

**FILM EDUCATION IN GHANA: A NARRATIVE STUDY OF JIM FARA AWINDOR
AND VITUS NANBIGNE**

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies two of Ghana's foremost film instructors: Jim Fara Awindor and Vitus Nanbigne. Using narrative design as the research approach, the study delineates on the teaching philosophies and approaches as well as the major contributions of the two instructors to film education in Ghana. Major findings of the study included the two facilitators almost sharing the same circumstance leading to their career and professional path. They both come from the Northern areas of Ghana, they both attended the National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI) and they both won scholarships for their post-graduate studies outside of Ghana. The two facilitators also, officially, started their profession as film teachers at NAFTI. Whilst Nanbigne believes in an explorative approach to teaching, Awindor goes by what he terms the Philosophy of the Mind approach that goes beyond the curriculum to include life experiences that will mould the students, not only for scholarship but for the world. Jim's contributions to film education in Ghana included the acceptance of documentary making as a specialised area in film education, whilst Vitus has contributed diversely in the areas of film history in Ghana and in Africa. The two facilitators mentioned the lack of key needed facilities as the major impediments to film education in Ghana. The study recommends concerted efforts by film scholars to document the professional journeys of the major film facilitators in Ghana and document their achievements and contributions. The study also calls for support from various stakeholders, to provide the necessary equipment and materials that will facilitate film education to realise its intent of training professional filmmakers in Ghana.

Key Words: Film Education, Facilitators, Film philosophies and Approaches.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper predominantly aims at documenting the historiography of film education in Ghana, in the life of two foremost facilitators; Dr Vitus Nanbigne, (University of Cape Coast) and Dr Jim Fara Panbonor Awindor. Film education is an academic discipline that provides theoretical and practical basics for the study of film and its narrative characteristics, such as approaches, techniques, styles and productions. Film studies emerged as an academic discipline with the creation of film theory and the writing of film historiography (Grant, 1983). In film education, students are introduced to the diverse processes, stages and complexities in filmmaking backed by various concepts, theories and authorities.

In film education, students get to know the "diverse narrative, artistic, cultural, economic and political implications of films" (Dix, 2009, p. 65). Film education takes a series of critical

approaches for the analysis of production, theoretical framework, context, and creation of any film (Sikov, 2005). Film education has been a sought-after academic discipline that continues to grow perhaps due to the possible career assurance (Vilarejo, 2007).

In Ghana, film education has been in the lead of the many educational drives and initiatives that seek to equip Ghanaians, especially the youth, with various dexterous skills and expertise in filmmaking. The phenomena of film education in Ghana have been in different forms and with diverse approaches some private initiatives and hugely governmental drive albeit similar aim of making the learners know, appreciate and foster some level of acquaintance and professionalism in the tirade of filmmaking. Various institutions, including government-sponsored and privately owned, have been at the forefront in pushing the agenda of producing film professionals and enthusiasts.

In Ghana, some fully-fledged film institutions like the National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI) and other cognate departments in various tertiary institutions such as the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, University of Cape Coast and the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ghana, have been the major institutions championing film education in the country. These institutions contribute positively to shaping and enhancing the professional quality of the participating students who enrol on the various film programs of study.

This has had a significant impact in Ghana by churning out many trained professionals who are also either practising or teaching what they have learnt from these institutions. It stands to reason, therefore, that film education is a very important academic discipline acclaimed worldwide.

Just like every other educational drive, facilitators play a critical role in meeting the objectives and achieving significant breakthroughs in film education. Primarily, these facilitators impart to their students, film knowledge, appreciations and applications as well as techniques and concepts in filmmaking. These facilitators may include tutors, technicians as well as teachers of the program and they come in different statuses and levels. However, for this study, the term facilitators represent the teachers/lecturers of film.

Therefore, the role and function of these teachers in their various institutions are imperative to the general growth of their students as well as the programs they teach. The facilitators serve as a spine to the sustenance of the programs they teach. Some of these facilitators out of their long services and experiences have become frontrunners and have acquired vast institutional memories that need documentation for academic preservation. For those reasons, there ought to be gritty efforts not only to document but also to preserve the vast experiences, influences and contributions these facilitators make.

Film educators in Ghana have employed unique philosophies, styles and approaches in their various teachings and contributed immensely to the general development and sustenance of film education. Undoubtedly, two of such facilitators who have been at the front in promoting and sustaining film education in Ghana now are Dr Vitus Nanbigne, of the University of Cape Coast, and Dr Jim Fara Panbonor Awindor, of the African University College of Communications. Despite their good standings and colossal contributions to film education in Ghana, these

individuals, and their other compatriots, have not been given any meaningful scholarly attention in terms of proper academic documentation that map out their philosophies, approaches and most importantly, their contributions. On a cursory search, it does appear that research on film in Ghana has hugely centred on various trajectories, concepts, and theories of the genre without recourse to the many individuals who are at the forefront in teaching the curriculum of film in Ghana. Whilst the many experiences and contributions of these facilitators could serve as adequate research materials in the scholarly space, they have not received much scholarly attention, hence, the need for this study.

The general objective of this study is to recognize two foremost film education facilitators in Ghana and document their contributions to the promotion and growth of film education. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to trace the lives and academic journey of the two facilitators as film teachers in Ghana, to identify the teaching philosophies and approaches that influence their teachings and most importantly to map out the major contributions of the two facilitators to film education in Ghana.

Justification of the objectives are premised on three tangents. Firstly, tracing their academic journey will situate the study on somewhat academic memoire these film facilitators and their philosophies and styles deal with ideas and questions which can enhance understandings of film education within the global perspectives and on the Ghanaian outlook. Secondly, the facilitators and their contributions would help identify and understand the variation of their professional output. Lastly, these objectives are essential because noting their major challenges will help in coming out with necessary recommendations that will perhaps inform policy drive from the appropriate quarters concerning film education in Ghana.

This paper aims to bring together the relevant information on the selected facilitators with a keen focus on their major contributions to help promote film studies in Ghana. The paper outlines the facilitators' philosophies and styles, thereby making findings in these areas or on their concepts easily accessible. Moreover, the findings will serve as reference material for researchers on the subject of film education in Ghana. Even though a study like this may require extensive content analysis of relevant materials and works, due to the lack of proper record-keeping and documentation attitudes, we were challenged in sourcing and accessing most of the relevant information and records.

Although there are several film education facilitators in Ghana, for delimitation, the study settled on two foremost teachers of the program. Dr Vitus Nanbigne, from the University of Cape Coast, and Dr Jim Fara Panbonor Awindor from the African University College of Communications. We describe these two individuals as foremost in the field because, for Vitus, he has remained the only full-time film lecturer in the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, University of Cape Coast and he solely focuses on film education, although he gets support from some part-time colleagues. Vitus has therefore had the most challenging task of leading and steering the affairs of the film section of the department to an appreciable height. Vitus extends his expertise beyond his affiliate department to some other departments within the faculty Arts. Notably, the communication studies Department where he takes several film and communication-related courses.

On the part of Dr Jim Fara Panbonor Awindor, he is an acclaimed colossus in film education especially film documentaries in Ghana. Jim is one of the most visible film instructors in Ghana and he has extended his expertise to many students in the various schools that he has taught. He has worked with the National Film and Television Institute, University of Cape Coast, Central University, NYU Accra Campus, Ashesi University and the African University College of Communications. For these attributes and the many others that would be discussed in the subsequently, these two individuals are rightly described as two of the foremost facilitators for film education in Ghana.

This study is situated within William Thomas' and Florian Znaniecki's theory of *Life Course*. The *Life Course* theory, also known as *Life Course Approach* or *Life Course Perspective* refers to “an approach developed for analysing people's lives within structural context” (Elder, Glen, Kirkpatrick and Crosnoe, 2003:4). O’Rand and Krecker (1990) posit that the theory fundamentally elaborates the importance of time, process and human development. Elder, et al (2003) explains that: *Life Course Theory* typically indicates the chronology of activities or events across the life course. For example, educational background, achievements and contributions to human development.

The theory bears cognizance to retrospective life calendars, which record the year and month at which a transition occurs in each domain and are well-suited for event history analysis. Therefore, this study settles on the *Life Course Theory* as a framework or orientation for the study of the life, background, teaching philosophies and approaches as well as the contributions and challenges of the two film education facilitators. As a theoretical framework for documentation, the researchers considered the *Life Course Theory* to reveal patterns embedded in the film education facilitators’ life and accomplishments.

Film Education

According to Perez (2007), the term “film education” points in two directions towards learning about films and towards learning about how to make them. People learn about films by joining film societies, attending film festivals or by taking a course or even an entire program offered by a high school, college, or a university (Perez, 2007, p. 5). For decades, film education has evolved across the globe with constant modifications and considerable acceptance (Sikov, 2005). During this period, “film has developed its own language, one that is highly complex, sophisticated, and immensely powerful” (Creative Europe Media, 2020) and like any other nuance with such attributes, the need for proper channel of instruction and impartation is essential hence the many formal and fairly familiar birth of film education (Grant, 1983). Film education, fundamentally, is a developed film literacy: that is the ability to read, write, talk and listen with moving images and sounds – alongside critical, cultural and creative knowledge and skills.

Through the study of film, learners can learn not only about technical aspects of filmmaking and the industry, but also about the world we live in, the people within it, and ourselves (Screen Scotland, 2021). “The level of understanding of a film, the ability to be conscious and curious in the choice of films; the competence to critically watch a film and to analyse its content, cinematography and technical aspects; and the ability to manipulate its language and technical resources in creating moving image production” (Mumford, 2021).

International institutions such as the European Union (EU), for instance, have advocated and acknowledged the ubiquitous nature of film education and asserted the cultural richness, the social complexity as well as the historical and the artistic relevance of film education in the general educational space (Reid, 2018).

Consequently, film education, unsurprisingly, has been one of the generally espoused and largely recognized means of providing an entertaining and unique way of addressing some of the major challenges the world faces, either through cognitive and affective instruction objectives (Vilarejo, 2007). This is due to the understanding that “films, generally, can demand that students develop the ability to analyse, synthesise, and offer criticisms by connecting what they [students] see to be sociological concepts and theories” (Yaffa & Simha, 2012, p. 53). Morze (2008) trumpets on the major general skills film education bequests its students.

Aside from personal and cultural development, film education offers students a broader perspective on wide-ranged skills and talents, professions and careers and understandings. Due to the numerous engagements with diverse film gadgets, beliefs and approaches, film education ordinarily, will provide outstanding opportunities to promote active learning and raise motivated personalities ready to engage and demonstrate their skills (Dix, 2009). On his part Perez (2007) proclaims that film education is to accept the notion that the Arts, in general, and film education, in particular, is intellectually demanding, emotive as well as reflective, and done with the hand (heart) as well as with the head (reason) (Perez, 2007, p. 7).

Perhaps Carroll (2003) gives a defining importance of film education and its connection with cross-race importance when he asserts that there is evidence that people can learn about alternative lifestyles from both films and that this can bring ethically significant changes in their everyday existence. People from Third World cultures can learn about ways of life in the First World and women can learn about male culture, and this exposure can encourage them to alter their lives (Carroll, 2003, p. 109).

According to Brunt (2018), film education, globally, has been situated within the scope of technical and vocational skills and this is largely due to the various handy and demonstrable skills that film education is able to inculcate in students. Accentuating, an EU sponsored framework developed by film education experts across the globe, strongly advocates for film education to stress the importance of integrating critical and creative practices and processes with the widest possible participation. The framework also touched on the entitlement of young people to learn about, and appreciate film through both the formal structures of schooling, and the informal environments of home, family, and society. Regrettably, in all the advocacy the EU sponsored framework delegates and many other of such film education policies, the brazing lack of attention given to the facilitators is conspicuous.

Philosophies in Film Education

General education philosophies have been affected by the norms, principles and statements of varied theories. These theories form the underpinning philosophies and styles employed by every educator (facilitators) in achieving their goals. The general viewpoints and objectives, lesson

approaches, motivations and expected outcomes are some of the major pointers that define the philosophies of educators (Brunt, 2018). Just like other fields of study, there are various underpinning philosophies that guide film education and though such philosophies may differ on the institutional as well as the individual instructors' levels, nevertheless, "we must realise that a philosophy of film education cannot be developed in a vacuum without reference to the socio-cultural context in which film as a mode of communication takes place" (Perez, 2007, p. 121).

Perez (2007) again elucidates that, the overriding philosophy of film education is in the film literacy movement, developed and expanded which took as its aim the development of abilities in the students enabling them to understand the techniques and 'language' of film. Film has become the newest art form with the unexplored potential to do what words have failed to do. Film is multimodal, multi-sensual, and universal (Perez, 2007, p. 123).

It is important to note, aside from the general focus of every educational philosophy usually fashioned by schools or institutions, the individual educators, teachers or facilitators also have their peculiar philosophies that drive their lessons. This personal philosophy of the facilitators, however, must be grounded in reality and must tap into the imagination of both the teachers and students. The inherent value of teaching must be valued and methods of philosophical work including critical analysis, synthesis of ideas, personal experience and speculation will be employed to try to come to some understanding and provide clues about how education can help to lead better lives (Reimer, 2003, p. 2). This assertion expressed by Reimer fits in the second objective of this study in the sense that it will reveal the major philosophical drive of the two facilitators.

Pedagogies in Film Education

There are various pedagogical slants in every education philosophy and the pedagogies are developed and decided on based on a facilitator's views and principles about how learning should be delivered. Pedagogies help facilitators present their teaching in a coherence way that is relevant to the students' needs (Persaud, 2021). In film education, dependent on the expected outcome, pedagogies by facilitators are usually influenced and tainted by their philosophies.

Having a well-thought-out pedagogy can improve the quality of a facilitator's teaching and the way students learn, helping them gain a deeper grasp of fundamental material. Being mindful of the way you teach can help you better understand how to help students achieve deeper learning. It can, in turn, impact student perception, resulting in cooperative learning environments (Persaud, 2021, p. 3).

Pedagogies essentially is about working alongside students in a way that allows lived experience to be at the heart of learning and in film education, pedagogies are used as educational ethos that encourages co-created practice, learning through play, and learning from each other. It brings learning to life (Leake & McDougall, 2020). By focusing on pedagogical practices that work with the most challenging and inexperienced students, it is possible to identify the critical elements of teaching that results in success for all children.

One other teaching pedagogy that is usually applied in film education is what Quist (2021), terms as an exploratory pedagogy. With this teaching approach, Quist (2021) explains that, the facilitator often teaches in a form of seed planting. The facilitator will usually plant questions and she/he will boost the students' interest in finding answers to the question. With this approach, the facilitator will give the students some form of respite to assume whatever appropriate means and mechanisms in finding solutions to the planted puzzle. In film education, students are allowed to explore with various gadgets by means possible to produce either a documentary or feature film. This is usually, after a facilitator may have discussed or concept, idea or information and encourage the students to work on them

One of the major pedagogical sorts identified with many film educators has been what is described by Orr & Shreeve (2018) as Practice Pedagogy. Orr & Shreeve, as quoted by (Leake & McDougall, 2020), educate that, *Practice Pedagogy* champions experiential learning, where practice is central. This kind of pedagogy may 'change the tutor's role to be a "facilitator of learning" ... [but the role of the tutor] is not diminished as a facilitator but remains powerfully educative' (Orr & Shreeve, 2018, p. 74).

Film Education in Ghana: A Historical Dig

Film education in Ghana is intrinsically linked with the political history of the country. The advent of European rule in the then Gold Coast has been credited with the commencement of film culture in Ghana. Nanbigne (2011) has intimated that the idea of film started in Ghana when Christian missionaries first used slides and later films as evangelical tools. Nanbigne has studied that the Basel Missionaries who settled in present day Osu, in Accra, introduced films to the natives. Then after, the colonial authorities recognized the power of the visual medium and adopted same as a political propaganda and indoctrination tools (Nanbigne, 2011) as quoted by (Ayisi-Ahwireng, 2017)

Following Ghana's attainment of political independence, however, the new nation's leader, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, made efforts to lead Africa's decolonization process. He used film as a medium of achieving this Pan-African agenda. Nkrumah restructured and renamed the Gold Coast Film Unit (GCFU), which the British colonial administration had established, as the Ghana Film Industry Corporation (GFIC) and placed it at the forefront of documenting and propagating his version of the Pan-African narrative (Ohene-Asah, 2021). However, the use of film to foster African liberation and unity was first formalised in 1958 at the premier conference of independent States in Africa, held in Ghana. A resolution was passed at this conference to implement an exchange of cultural ideas, audio-visuals and other journalistic materials (Eko, 2001).

The political regime therefore felt the need to establish an institution that will then provide professionals who will lead the course. In this regard, the National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI) was established in 1978 by the government to foster professional and academic excellence in film and television (Selbo, 2015).

Film Education in Ghana: A Look at the Leading Schools

The National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI) started as the leading institution for the training of professionals for the film industry in Ghana. The Institute offered three-year

professional programs leading to the award of Diploma until 1999, when, in affiliation with the University of Ghana it commenced full-time four-year professional Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in addition to two-year Diploma programs. The two-year Diploma programs are essentially intended for industry practitioners who wish to update their knowledge and skills. NAFTI has over the years also provided diverse collaborative technical support for projects within and outside the continent (NAFTI, 2021).

According to the NAFTI, its programs are developed to help prospective students acquire scholarships on filmmaking and television productions. Due to its strategic location and place in the Pan-African agenda, the institute has often encouraged its students to produce film and television content that reflect the general cultural nuances and aesthetics of the African people. Striving to achieve its main mandate, the school is constantly providing some needed facilities including equipment and books that are needed for the professional training of film students. The school's library is well stocked with film and television materials including periodicals, journals and magazines. The institute also has various studios that include computer animation studio, still photography laboratory and a viewing theatres for practical demonstrations and exhibitions.

Aside from NAFTI, there are other institutions that are also in the business of film education in Ghana. Interestingly, the two facilitators under this study all have some form of stint with these institutions. These institutions include, the School of Performing Arts in the University of Ghana, the Department of Theatre and Film Studies in the University of Cape Coast, and the African University College of Communication among others. It is worthy of note that whereas these other tertiary institutions take film education as an attached course, film education at NAFTI is fully fledged and even "aspires to maintain and further establish a reputation for excellence in film and television education, and also aims to be a worldwide model for other regional institutions of higher education and thereby attract more funding and other forms of support"

The Department of Theatre and Film Studies at the University of Cape Coast, on the other hand, has also been at the forefront in educating students on the various strands in film education. The department, after more than a decade of its establishment, has strived to help students develop various skills that are relevant to the general society of Ghana. Its focus has been to develop and hone students' creative ability in the field theatre and film that is consistent with the general agenda of the Nation's development. Another of its focus is to provide media education that is capable of affecting behavioural changes in a target audience. Then finally, the department aims at moulding students that will be capable in Manning the various film, television and advertising companies in Ghana.

Film Education in Ghana: Role of the Facilitators

As has been noted adequately, facilitators play a very important role in every educational drive and the case is film education is not different. Murati (2015) avows that, every facilitator with the right professional ability is a relevant factor in training and preparation of didactic and methodical plans, organises and carries out work on student learning. Educational process and people as social beings reciprocally are related to one another from the existence of man or mankind and so will continue to remain (Murati, 2015, p. 75).

Specifically, with film facilitators, the role will be to offer instruction in filmmaking, film history and appreciation, and related subjects. Film facilitators may teach and offer classes in the technical aspects of movie production, film criticism, or screenwriting. One other key role of the film facilitator will be to design syllabi and offer lectures on the specific subjects, as developed in the syllabi, using various movies as text to support the various lessons. Film education facilitators may specialise in a specific aspect of film education, such as screenwriting or film direction. Also, it behoves on the film facilitator to offer advisory services to students at various levels on their projects. In addition to teaching classes, college-level facilitators often offer guidance to students who want to start a career in the film industry (Zip, 2021).

2. METHODS

This study, as indicated in the study title, adopts the narrative study research design. Narrative research aims to unravel consequential stories of people's lives as told by them in their own words and worlds. The researchers then interpret these stories in a sequenced and organised way. In the context of the health, social sciences, and education, narrative research is both a data gathering and interpretive or analytical framework. It meets these twin goals admirably by having people make sense of their lives in their social context as they understand it, including their self-belief-oriented stories. Narrative research falls within the realm of social constructivism or the philosophy that people's lived stories capture the complexities and nuanced understanding of their significant experiences (Liamputtong, 2019).

We also used the qualitative survey approach in qualitative research since a vital part of this study documents the teaching philosophies and contributions of the two facilitators. In his no-arguing view, Dawson (2002), explains that the qualitative approach "explores attitudes, behaviour and experiences through such methods as interview..." (p14). It attempts to get an in-depth opinion from the participants. This explains my usage of interviews, documents and observation to interpret phenomena and experiences in relation to the meanings that the two facilitators have had on their various works.

To achieve this, the study adopted the five (5) essential steps in data collection as propounded by Creswell (2012) in attaining the set goals. Creswell notes that the first of the five steps are to identify participants to be studied and to engage in a sampling strategy that will best help the researchers understand the central phenomenon that will inform the research question.

The second step is obtaining permissions from the individuals to be studied. Third, once permissions are in place, the researchers consider what types of information will best answer the research questions. Fourth, at the same time, the researchers need to design protocols or instruments for collecting and recording the information and finally, the researchers need to administer the data collection with special attention to potential ethical issues that may arise (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

We adopted Creswell's five steps through the qualitative method of research in order to gather the needed in-depth understanding regarding design processes and techniques which can enrich knowledge on this study. As this study documents the teaching philosophies and major contributions of two foremost film facilitators in Ghana, the qualitative approach gave room for a

better analysis to be able to determine the developmental stages and distinctive characteristics of their works.

The total number of all units needed and are available to be investigated for the research are considered to form the population for a study. Therefore, the entire population for this study included all teachers in film education in Ghana that is seventy-two in approximation. This population represents the portion of the units accessible to the researchers, and covers the total set of individuals or experiences with familiar characteristics needed for the research (Kumekpor 2002 & Twumasi 2001). For the purpose of this study, the main targeted people are two foremost film lecturers in Ghana.

The study adopted the purposive sampling approach to research. According to Patton (1990), as cited by Creswell (2012) "...in purposive sampling, the researchers intentionally selects individuals and the site to be used. Also, the researchers must know if the participants and their works are information rich". Preliminary study by the researchers, therefore, revealed that the two facilitators under study have, cumulatively, had more than two decades of teaching experiences and they have worked with most of the leading film education institutions in Ghana. Due to this, they have gained experience through practice, formal and informal lectures, and presentations as well as have developed in-depth knowledge in the area of film education. The two, therefore, represent the sample size used for the study.

During the reading of related literature on the study, notes were taken of the salient points found in them that resonated with the research topic of this study. Notes were made on the reading materials; in a notepad and exercise book when needed. The researchers used a mobile phone as a data collection tool in recording information during the interview. Also, we had pens and notepads to note down some salient points or further questions. Therefore, the study deployed interviews and observations as the two data collection instruments.

The interview guide was designed using open ended questions, which gave room for the participants to really express themselves as much as possible. The language used for the interview was English due to the academic background of the participants.

The study used both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary sources of data are those items that are archetypical to the study and are regarded as the life blood of historical research (Cohen, et al, 2007). The approach to data collection also involved library research to find analysed concepts on film education from other parts of the world. Primary and Secondary sources are the two main classifications of data sources in historical research. Since study is about the two facilitators, and their works, the majority of the data gathered was acquired from them. Therefore, more data was gathered from primary sources than secondary sources.

The secondary data included all relevant literature or information on the topic under study. These sources comprise of data which are representative to the study in general and the key concepts in the topic under study specifically. Studying established literature on the topic from other scholars in other jurisdictions, the secondary sources assisted the researchers to further appreciate the facilitators and their contributions to film education in Ghana. Specifically, the study used twelve

journal articles and six books, from electronic sources as well as physical sources, in the Sam Jonah library of the University of Cape Coast, the Centre for African and International Affairs library and the Amissah Arthur Language Centre library for the study.

To enable us to acquire detailed information on the facilitators, a One-on-One interview was utilised. This interview style is ideal for interviewing participants who are not hesitant to speak, who are articulate, and who can share ideas comfortably (Creswell, 2012). These traits, as mentioned by Creswell, were noticed in the participants by the researchers and that contributed to the appreciation of the data.

The narrative analysis of data approach was used in analysing the data. This approach involves an examination of the data collected in a manner that the researchers are able to establish the patterns and connections between information gathered (Delve 2021). Data gathered were transcribed and further grouped according to the similar responses, after which they were studied in order to identify the relevant information needed for the study. The data gathered gave a great deal of information to the researchers as regards a better appreciation of film education in Ghana and the role of the various facilitators. Also, the researchers were able to consider the different views and opinions from the two facilitators and their contributions revealed significant knowledge about film teachers and their works that had not been considered for the research from the beginning.

In carrying out interviews, an interview guide was designed to aid in the process. This made the interviews easier and successful. Decision for the selection of the interviewees was also decided upon. Phone calls were made to the facilitators. To conduct the interviews, the researchers reached, with the participants and at their convenience, the date, time and venue for the interview. Before the interview, the researchers sought the consent of the facilitators to record them and they granted the same before proceeding to interview them.

Adherence to ethics was observed during the interview, since questions outlined for the interview had bearing on the personal lives of the interviewees. In gathering data for a qualitative project, participants may be asked to discuss private details of their life experiences over a period of time (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). However, for this study, most of the issues discussed with the participant were seldomly sensitive, therefore the various participants consented to sharing their knowledge on the research topic.

Interviews were held at the University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast and the Africa University College of Communications, Accra in the offices of the participants for convenience. Though minor disruptions occurred such as a knock on the door, a visit by someone among others, these did not affect the information gathered in any way. Before the interview, a general idea of the whole process was discussed so as to prepare the participants. Results from the interviews conducted were transcribed and this helped the analysis of the work.

3.FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The lives of the two facilitators are discussed and their major inspirations and influences are highlighted. It also maps the major contributions of the facilitators to film education in Ghana.

Jim Fara Awindor: Life Experiences that Lead him to Teaching Film

Jim Fara Awindor was born and grew up in Bolgatanga, colloquially known as Bolga, the capital city of the Upper East region of Ghana. Jim Awindor grew up in a family that was strictly divided in terms of the academic interest in the sense that half of Jim’s family took interest in the sciences whilst the half also had insatiable love for the Arts. For Jim, he was with the latter group and studied Arts up to the sixth form level with concentration on paintings.



Figure 1: Dr. Jim F. P. Awindor (*Source: Jim F. P Awindor’s Library*)

Jim Awindor’s interest in the Arts developed at a very early stage of his life where he joined the drama group at the primary school and acted a couple of roles on stage. Although Jim spent just a little over a year at the middle school, his love for the Arts was still with him and contributed his quota to the various Arts groups in school. Moving on to the Secondary school with the same trend, Fara had stints with several of the Arts oriented students’ organisations and clubs including the creative club, which was mainly into poetry writings and recitals.

Here also, he joined the drama group and performed with the group on some special occasions. The other groups Jim joined due to his love for the Arts at the Secondary level were the supporting club whose main duty was supporting the various sporting teams in the school during sports activities. Interesting, Jim was also with the cultural troupe and for him being such groups was more interesting to him. Jim’s love for the Arts at the Secondary school made some people question his real intent of going to the school. He recounts that for him, at the secondary school level, “anything that was fun and had the Arts in them I was there and at one-point people were even wondering if I had come to the Secondary to learn or to play?”. However, by some Divine design, he looks back and believes that his involvement with all those groups “were part of the formative years that gave me some groundings that would in later years have a certain impact on me. So, I think all those things were preparing me for what I am today and I strongly believe that that foundation was good”.

On how Jim Fara Awindor got to the National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI), he recalls that

“... during my secondary school days, that was when the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), a military regime led by its then leader, popularly referred to as Chairman Jerry John Rawlings, ruled the country. There was a State function in Bolga and NAFTI came with Chairman Rawlings for the program and for the first time I saw the NAFTI signage boldly written on a Land Rover vehicle with the school address on the vehicle. I had never seen or heard of it but immediately I saw it, for some reason, I decided that, this is where I must go and for some reason, it just stuck with me and it will never leave me even when friends and family were pressing on me to go to the University, I said No way!!!, It’s NAFTI I am going and nowhere else”

Unfortunately for Jim, it took him four years after Secondary School to get admission to NAFTI. This was because NAFTI at the time was not admitting students every other year. Application for admission was queued at the time and he was not able to keep monitoring the process from his base in Bolga. Nevertheless, with the strong fondness I had developed for NAFTI he persisted and kept applying until he finally got the admission.

At NAFTI, Jim was very enthusiastic in the film program and academically excelled. In his view, his passion for film and being at NAFTI was as a result of him identifying with almost all the things the film program offered. In his assertion, he got so immersed in the film program because he believes that *“... film and television, synthesises everything about the arts into one conglomerate because when you go into film and television, set designing, painting, drawings, sound, and all the others. Anything in the Arts you find it there. So, it was so interesting that due to my earlier-developed passion for the Arts, seamlessly, I readily excelled and had a first-class honour”*.

Before Jim could even complete his film studies at NAFTI, the institution had seen the potential in him and was willing to nurture and groom him to become a teaching staff member of the institution. For this reason, he was offered a scholarship to study television techniques and productions in Germany even before he graduated. Jim’s travel to Germany did not only make him miss the graduation ceremony but also deprived him of enjoying the euphoria and excitement of being awarded, for his final year project, the best film, best script, best directing and the best camera. Nonetheless, Fara focused on his studies in Germany and returned to NAFTI to begin his teaching career. One of the major motivations then, to go into teaching film was to help improve whichever area(s) he is assigned. However, upon his return and having realised that there were seasoned film teachers in his area of interest, he was assigned to the productions unit of the school and took charge of all the commercial projects that were coming to the institution from government and private organisations. Although Jim was doing more productions, he also served as a Teaching Assistant and went to the lecture halls with some lecturers to teach.

Jim was eager to develop himself, he applied for a Fulbright scholarship to the Congress of the United State of America (USA) and after summering over several impediments that nearly barred him from getting the scholarship, he was offered the scholarship to go study for a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in film productions with specialisation in documentaries. For the three years that

Awindor was in the USA he strived to build and prepare himself to fully go into film teaching and that was his full academic journey as a film lecturer at the National Film and Television Institute. Aside from teaching at NAFTI, Jim has been one of the most visible film instructors in Ghana and he has extended his expertise to many students in the various schools that he has taught. He has had a working stint with the National Film and Television Institute, University of Cape Coast, Central University, NYU Accra Campus, Ashesi University and the African University College of Communications.

Asking Jim about how exciting teaching film has been for him, as comments that

“... it is exciting because it is something that I got immersed and soaked up in and I am so passionate about the area that it is exciting to know that what you like so much, you are able to impart to others so that what you part to others, also trickles down to wherever that could go. I am also excited to know that my teachings do not only end here [classroom/lecture hall] but transcends what we do in one moment.

The excitement also comes when every year, whilst your students are completing, another set is coming in with so much enthusiasm and you get to know so many people who may end up doing you one favour or the other. The excitement is just immeasurable...”

Fara Awindor: Teaching Philosophies and Approaches to Film Education

As noted in the literature review section of this study, every instructor has a unique way of teaching backed by certain philosophies, therefore, we probe here, to understand what Jim’s teaching philosophies and approaches are. The facilitator indicated that his approach to teaching is predicated on his understanding that each student is unique. He believes that every student is different from the other, *“so I go into a class and I see that not all the students before me are the same, they are not equal and their intelligence level can never be the same, each of them has something unique about them. It might not be something that might be demonstrated in class but each one obviously has different talent, skills or even intelligence so if you know this premise, you cannot teach them the same, so for me, I make it a point to understand who they are even if it is through a third person.”*

On the subject of teaching philosophy, Jim has interestingly developed his unique *philosophy of mind* which he also calls the *perennial teaching philosophy*. With Jim’s philosophy of mind or the perennial teaching philosophy, Jim believes in the comprehensiveness of curriculum to include life experiences that have some connection with the subject matter. *“At the end, you look at how to train students, how to impart knowledge and how to get them to think about the future and the world. Often in class, you have me digressing to talk about a certain world or life experiences that have a certain connection to what I am teaching so that it’s not all about what the students are getting in class but also preparing them for the world. He summarises his teaching approach that...*

“The content of the curriculum should not only be on the subject matter but must be broadened in conjunction with other things that it fits in certain broader perspectives so that the students leave enrich rather than deficient on how to face the world.”

Jim Fara Awindor: Major Contributions to film Education in Ghana

Mapping Jim’s major contributions to film education in Ghana, the facilitator mentions that his singular effort to have the directors and the board of NAFTI to eventually accept to have documentary production as a specialised area of study under the general film education is his major singular success and contributions to film education in Ghana. The instructor declares that

“... before we starting specialising in documentary film making in Ghana, people didn’t know how to make documentaries and people still do not know how to make documentaries, so when you find a good documentary in the system now, it's probably coming from somebody who has trained as a documentary filmmaker or somebody who has pass through me because I have taught the subject for about twenty (20) years and if you look at most of the documentary students here in Ghana, they passed through me so I think that the introduction of documentary film making as a specialised area of film education is one of my greatest contributions.”

Vitus Nanbigne: Life Experiences that Lead him to Teaching Film

Dr. Vitus Nanbigne was born in 1964. He had his basic education in Tamale at Our Lady of Fatima Primary School.



Figure 2: Dr Vitus Nanbigne (Source: Dr Vitus Nanbigne’s library)

Upon reaching class four, he had to abruptly stop because he was sent to go and live with his uncle. So, he was there for two years, where he continued from primary four to five. Then his uncle, who was a teacher at that time, got transferred to Wa. There, he completed primary six. Just after completing his primary education, he enrolled in a preparatory school where they prepared students to write the Common Entrance Examination. He went through that process and entered Secondary school in Nandon. He did both Ordinary and Advanced levels there and afterwards did his national service.

After his service, he went to the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ) to study Journalism. When he was done, he worked with the Ghana News Agency for about a year and a half. He then got admission to the National Television and Film Institute (NAFTI), which he completed in 1993. In

the course of his schooling at NAFTI, he had a partial scholarship from some missionaries, and as part of the agreement, he was required to come back and work with the church when he was done with the school. The church had a communication setup, so they needed experts.

Consequently, he went back to Tamale and worked with the church for two years, transferred to Wa and worked for an additional two years until he was called to NAFTI to be an assistant lecturer. And so he moved to Accra to teach in 1998. That was where his teaching career in film commenced. At NAFTI, he taught Film History, Film Theories, some part of Script Writing and Directing. He also supervised students in doing their long essays. He was there for two years before he got admission to the University of Bergin, where he did both his MPhil and PhD. He came back to NAFTI to teach but had to quit because of certain reasons. This led to him being unemployed for a long time. He tried as much as possible to find a job, but all attempts proved futile. Most of the time, their employers said he was overqualified. He tried to make films but the producers at that time did not seem to understand what he was trying to do. None produced his works, including TV3.

Fortunately, he got invited to an interview in the University of Cape Coast and was employed in March 2009. He received his employment letter and started working in April 2009. Apparently, he has been there since then.

When asked how exciting the journey has been for him, he asserted that teaching is quite exciting when you meet exciting students. He said although he has had his ups and downs, he has also had moments of great excitement, interesting with his students exchanging ideas and trying to experiment with various forms of learning and productions. In spite of all these, there have also been moments that were not exciting, because he met students who did not seem to be focused and were not sure why they were in school. Some of these students did not even want to be part of the film programme. For some reason, they were forced to be in it.

To him, he is mostly happy when students come in at level 100, not knowing anything about film making, and by the time they get to level 200, you notice that they have learnt enough to even start making money for themselves. And so as a lecturer, that excites him, because it is a vivid explanation that he is doing something.

Vitus Nanbigne: Teaching Philosophies and Approaches to Film Education

After a discussion with Dr. Vitus Nanbigne, he outlined that his guiding philosophy is to encourage students to explore. He asserted that his teaching principle is not a talk-down-approach, where the lecturer goes in and pours down materials on the students for them to absorb. He is only compelled to do that when the students are not explorative enough. When they do not venture or challenge themselves enough. So he is forced to deliver the information to them. On the contrary, he loves the situation where the students can explore and challenge him as a lecturer. Because he believes that, that would make him also learn more.

He added that, usually, in his class, he tells the students that he may be a teacher, but he learns from them. So when students are able to bring up ideas and dig up materials that he did not already know, he feels very happy about it. So he always wants to treat his students as if they were his colleagues.

In most cases, instead of him going to the class and being the teacher teaching and the students taking notes, he allows the students to also prepare and come and teach. He believes that that allows them to read, watch, analyse and explore. This approach, according to him, really worked well and students appreciated it and wanted even more of such. In other cases, it did not work because the students were not willing to go by the procedure. They were not willing to go the extra mile and to explore.

Vitus Nanbigne: Major Contributions to film Education in Ghana

When asked about this, he said, “Well, I am not sure if I can describe my teaching in terms of major contribution, because I think that I try to give the little that I know in terms of forming my students.” In his opinion, all students from the beginning, when they have selected the programme (Film Studies), need a certain amount of formation and modelling. And that is what he tries to do, so that they can understand that filmmaking is a journey. And those who you embark on that journey, you should embark on with a certain philosophy and way of thinking. He tries to introduce the students to these ways of thinking so that they can then make up their own minds and form themselves in terms of what kind of films they would want to make when they are out of school. So when they learn some of the philosophies of film making and the ideologies that guide films, then they can make up their own minds about what should inform their own strong feelings.

He thus affirmed that his contribution is getting filmmakers of the next generation to go beyond what they are experiencing now. He added that the students he has nurtured have not made any major movies yet, but are in the field doing other relevant things. Some who are into the production of audiovisual materials, are doing quite well.

Linking his contributions to film education in Ghana to the general development of the country, Vitus stated categorically that he is contributing what he can in his own little and humble way. He believes that some of the students he taught at NAFTI are now doing major works in the film industry. And they are probably able to use what he impacted into them.

He shared a recent encounter he had with one of his former students at NAFTI via phone call. The caller (his student), said he was in the field with a group of people to shoot something, and a discussion came up as to how they were going to film it. It was about how to record a particular scene. And people were suggesting various styles and techniques. It was then he remembered him (Dr. Nanbigne).

Apparently, the caller was the cinematographer and way back at NAFTI, he did not want to do Film History, because he felt that as a cinematographer, Film History was irrelevant. Dr. Nanbigne said he recalled citing scenarios to prove him wrong. So now that he found himself in the field, he remembered this and called and said, “Sir, when the situation came up on set, the thing you told me in the Film History class came to mind, and I used it to solve the problem”. According to

Nanbigne, this is just one of the many things that a teacher can do that would contribute to the industry in several ways.

4.CONCLUSION

This paper set out with three objectives thus;

1. To trace the academic lives and journey of the two Dr Jim F. P. Awindor and Dr Vitus Nanbigne
2. To identify the teaching philosophies and approaches that shape and influence their teachings and
3. To map out their major contributions to film education in Ghana.

After interviews and interactions with the two facilitators, they gave comprehensive information about themselves and their journey to teaching film at the tertiary level in various institutions of Ghana. The following are the summary of the findings.

Whilst Jim Fara Awindor started his academic journey in the Bolgatanga, in the Upper East regional capital, Vitus Nanbigne started his schooling at the Northern region, Tamale, which also happened to be the capital. However, they had different reasons for joining academia. Jim was identified by NAFTI in his early student days, as a brilliant student among his peers for which he had a first class distinction, won four awards at his graduation and offered a scholarship for further studies in Germany and in the United State of America. Vitus Nanbigne on the other hand got to NAFTI after a year of studies at the Ghana Institute of journalism. Coincidentally, Nanbigne also had a scholarship to go study film history and production in Germany and as part of the conditions, he was to return to Ghana and teach after his studies. Both Jim Awindor and Vitus Nanbigne had a stint with NAFTI and eventually had to leave the school. Whilst Nanbigne was teaching film history, Jim was teaching documentary productions.

The two instructors, although appear to have different approaches to teaching, their aim is the same. Vitus believes in an exploratory teaching approach that encourages students to be at the forefront of discovering and acquiring knowledge and experiences in their academic and professional careers rather than constantly being fed and depending on the instructors. For Jim Awindor believes in the Philosophy of the mind where students are catered for comprehensively with broadening the scope of the teaching curriculum to include world and life experiences.

The two facilitators have contributed enormously to film education in Ghana. In the cumulative years of two decades, the two facilitators have trained, mentored and moulded a considerable number of professional filmmakers in Ghana who have been practising filmmaking and its related professions. Specifically, whilst Vitus gives a broad contribution to film education, Jim noted the introduction of documentary film productions as a specialised area in film education as his single most visible contribution.

5.RECOMMENDATION

The study has been quite revealing and the realisation that there is so much to be captured in terms of film education in Ghana makes this study worthwhile. Based on the various findings and conclusions we wish to proffer the following recommendations.

One of the key concerns that both facilitators expressed as hampering film education is the lack of basic equipment to facilitate their teachings. For instance, Vitus frustratingly stated that “it is almost impossible to teach filmmaking with nothing because the intent of the film studies program to train students that can fit in the audio-visual media industries, fit into television programming, advertising, online media productions and you just can't do it when you have nothing!”. Expressing similar sentiment, Jim pryngly pontificated that, “when teaching film and television, there are equipment and facilities needed.

There is no way you can teach film without a film camera, without at least a machine to record your sounds or edit them and some basic lights to illuminate actors in a scene, so if you don't have that, teaching that subject is so difficult because it is not theoretical, it is practical but because the resources are not there, we have to do without them and makes teaching difficult actually”. Based on these disclosures, it is my recommendation that the various film education Departments and Faculties press on the discharging authorities to institute measures that will help them procure the various needed resources that will enhance the teaching of the program. The two facilitators under this study are colossus and have contributed a lot not only for film education but also film and television practice and productions. However, they appear to be under celebrated and their achievements and contributions are not properly documented for safekeeping and referencing and obviously, a long essay such as this cannot suffice to fill that yawning gap. Having set the tone, however, we recommend that extensive study is carried on these individuals and their compatriots for proper documentation as done in other jurisdictions.

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