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## **Blowing Our Own Horn: The Departments of Art Education and Graphic Design**

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### **Abstract:**

*The objective of this paper is to find out how well the potentials of the school has been fully advertised and also identify how best the school can be advertised. The paper was centred on the Departments of Graphic Design and the Art Education of the School of Creative Arts of the University of Education, Winneba. Qualitative and descriptive research methods were used in this research. The qualitative was used to ascertain prevalent information from staff members of the university and some indigenes of the Winneba community, as required by the study whiles the descriptive method was also used to specifically reveal the prevailing situation in the university and its environs. The study revealed that, members of the university community and people within the Winneba community have little knowledge about the two departments, let alone their full potentials in the university's activities. The study therefore commends that effective and efficient advertising media be used to create the awareness of the existence of the Departments of Graphic Design and Art Education and also publicize their full potentials to the University community and its environs and the country at large.*

**Keywords:** *Graphic design, art, education, art education and advertisement*

### **1. Introduction**

University of Education, Winneba (UEW) is one of the topmost public tertiary institutions that offers students the opportunity to explore in the area of the arts and many other disciplines. The School of Creative Arts of UEW is a faculty made of the Departments of Art Education, Graphic Design, Theatre Arts and Music Education. The desire of every institution is to sell its potentials to the outside world for people to see what they are capable of doing for individuals, societies and the nation as a whole. In view of this, advertisement becomes the most appropriate way of bringing to bear, what that institution has to offer its people and the International Community. Undoubtedly, advertisement has been the bedrock of most wellbeing companies and institutions in the world; a consideration that has put lots of institutions on a win-win pedestal in the modern economic development and achievement practices. In the case of the School of Creative Arts in UEW, however, there remains a lingering question as to how well people are aware of the numerous potentials of the School. This question may lead to other few possible questions which may require immediate answers and attention.

In our modern world, most businesses prosper when they are publicly advertised. Advertising loosely refers to public promotion of goods and services. Others see it to be a means to call to attention what a company, enterprise, institution and other entities have to offer its people. Jethwaney and Jain (2006, p.3) defined advertising as "a marketing tool use to disseminate information about a brand which is aimed at a large number of people at the same time". Robbs (2009) is also of the view that, advertising is a form of commercial mass communication designed to promote the sale of products or services, or message on behalf of an institution or organisation or candidates of political office. If the idea of advertising is to create awareness of the existence of a thing and effectively promote its activities, it behoves on the UEW as an institution to play this consultative role effectively to fully advertise the full potentials of the Departments of Graphic Design and the Art Education of the institution to its members and the general public at large. After all, *advertising and promotions* lie at the heart of any marketing endeavour, and is the key tool through which a company communicates product and brand image information to its customers.

The Department of Graphic Design is known for its pedagogical experiences it gives to students over the years. The department has also assisted the institution immensely in an attempt to satisfy its corporates and community responsibilities.

The courses under this department include industrial graphic reproductions, photography, illustration, computer graphics just to mention, but a few. Through these courses, students are able to acquire necessary skills needed to solve all graphic design problems such as website design, corporate identity works for organisations, labels for packages, posters, billboards, handbills, fliers and banners for advertisers. Others including taking of photographs of events, editing, making video recording and many more. Interestingly, people within the university and its immediate environs have just a little knowledge about what the department can offer for students, the institution and the community at large. A situation which needs to be addressed to put the department and the UEW as an institution on a high pedestal.

The Department of Graphic Design has the capabilities of providing competent graphic artists who will solve most graphic design problems in Ghana if not all. Currently, advertising has taken a centre stage in all businesses; both local and international in the development of most nations and in the sub-region and the graphic designer has been the back bone to almost all advertising products.

It is apparent from the above that, the graphic designer's work has been helpful since the 20<sup>th</sup> century and continues to be in the current education, economic and social dispensations. The production of sophisticated advertising billboards, banners, posters and other print media with good quality photographic images are the potentials the graphic designer employs to communicate effectively to solve visual problems.

In the case of the Department of Art Education, it is also a branch of the School of Creative Arts. It is made of different aspects of arts ranging from sculpture, textiles, ceramics, basketry, to jewellery. Just as the Department of Graphic Design provides the necessary skill to students and prepare them for the job market, so is the Department of Art Education. Students who are trained from this department come out as professional teachers in all the art disciplines. However, the kind of training given also prepares them to be self-employed at the end of their chosen areas of study.

It is interesting to know that, the Department of Art Education basically trains students for the classroom. However, the kind of pedagogy they go through also prepares them to be self-employed after their education (Department of Art Education Brochure, 2009). As student teachers, they choose subject areas that are of interest to them and also, subjects that they can handle effectively in the classroom situation. For instance, students are made to study a subject from the two-dimensional subject areas – Graphic Design, Textiles and Picture-Making, and another subject from the three-dimensional areas including Leatherwork, Basketry, Ceramics, Jewellery, and Sculpture. The student teacher is therefore given the needed theoretical and practical knowledge that equips them to be able to perform effectively as a professional teacher after the training period. These subject combinations make the student teacher a 'master' so that they can equally impart to the young generation of art students to come.

Practically, student teachers could produce artefacts such as printed cloths, weaving cloths, illustrations for children and adult books and pictorial paintings. Products made of ceramic, cane products, leather and beads are a minute repository of the achievements made from the Art education department. Unfortunately, the story of how well these achievements by the department are known to the institution and the general public leave to be desired.

It is based on these that the researchers believe that, the potentials and achievements from the two departments of the School of Creative Arts are made public through effective advertisement so that members of the University community and that of Winneba and its surrounding communities become aware and contribute to these potentialities. The objective of this paper was to project the potentials of the Departments of Graphic Design and Art Education.

## 2. Methodology

To achieve the objective set for the study, the qualitative approach was adopted. Under this approach, the descriptive and documentary research methods were used. The researchers used interview and documents as the instruments to obtain prevalent information from staff members of the university and some indigenes of the Winneba community, as required by the study.

In all, sixteen individuals were sampled from the Winneba campuses of the University of Education, Winneba and the Winneba community. The sample included three people from the administration, seven lecturers of whom three were selected from other departments outside the study area, three students other than Creative Arts students, and three people within the Winneba community. The researchers used the convenient sampling method to select the sample for the study.

## 3. Discussion of the Findings

The data that were generated through the instruments were assembled and discussed under their appropriate theme.

### 3.1. Respondents' Knowledge about the Departments of Graphic Design and Art Education?

Majority of the respondents knew the fact that the Art Education and the Graphic Departments are part of the departments of the School of Creative Arts. Other responses indicated that, both the Graphic Design and Art Education are known to be under one umbrella and call it the Art Department. It was also obvious from the responses that, just as they have a fair-mind about the department, their knowledge were shallow to the extent that, the actuality and existence of the Department of Graphic Design become a delusion, let alone knowing the different potentialities that characterized the two departments.

On the issue of how respondents got to know about the departments, majority were of the view that, they heard the existence of the department from students. Others stressed that, they knew of the department from friends who are lecturers in these departments, while others said, they got to know based on errands made to the department. Interestingly, other respondents were of the view that, they saw students wearing "t" shirts with inscriptions about the department and also seeing those making posters and banners.

### *3.2. Potentials the Departments Offer the Society*

Little information could be picked from the data on the respondents' knowledge of the potentials of the two departments. Most respondents, except those from the two departments, were unable to give any specific potential of the departments. All the respondents were of the view that, all that they know is that, the Art Department only 'do drawing', so apart from that, there was nothing they could provide apart from drawing works. However, one respondent said that, if they can train people to draw, then, it could fetch them a job at the end of their schooling.

That notwithstanding, the Department of Graphic Design has the capabilities of providing competent graphic artists who have solved and continue to solve most graphic design problems in Ghana if not all. Currently, advertising has taken a centre stage in all businesses; both local and international in the development of most nations and in the sub-region and the graphic designer has been the back bone to almost all advertising products. The graphic designer's potential has been stressed by Meggs (2017) when he stated that, pictorial images inspired by advertising art with vigorous art training institutes enable the German graphic designer to achieve a high level of excellence in advertising and business communication activities. They further assets that, posters and pictorial graphics responded to the communications need and retained sufficient momentum to provide graphic solutions to communication problems in World War II and beyond.

It is apparent from the above that, the graphic designer's work has been helpful since the 20<sup>th</sup> century and continues to be in the current education, economic and social dispensations. The production of sophisticated advertising billboards, banners, posters and other print media with good quality photographic images are the potentials the graphic designer employs to communicate effectively to solve visual problems.

The photographs below are examples of works that the Departments of Graphic Design and Art education of the UEW have executed (either by students or lecturers) to solve one visual problem or the other in the institution and the society at large.



*Figure 1: 'Textual Mural'. Researcher's Field Study, 2017*

Figure 1, is a textual mural that was executed by one lecturer from the Department of Art Education of the UEW. This textual mural can be found on the Arch at the entrance of the main campus of the University of Education, Winneba. This textual mural identifies the University and the actual campus it belongs to.



*Figure 2: 'Academic Hero'  
Researcher's Field Study, 2017*

The Sculpture piece in figure 2, is one of the numerous works that have been executed by lecturers of the Departments of Art Education and Graphic Design and which is located at the South campus and replicated at Mampong and Ajumako Campuses of UEW.

During the data collection, it came to light that, the UEW Logo which has been used for so many correspondences within the University community and other sectors both locally and internationally was designed by Mr Nana Yaw Gyapong; a lecturer from the Department of Graphic Design. Unfortunately, the researchers believe that its designer is yet to be known by a lot of workers and the society through this paper. The UEW logo has been illustrated in figure 3.



*Figure 3: 'The UEW Logo'. Researchers  
Field Study, 2017*

The data revealed that Certificates that are issued to graduates at all levels of study in University of Education, Winneba (viz. certificate, diploma, degree, Masters and Doctoral levels) and the academic gown that are worn at congregation ceremonies were also designed single handily by Dr Frimpong K. Duku who is a Senior lecturer from the Department of Graphic Design of the University of Education, Winneba. An example of the said designs has also been illustrated in Figures 4.

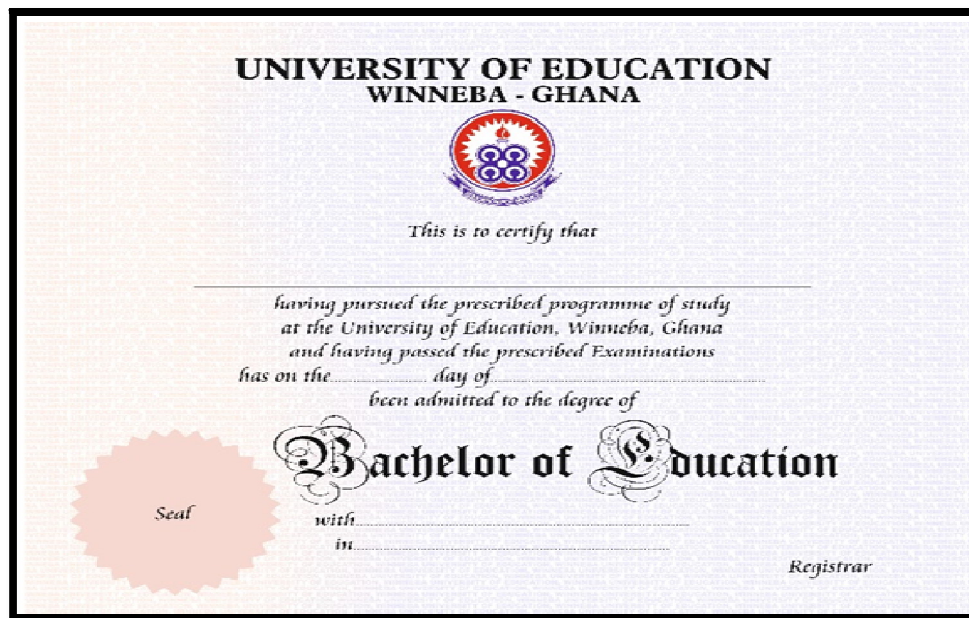


Figure 4: Bachelor of Education Certificate. Researcher's Field Study, 2017

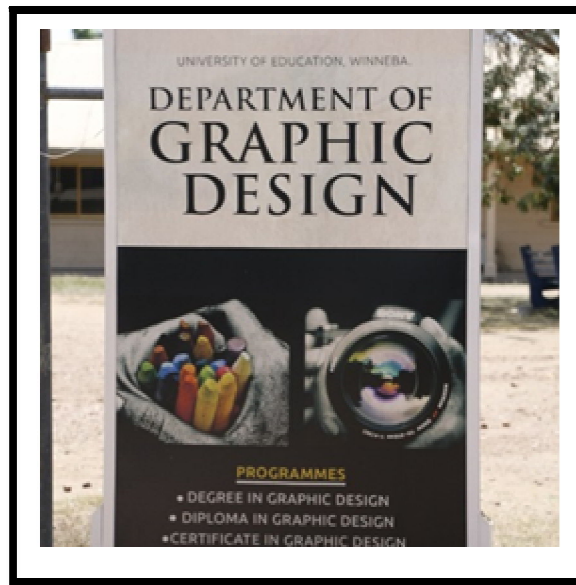
In much the same way, the name of Dr Ebenezer K. Acquah who is also from the Graphic Design Department came up. According to the personalities contacted during the data collection, it was realised that, he was the one who designed the University of Education, Winneba Autonomy Anniversary Cloth.

The information above is concerned with the ostensible truth about the potentials and what the Departments of Art Education and Graphic Design can offer to the University community and the society at large. That notwithstanding, students of the two departments have also contributed in various ways to solve visual problems in the University community. For example, students from the Department of Graphic Design have designed banners to beautify and depict what goes on in the various courts (Volleyball, Basketball and Hockey pitch) that are found on the North Campus of the University of Education, Winneba. These have been illustrated in figure 5.



Figure 5: Beautification Banners

Furthermore, figure 6 is a work of a student from the Department of Graphic Design. This has been designed to publicise the Department in the form of signage. This has been placed at a vantage places around the University community (North Campus) for visitors to identify and have easy location of the department.



*Figure 6: Signage for Graphic Design Department, Researcher's Field Study, 2016*

Currently, all stakeholders of the University of Education, Winneba can attest to the fact that, its website has improved tremendously, artistically. Again, the quality of congregation brochures and photographs that are used have exceptionally improved. Many thanks to the Department of Graphic Design. It is on record that, the current web designers at the Communication and Publication Department of the University were trained from the Graphic Design Department of the University of Education, Winneba and that has accounted for the dramatic changes we found today in those directions. Furthermore, motion graphics which the Department of Graphic Design of the University of Education, Winneba, has been imparting to students through pedagogical experiences, is another area which assist the economy in many fields of endeavour. Book production, illustrated books, photography and web designing are all areas that the graphic design department has been imparting into its students and build them for the real World of Work. Per this information above, the graphic design department is doing a lot to the graphic designer who is seen as a tool that propels economic and social growth of the economy through advertising media across the business divide.

If the main aim of graphic design is to advertise which is the pivot to a business' growth, it suffices to say, without graphic design, businesses will be stifled and subsequently collapse. All these potentials are what the researchers believe the Department of Graphic Design of the UEW is endowed with what the general public must know, so that the departments activities are fully patronized at all times for the benefit of the younger generations to come and also assist the university to achieve the education excellence it wants to provide for the Winneba community and the country at large.

Other sculptural works executed by the Department of Art Education and dotted around the entire country are:

- The 'Horn Blowers' at the Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum, Accra.
- Mother's Love, Ashanti Goldfields.
- The Bust of Dr. Abrefi Busia, Wenchi.
- Cast Concrete Signboard – Kwegyir Aggrey Hall, UEW.
- The Bust of Ephraim Amu – Central Campus, UEW.
- The Community Health Nurse – Community Health Training School, Winneba.
- Akwaaba – Sir Charles Tourist Centre, Winneba.
- Ghana Commercial Bank – Winneba.
- The Aboakyir – Taxi Rank, Winneba.
- The Fisherman – District Assembly – Winneba.
- Greenland Hotel, Agona Swedru
- The Nun and two students – Holy Child School.
- The Bust of a former Headmistress – Wesley Girls' High School.
- The Bust of Mr. Bartels – Mfantshipim School.
- The Bust of Nkrumah – Ghana National College.
- The Stage of Mr. Agyako Saka – Abetifi Kwahu.
- Busts of Former Vice – Chancellors, University of Ghana - Legon.
- The Academicians and all statues in front of the Balme Library – U G, Legon.
- The Nurse - Ridge Hospital Roundabout, Accra.



- Plaque – IEDE – UEW
- University Crest on the pedestal of Academic Hero – UEW, Winneba and Mampong Campuses
- The Cedi Fountain – Foyer of Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning.

The marriage by capture and the freeze (see Figures 6 and 7) are two prominent works executed by the department of Art Education in addition to many that cannot be recalled.



*Figure 7: Marriage by Capture*



*Figure 8: the freeze at South Campus, UEW*

This is a clear indication of some of the potentials of lecturers and students of the Departments of Art Education and Graphic Design. The researchers are of the view that, if these potentials are well advertised, people within the University community and the society at large would be well informed as to what the departments can offer to the University and the society at large. The potentials that the two departments have to offer the society have to be advertised by the institution in order to build a better notion for the two departments of the School of Creative Arts in the University of Education, Winneba.

### *3.3. Advertise the Departments of Graphic Design and Art Education*

The newspaper readers among the respondents said that they usually see the University's tender advertisements and other news which is not about the two departments. Some also talked about congregation advertisements in the newspapers. For those who are able to access the internet, they testified that, there has not been any advertisement on any of the two departments. However, some were of the view that they saw adverts for theatre drama programmes on the University website and not advertising the department and what they are capable of doing. Some also said that, though they have not seen any advertisement about either the Department of Graphic Design or the Art Education, they believe the posters they have been

seeing around, advertising these dramas, may be coming from the Department of Graphic Design which might even be the efforts of those organizing the programme and not the institution that is advertising it.

Surprisingly the researchers also found out that, nothing has been stated in the strategic planning document of the University of Education, Winneba, indicating how well the numerous programmes listed would be advertised, let alone the Departments of Graphic Design and the Art Education of the University of Education, Winneba. This is an indication that the University is depending on its past glories and to the researchers, it could be a precarious move that can affect the institution in this competitive modern economic dispensation.

For many, they recommended all the available media in Ghana for advertisement for the institution. Such as Online, Radio, Television ads, video documentaries and the Print Media (dailies, banners, posters, brochures, flyers) and the like. They explained that, this will perceptibly and vividly advertise the departments well enough for people to know the potentials of the two departments and the University as a whole. They further said that, they wish to know much about the Departments and their potentials, and that advertising it in a better way would be the best option. Some even went ahead to say that, mobile phones could even be one of the best medium to advertise since it is relatively one of the dominating portable electronic devices with internet connectivity. This has been buttressed by [www.knowthis.com](http://www.knowthis.com) that, current trends in mobile advertising involve major use of social media such as Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook.

The researchers are of the view that, these media offer stronger tracking options and that if the University authorities take cognisance of this idea, general information on both the Department of Graphic Design and the Art Education will get to the public for their participation in the activities of these two departments.

#### 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

It can hereby be concluded from the findings made that, the University has made little efforts in marketing the Departments of Graphic Design and Art Education. Furthermore, very little knowledge is known of the potentials of the two departments of the University of Education, Winneba and that, all advertisements made by the University has never been geared towards advertising the departments and their full potentials but events like matriculations and congregations.

It is hereby recommended that, much advertisements be made to create the awareness of the existence of the Departments of Graphic Design and Art Education and also publicise their potentials to the University community and its environs and the country at large. The researchers believe that this will be an eye opener for the general public, especially, people of the Winneba community to come to terms with the potentials of the departments of Graphic Design and the Art Education.

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