in Ghana to offer opportunity to the district to identify, document, exhibit and preserve the cultural heritage from various ethnic groups in the district and impress upon government to adapt and implement it.

Centre for National Culture must develop a comprehensive talents hunt models to identify, harness and develop the creative talents of Ghanaian children and youth. This model must include the establishment of creative art clinics and clubs in basic and senior high schools across the country. The model must be planned in such a way that district creative art clinics must be organized for all member schools at the end of every academic year where the most talented individuals would be sifted out to hold regional creative art clinics and subsequently to a national creative art festival where the most talented children and youth shall be selected and nurtured in a national creative art academy

that would offer various creative arts programmes in visual and performing arts.

Ministry of chieftaincy and culture must collaborate with African Studies, Arts and Culture, Theatre arts, Music, ICT and Visual arts Departments in our tertiary institutions and private organizations in the arts and culture fraternity to embark on scientific research into many aspects of Ghanaian indigenous and modern cultures from different ethnic groups and cities and document them in the mass media for public education and keep them for posterity. Government must empower National Commission on Civic Education to collaborate with relevant state and private organizations and individuals to develop children's video games with Ghanaian folktales, moral and ethical laws, to be aired on public and private television stations on children's channels. This will help educate them on different aspects of our cultural heritage and traditions so that as they grow they will have regard for Ghanaian culture and strive to promote and preserve it. Government must provide appropriate and adequate physical, human and financial resources to the creative arts departments and faculties in our basic, senior high school and tertiary institutions to enhance teaching and learning of creative arts, and attract a lot of students.

Ghana Education Service must organize yearly regional visual art exhibitions to showcase the artworks of Senior High school students. This will provide a platform for



cultural sector a new direction that will take into account a policy guideline to enhance the capacity of the creative arts industries and their goods and services (Peace online FM, 2009). According to him, Ghana could ride on the back of the creative industry to build the economy and create employment for its citizens. This means that Ghana has not been able to harness the potentials of the creative industry due to lack of access to market, limited funds for the industry and non-competitive business practices. Kojo Antwi, a musician, stressed the need for musicians to be supported, saying music is an important tool for national development citing how it has been used to fight slavery and colonialism. An economist at the National Planning Development Commission, Kenneth Owusu, urged GAPI to take interest in the national budget, to enable it to raise issues which concerned it.

Traditional festivals which bring unity and development in our societies have also been faced with a lot of criticisms from some Christian churches and individuals who perceive them as idolatrous and constantly pray against it and prevent their members from taking part in such celebrations. A typical example is the annual confrontation that occurs between some Christian churches in the Accra metropolis and the Ga Traditional council whose traditional bans towards the celebration of 'Homowo' are constantly flouted. This form of disrespect to our customs

and traditions has arisen as a result of the brainwashing agenda perpetuated in this country by the colonialists and the religious missionaries decades ago.

Another clear evidence of negative public perception and colonial acculturation on our culture is the adaptation of foreign and religious names by many Ghanaians to dislike of Ghanaian ethnic and traditional names which identify and distinguish us as Ghanaians who hail from a particular ethnic group. Regrettably, some Ghanaians even ridicule their fellows who bear ethnic names. It is also worth mentioning that this act is often perpetuated by some educated people who are supposed to know and appreciate our tradition and understand the significance of names in national and self identity.

Based on the findings I recommend that government must empower the National Commission for Civic Education to embark on massive public education on the benefits of creative arts to individuals, the public and the nation. A comprehensive curriculum on Ghanaian Arts and culture must be taught as a subject or course at all levels of the educational system. A national renaissance commission must be formed and empowered to form renaissance clubs at all levels of our education to re-orientate the minds of Ghanaian children and youth towards 'Africanism',

the public to see the unique talents of the student-artists and re-orient their perception towards art. The teaching and learning of child art must be intensified in our educational system so as to help Ghanaian children to acquire holistic personality development (mental, social, intellectual, emotional, perceptual, esthetical and technical developments) before they complete basic education. This can be achieved by developing a comprehensive child art curriculum for all colleges of education, early childhood education and all other teacher education programmes in public and private institutions to be taught as a compulsory two semester course. This will equip pre-school and basic school teachers' with basic theories and principles of child

art so that they can guide the pupils and students effectively in their creative arts and Basic Design and Technology classes.

Ghana must re-orientate her psyche and move towards the good aspects of her fundamental indigenous cultures and use them as a bait to create a modern culture that is linked to African identity, sense of reasoning, patriotism, intellectualization, needs and aspiration. It is also imperative for us to focus on creative arts, science and technical education so that we can move towards industrialization.