

Examining the Literature on Basic Educational Ideas Established by the Initiators of the English Art and Craft Movement and the Scandinavian Sloyd

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Abstract

The Art and Craft Movement was established as a response to the Industrial Revolution around 1880. The aim was to use handicraft to create genuine artefacts with aesthetic values for use in everyday life as opposed to using mass produced items. From this new mechanization and mass production grew a romanticized belief in handcrafting. Nature became the reference for beauty, in decoration and in art. Organic shapes were promoted as inspiring, and the value of well-crafted art was assumed as the outcome of the coordination of eye and heart. The originators of the Art and Craft Movement criticised contemporary education for not adapting to students' environments and not providing them with opportunities for self-fulfilment. The Sloyd Movement originated at about the same time. The aim was to use handicraft in general education as a way to support the student's personal development and to create a perfect citizen. However, for many educators, the Sloyd system was too manual and did not give students the flexibility and freedom required for true creativity. The article considers these two educational ideas from the literature, and the authors discuss the differences and similarities between these ideas.

Keywords: Industrial Revolution, Sloyd, Art and Craft, education, pedagogy

The Industrial Revolution originated in Great Britain in about 1880. Education as employment was established at the same time in many countries. The new methods of production and manufacturing at the beginning of industrialisation demanded new skills from workers (Kantola et al., 1999). Both vocational education and pedagogical sloyd became part of general education in many countries in order to meet the demands of a school-based system of formative education. Sloyd involves school activities that use craft to produce useful and decorative objects. The meaning of Sloyd in relation to education refers to discussions amongst 19th century philosophers about the value of craft in general education (Borg, 2006). The goal of the Sloyd Movement (SM) was to contribute to the character building of the child by encouraging industriousness, intelligence and moral behaviour through the use of crafts in general education (Borg, 2008; Thorarinsson, 1891). The SM was built on the philosophical ideas of Froebel, Pestalozzi and other philosophers who emphasized the role of nature, experience and the use of the hands in practical occupations.

The Art and Craft Movement (ACM) was established at about the same time. It was initiated by Pugin, Ruskin and Morris (Petts, 2008) as a reaction against declining standards caused by the use of machinery and factory production. It was also, in part, a response to items presented in the Great Exhibition of 1851 that were decorative reproductions of known artefacts, but which did not consider the quality of the materials used (Cumming & Kaplan, 1991; Gillian, 1971).

The interest of the initiators of the ACM in education was based on their desire to change the nature of the newly industrialised society and to create a futuristic society based on social liberalism. Nature was seen as the true source of learning and development of the individual. The educational ideas were based on aesthetic education achieved through genuine work (Petts, 2008).

As soon as the steam engine was invented in the 1780s, energy production increased and factories became common. Cities grew and power moved from the aristocracy to capitalist industrialists (Hudson, 1992). Mechanical mass production became conceivable, and, consequently, people earned more money and goods became cheaper (Szostak, 1991; Uglow, 2002; Usher, 1920). The population of the cities grew, and basic living conditions involving long working days, pollution and job uncertainty caused misery. This gave rise to political movements, which planned to fight against workers' mistreatment and to better their living conditions. Nevertheless, literacy increased, and design became increasingly influenced by mechanical processes which gave rise to a new demand for advertisement (Hudson, 1992). The traditional process of the craftsman designing and making artefacts was fragmented. In the early stages of mass production, the production companies tried to replicate the visual look of handcrafted artefacts, but as time passed, designers began to consider production methods designed to make production more efficient (Blakesley, 2005; Gillian, 1971).

The article firstly describes the context of the Industrial Revolution and its impact on the role of art, craft and design in society and on general education. Secondly, it portrays educational ideas of the initiators of the Art and Craft Movement and the Scandinavian SM. Finally, the authors discuss the difference between the educational ideas of these movements, and finally they present their conclusions.

The Industrial Revolution and the Role of Art and Design

The Industrial Revolution had an enormous impact on people's aesthetic sense. Mass-produced, inexpensive artefacts manufactured by machines lacked genuineness. Suddenly, the upper class saw copies of expensive, unique goods in merchants' shops, and the bourgeoisie who owned such goods felt that this illustrated their good taste and uniqueness. The lower and the middle class saw an opportunity to buy copies that looked like expensive items that belonged to the upper class; they saw these ornaments as a sign of class distinction (Blakesley, 2005; Gillian, 1971).

Because of the Industrial Revolution, fashion became universal. It became based on the design of a few unique things for the upper classes who wanted to feel different and above others, and things mass-produced for the lower classes who wanted to buy copies of known artefacts that belonged to the upper classes. The industry was now able to offer objects of luxury for the few and rich, and this then led to mass manufacturing, which after a time, put the few and rich in need of a change (Hudson, 1992).

The initiators of the ACM were against using meaningless decoration in design. Pugin considered nature as the orientation for beauty in art and decoration; he was against illusions. Ruskin underlined the importance of an artist-craftsperson's partaking in manufacturing in order to distinguish between genuine and false art. He saw Gothic architecture as an outcome of free people putting their hearts into their work, thus making it inspiring. Egyptian architecture, however, had no elevating value to him as it was the creation born of the slave industry (Blakesley, 2005; Gillian, 1971).

From this new mass manufacturing grew the romantic idea of handcrafting unique things. Natural forms were seen as inspiring, and the value of art made through craft was believed to be the result of a harmonization between the eye and the heart (Blakesley, 2005; Gillian, 1971).

The Art and Craft Movement and Its Educational Ideas

According to Ruskin and Morris, mass production had negative effects on traditional design, skills and the aesthetics of everyday life. The ACM advocated truth in the use of materials and traditional craftsmanship by applying simple forms and often medieval, romantic or folk styles of decoration. It also proposed economic and social reform and has traditionally been seen as anti-industrial. The use of creative processes, according to Ruskin, contributed to human joyfulness, but the machine-driven methods of modern mass production could not equal the touch of the human hand. Ruskin and Morris tried, therefore, to advocate for art and design reform in many aspects of life. These ideas had an

impact on art education in many countries. They encouraged spontaneity and free expression, and they even sometimes discouraged rational thinking (Triggs, 1979).

Pugin, Morris and Ruskin articulated ideas about education in the context of art, design and craft. Morris considered art and design of his own time both worthless and inferior. Furthermore, he blamed the Industrial Revolution for the bad quality of mass-produced goods. He believed that aesthetic education was important to enhance the quality of craft and maintain its originality (Triggs, 1979). The factory system was not only shaped by the new, innovative technology, it was an instrument for factory owners to control society; machines were tools used to discipline workers and to control the manufacturing process. Education, therefore, had to give individuals freedom from repression and the opportunity for personal development.

It was the factory system Ruskin and Morris protested against. They saw that workers lacked control over their work and were deadened by it. The medieval social system had been damaged by the French Revolution and so, too, had the handcraft guilds with their masters and journeymen (Gillian, 1971). Therefore, they encouraged artists and designers to look back in history to medieval art for their motivation, as this was a time when artists and craftsmen worked together on equal footing. Furthermore, education had to utilise nature and give freedom for creative thinking and flexibility for personal expressions. Pugin underlined the importance of using the principle of logical function in design, criticising the vulgar practice of exploiting uneducated taste. Any illusion in design was considered bad design (*Blakesley*, 2005).

Morris assumed that nature was the perfect example of God's design. All design should be based on nature, which he believed could be a spiritual remedy to the poor standards of art and design during the Industrial Revolution. To underline his attitude, Morris said, "Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful."

In his book, *News from Nowhere*, Morris (2009) illustrated his vision of a libertarian socialist society. He desired return to nature where machines were only used to ease the burden of men. In this future society, he argued, education would be offered to everyone with the objective of developing good values in students. Morris's idea of education focused on increasing students' knowledge of art and craft skills in order to create in them the self-confidence to live in a classless community in brotherhood and balance.

Educational activities take place in nature in the form of outdoor education rather than in schools; children learn in and from nature. Morris and Ruskin emphasised gender equality and division of labour, but women were still doing housework. Labour should be based on workmanship and workshops, they reasoned; otherwise, people would not be happy at work.

Ruskin also underlined the importance of education for workers so they could develop a sense of self-fulfilment (Cole, 1954). He considered preparation for active, intellectual participation in ordinary matters to be of a greater value than the study of subjects that might never be used in real life. Moreover, Ruskin thought that schools should teach subjects adapted to the circumstances of the children they were teaching (Ruskin, 1888). In his poem "Christ Church – Night," he expressed his attitude towards contemporary education:

*Ye melancholy chambers! I could shun
The darkness of your silence, with such fear,
As places where slow murder had been done.
How many noble spirits have died here,
Withering away in yearnings to aspire,
Gnawed by mocked hope, - devoured by their own fire!
Methinks the grave must feel a colder bed
To spirits such as these, than unto common dead.*

(Hervey & Ritchie, 1826, p. 287)

Aesthetic appreciation and faithfulness was a significant part of Morris's thinking. Moreover, he saw aesthetic appreciation as built on ideas of *collaboration* and *community*, which, in turn, are founded on an aesthetic education achieved through authentic work (Petts, 2008).

The Scandinavian Sloyd Movement

Sloyd, a pedagogy aimed at craft education, was established in Scandinavia in the middle of the 19th century. The Sloyd pedagogy was initiated by the Finn, Cygnaeus, the Swede, Salomon, and the Dane, Mikkelsen. Salomon had the most influence on the dissemination of the Sloyd pedagogy. The basic ideas of Sloyd derived from Fröebel and Pestalozzi. Pestalozzi believed that schooling which emphasised only one side of education, either vocational or general, would create an individual who was of little value to society (McClure, Chrisman, & Mock, 1985). According to Pestalozzi, craft training had to be embedded in general education, and the education of the body had to be in harmony with the demands of nature, sufficiently allowing space for a child's urge to move around and play (Thorarinnsson, 1891).

Based on Pestalozzi's ideas of training through observation and experience, Fröebel developed the idea that children are inherently creative and best express themselves through action, and he felt that handwork lay at the centre of all learning (Thane, 1914). Fröebel converted Pestalozzi's theories into practice with the development of the first *kindergarten* in 1837, and, in this school, there was one predominant idea: 'As activity precedes thinking, education must begin with doing and that, from this impulse to activity, all education must evolve' (Bennett, 1926). By partaking in craft activities, students could discover, arrange, invent and control.

While Fröebel worked primarily at the kindergarten level, his idea of 'self-activity and the creative tendency of the human mind' (Vaughn & Mays, 1924) would have a profound impact on the way future educators would look at how children learn. In Fröebel's kindergarten, physical work was meant to be in harmony with the spiritual aspect of such work. According to the ideas of Fröebel and Pestalozzi, the spirit and the body were constantly cooperating and, in doing so, were helping the child to understand the world around him or her (Thorarinnsson, 1891). Fröebel had little or nothing to say about further craft activities in later educational stages; however, Pestalozzi opened experimental residential schools for the children of the poor, and although his instructional methods of using tools and manual labour to teach traditional school subjects were quite successful, his schools were not financially successful (McArdle, 2002).

Building on the ideas of Fröebel and Pestalozzi, Salomon acquired vast knowledge in the field of practical education, becoming a respected scholar. He wrote many books, newsletters and articles on pedagogy and education (Bennet, 1926). He was also an outspoken advocate of Sloyd outside of his home country. Salomon participated in international conferences and gave lectures around the world (i.e., Germany, Britain, France and Scandinavia). Furthermore, he participated in discourses on educational issues.

According to Salomon, the main goals of teaching were as follows:

- The facilitation of contentment in work and diligence,
- To create respect for difficult and meticulous physical work,
- The development of independence and decision-making skills,
- The provision of training based on orderliness, precision, cleanliness and caution,
- To train the precision of the eye and learn to appreciate the value of form,
- The development of a sense of touch and laboriousness,
- To facilitate concentration, industriousness, stability and patience,
- The facilitation of increased physical strength,
- The acquisition of skill in the handling of tools, and
- To carry out work requiring precision and the creation of useful products (Thorbjornsson, 1992).

In his courses, Salomon placed great emphasis on the practical training of students through manual work, along with acquiring the appropriate postures for working. Salomon's teaching was based on a certain scale of exercises that transitioned from the simple to the more complex. Salomon developed his training system in pedagogical crafts by analysing work processes and scrutinising objects made of wood in order to determine the typical woodworking methods used by professionals. Students were provided with drawings and models to work with, which grew increasingly more difficult relative to the abilities of each student. The models also differed, depending on the various needs of the students (Thorbjornsson, 1992).

Both men and women attended the woodwork courses, and the groups were kept mixed; it has been said that the woodwork classroom was always characterised by a pleasant atmosphere while the students worked on their projects. Up to 40% of the students were women (Thorbjornsson, 1990). During his last years of teaching, Salomon identified a reason for changing his system: meeting students' need for creativity, thus, allowing individual decisions and choices (Hartman et al., 1995). Instead of working entirely with prefigured models, the students were allowed to choose exercises freely (Hartman et al., 1995). The exercises were then assessed and graded after the course was completed.

Discussion and Conclusion

The initiators of the ACM formulated innovative, intriguing ideas for art and craft education. However, this was developed as a holistic system or used officially in schools. In contrast, the SM formulated a holistic educational system for educational craft that was used in many countries. It was the beginning of craft as a formal subject in general education around the world. Nevertheless, it is interesting to compare and consider the educational ideas of the two movements in the context of art and craft.

The fundamental educational ideas of the two movements originated at the same time, but were based on dissimilar backgrounds. However, they also had some commonalities as shown in Table 1. The ACM emphasized handicraft as a response to the tasteless mass production of the Industrial Revolution, but the SM was concerned with using craft as a tool in general education for individual development.

The educational ideas of the ACM were not defined by a particular system, but rather as a response against the social, moral and artistic confusion of the Industrial Revolution. Nevertheless, the initiators of the ACM tried to formulate radical educational principles to develop a socialist society through education, for example, by using craft to teach students inclusive collaborative decision-making. Such education would emphasize the revival of craftsmanship, honesty in construction and truth in the use of materials. It would, moreover, offer a good quality of life.

The Sloyd system was a pedagogical approach to education. The initiators made a clear distinction between craft education for economic reasons and pedagogical crafts. The SM emphasised the educational value of practicing craft, beyond the practical aspects of craft. Nevertheless, the Sloyd system was criticised, as it was characterised by repetition and did not encourage students' creativity, nor did it give them flexibility to make their own design decisions (Thorsteinsson & Olafsson, 2011).

Table 1 *The Fundamental Educational Ideas of the Art and Craft Movement and Sloyd: Similarities and Differences*

<i>Art and Craft</i>	<i>Sloyd</i>
<i>Focus on art and craft</i>	<i>Focus on craft</i>
<i>Desire to change society through education</i>	<i>Desire to develop the perfect citizen</i>
<i>Aesthetic education</i>	<i>Craft as a general pedagogical tool</i>
<i>Focus on genuine craft</i>	<i>Focus on making copies of models</i>
<i>Self-fulfilment</i>	<i>Self-fulfilment</i>
<i>Creativity and originality</i>	<i>Making copies through manual craft using model series</i>
<i>Adapted to children's circumstances</i>	<i>Lack of creativity</i>
<i>Developing artistic taste and ability</i>	<i>General personal development</i>
<i>Nature as a source of inspiration</i>	<i>Predetermined models</i>
<i>Autonomy</i>	<i>Individual learning</i>
<i>Increasing art and craft skills and knowledge</i>	<i>Increasing craft skills and knowledge</i>
<i>Emphasizing personal experience</i>	<i>Emphasizing personal experience</i>
<i>Art and craft as a source of happiness</i>	<i>Craft as a tool to create positive views towards work</i>
<i>Self-confidence to live in a classless society</i>	<i>Making the perfect citizen through individual development</i>
<i>Political educational ideas</i>	<i>Non-political educational ideas</i>
<i>Gender equality</i>	<i>Gender equality</i>
<i>Education for everyone</i>	<i>Education for everyone</i>
<i>Develop good values in students</i>	<i>Develop good values in students</i>
<i>Personal development through individual freedom</i>	<i>Personal development through the Sloyd system</i>
<i>Collaboration and cooperation</i>	<i>Individual learning</i>
<i>Preparation for participation in actual matters</i>	<i>Indirect preparation for future through general development</i>
<i>Learning to value handmade things</i>	<i>Learning to value handmade things</i>

The table above shows the differences and similarities between the educational ideas of the two movements. The ACM focused mainly on creating art through genuine craft, but the SM aimed at using craft as a tool for students' personal development. The SM aimed at increasing students' capacity for work to create perfect citizens. However, the main aim of the ACM was to transform society and to make it more humanistic.

Ruskin criticized the consecutive stages of completing products by mass production. He stated that the process deprived the worker of identification with the full cycle of forming something. The SM sought to address this problem by letting the individual make artefacts from beginning to end (Brown & Korzenik, 1993). However, by using the prearranged model series, and not supporting creativity, the SM might have done the opposite. The SM was not based on socialistic ideas like the ACM; it could have been seen as an attempt to adapt students to the capitalistic manufacturing context. Moreover, the Sloyd pedagogy was based on model series and included reproduction of known artefacts. Consequently, the classroom became more like a factory environment than the idealistic natural educational surroundings described by Morris, where nature was a source of inspiration (Morris, 2009). Also, the SM pedagogy aimed to create a positive attitude towards work in the students.

Creativity, originality and autonomy were important elements in the ACM ideas, but the SM lacked the flexibility for creative thinking and independent decision-making. The aims were, therefore, different. It was important for the ACM to develop the future citizen's ability to become independent, creative and able to understand art through craft. Nevertheless, the SM pedagogy also included individualized learning by taking into account students' different potentials and working paces. The ACM aimed at developing a student's artistic taste and ability. Ruskin and Morris both refused to be led by industry. They underlined the idea that art should improve industry and that beauty was available to everyone (Brown & Krozenik, 1993).

ACM and SM were idealistic movements, and their educational ideals demonstrate their attempts to improve society through education. Both movements aimed at underpinning students' positive experiences and contentment by making craft. Many of their educational ideas are still valid and might be useful in contemporary education. This includes common ideals for developing good citizens through craft in order to make society more humanistic and provide individuals with enhanced fulfilment in their personal and working lives.

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