Chapter 7: Harry Peach (1874–1936): The Materiality of Arts and Crafts Education

Amy Palmer

Introduction

Harry Peach was a Leicester manufacturer. He worked as a bookseller before establishing his Dryad cane furniture firm in 1907 and Dryad Metal Works in 1912 (Kirkham, 1986). His claim to a place in a book about arts education is twofold. First, he was a founder and active member of the Design and Industries Association (DIA), whose inaugural meeting was held on 9 May 1915 (Peach, n.d.-a). This organisation aimed to improve Britain's industrial success by increasing public awareness about the importance of good design—something to be achieved through education in both schools and colleges but also in the wider community. Second, a further business concern of his was a company, Dryad Handicrafts, which sold art and craft materials, again both to educational establishments and to community groups. This began with the sale of cane and raffia to hospitals during World War I for use in

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A. Palmer (✉)
University of Roehampton, London, UK
e-mail: Amy.Palmer@roehampton.ac.uk

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Photo 1 Harry Peach. Photograph provided by Leicester Museums Service

providing therapeutic craft activities for injured servicemen (McLeish, 1936). The business grew quickly in the early 1920s and published books, its own series of educational leaflets and an in-house journal, all with a view to increasing enthusiasm and know-how in craft subjects. When Peach died, Dryad 'was the world's largest supplier of handicraft materials' (Kirkham, 1986: 70). A history of arts education in Britain is incomplete without a consideration of crafts, as arts and crafts have throughout their history been intimately entwined (Sutton, 1967, see also the 'Introduction' to this volume).

An analysis of Peach's life and work forges a connection with the burgeoning scholarly interest in education and material culture. Ian Grosvenor argued in 2005 that 'Teachers and pupils, in classrooms and schools, work with and through objects and materials all the time. … Yet this element of schooling remains a largely obscured or ignored area of study in histories of national schooling' (p. 532). Scholars such as Grosvenor himself, Catherine Burke (e.g., 2013) and Martin Lawn (e.g., 2009) have been engaged in trying to fill this gap. Arts and crafts education is perhaps more dependent on material provision than any other area of the school curriculum. A government handicraft inquiry of 1919 argued that in junior classes, the subject had 'languished owing to the dearth of materials' (Howard et al., 1919: 1). A 1914 report into handwork in London gives some indication of the nature of this problem: 'The range of materials used is limited as a rule to paper, cardboard, clay and "prepared wood" or "stripwood"' (Board of Education, 1914: 1). As was later claimed by R.R. Tomlinson, Inspector of Art for London County Council (1934), new materials could have 'a considerable influence upon new methods' (p. 30) and the ways in which children could express themselves. As interest in handicrafts gradually increased after World War I (Turner, 1922), the Dryad firm was able to shape what was available for teachers and children to use and what was therefore possible to achieve. This is an important element in understanding the nature of pupils' lived experiences in art and craft education.

Peach has been the subject of a 1986 biography by Pat Kirkham, which covers the full range of his activities, and he has also been discussed as an arts and crafts advocate in a small number of other sources (e.g., Haslam, 1995; Nash, 1992). More recently, his connection with the Bauhaus art school in Germany has received particular attention: Peach visited in 1927 and was the first British person to describe the experience (Powers, 2019). This chapter provides a fresh analysis of his ideas about arts and crafts education. At the heart of these lay some potential contradictions and tensions: he wanted to make money out of manufactured goods but he wished to preserve and promote craft techniques that were unlikely to be compatible with maximising profit. He wanted to encourage arts and crafts in schools and other settings for philanthropic and educational reasons but he also wanted to sell the resources for doing so on terms favourable to himself. The chapter also considers the influence he was able to wield on arts education, focusing on education in elementary schools for children, both as a member of the DIA and as a vendor of craft materials.

Harry Peach's Beliefs: The Value of Design, Art and Crafts

Harry Peach believed in the value of art, crafts and design. As a businessman, he believed that good modern design underpinned quality products and ultimately business success. He acknowledged the contribution made by his local art school to his own achievements: the classes provided there helped his workers to improve their skills, and products made to designs from the school had been successfully exported to Germany (Peach, n.d.-b). However, in general terms, he believed that a lack of connection between art and industry was a factor which limited the country's economic progress (Peach, 1916). Schools of Design had been established in the mid-nineteenth century whose purpose was training artisans as an aid to British manufacturing (Bell, 1963, but see Cunningham, 1979 for an alternative perspective on the underlying aims) but these had a troubled history and had made very little impact (Bell, 1963; Field, 1970). In the early twentieth century, Peach and other businessmen felt a continued frustration about the issue. They believed that education, at all levels in the system, should play a role both in producing skilled craftspeople and in leading public taste towards purchasing quality products (Peach, 1929).

Peach commented on the relationships between design, art and craft. For him, 'a work of art is firstly a well made thing': it was an object that was perfectly suited to its purpose (Peach, 1925a). He was, for example, profoundly annoyed by what was considered to be artistic cane (and therefore flammable) candlesticks made by some boy scouts (Peach, n.d.-c). Art should not just consist in decoration applied as a final process, it was fundamental to the form of the object. Thus art belonged to all skilful craftspeople not just 'the big-tied, long-haired gentry who talk art twaddle' (Peach, 1925a). It was also important that artists should experiment with new ideas and did not merely reproduce older styles. He was infuriated, for example, by an exhibition of pottery where all the exhibits were eighteenth-century reproductions and 'nothing belonged to our day' (*Journal of the Design and Industries Association*, 1917: 9).

Where his business was concerned, Peach argued that he lived 'in an age of machines' and these should be used 'intelligently' and 'honestly'—making the craftsperson's work easier (Peach, 1925a). This put him at odds with some groups interested in arts and crafts, such as the Peasant Arts Movement, who believed it was possible to (re-)create a rural economy based on traditional handicrafts alone (Palmer, 2018). Nonetheless, Peach loved traditional objects and traditional craft skills. He had an extensive collection of folk art objects, which he began in 1907 with a collection of canework. This expanded in size and in range throughout his life (Leicestershire Museum Education Service, n.d.). His reason for building the collection was that he thought that craftspeople should connect with the 'wonderful work of the past' in order to build on (rather than slavishly copy) what had been achieved by their predecessors (Peach, 1926a: ix). The collection included objects from England but also from other parts of the world (Leicestershire Museum Education Service, n.d.). He took pride in a distinctively *English* tradition, claiming that 'we have prized the great art of England too lightly' (Peach, 1926a: 14) but also appreciated the traditions of other cultures and valued opportunities for craftspeople from different countries to learn from each other: 'Art should know no frontiers' (Peach, [1925b]). In this, there was a great deal of resonance between his position and that of the Peasant Arts Movement (Palmer, 2018) and it is noteworthy that Joseph King, one of its founders, wrote Peach's *Times* obituary, praising his work and achievements (King, 1936).

Despite his acceptance of the machine in the context of business, Peach believed it was important that traditional crafts should continue and that they had a value in the community. They offered a valuable way for people to spend the increased leisure time which many enjoyed after World War I, keeping them away from disreputable places such as the cinema or public houses (Nash, 1992). He argued that 'in all classes there is nothing more detrimental to character than badly spent leisure' (Peach & Pick, 1920: 3). He supported and encouraged groups such as the Women's Institute (WI) which promoted craft activities among members. Free from commercial imperative, such organisations could play a valuable role in preserving traditional techniques: an early Dryad catalogue, for example, included a passage expressing regret that country smocks with patterns indicating their county of origin had fallen out of fashion, and praised the WI for encouraging women to take up smocking as an activity (Dryad Handicrafts, [1925a]).

Peach was also committed to raising the profile of and effecting change in art (and crafts) education in schools, which he called 'too much the Cinderella of the educational world' (*The National Society of Art Masters*, 1928: 18). In the early decades of the twentieth century, many progressive educationalists were promoting handicraft as a valuable activity. Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852) himself had argued that the child's learning and development depended on interacting with objects and the material world and recommended occupations such as paper cutting, folding and weaving (Froebel, 1912). Froebelians continued to develop and promote such activities for their value as manual training but also as elements of a child-centred education, where individuality and creativity could be encouraged (e.g. Gawthorpe, [1914]). As Kirkham (1986) has noted, Peach's educational beliefs drew on Froebel and other progressive thinkers. He believed that education should be based on activity because 'we learn by doing' (Peach, n.d.-c) and he noted the positive influence of 'Madame Montessori's and kindergarten methods' (Peach & Pick, 1920: 2).

In addition to the general educational benefits, Peach also had more specific objectives in mind for arts and crafts education, such as the preservation of particular crafts. He was therefore keen that skills and materials linked to 'fundamental crafts' should be introduced, 'not invented methods and invented occupations' (Dryad Handicrafts, [1926]: 1). Crafts with 'definite cultural and educational value' (the examples given were bookbinding and weaving) were the priority for Dryad (*Dryad Quarterly*, 1932a: 23). A further benefit of craft education which tied very directly into Peach's business concerns was that it could foster a love of beauty (Peach, [1926b]). In other words, it could contribute to the good taste that would allow potential customers to appreciate high quality articles such as those that Dryad produced.

Peach's Work with the Design and Industries Association: Influencing Education Policy

The DIA's views about the relationship between art, industry and education were consistent with those of Peach, who was one of its founding members. The association aimed 'at the encouragement of good workmanship based on excellence of design and soundness of material' which would be achieved 'through the intelligent cooperation of designers, workers, manufacturers, distributors and the general public' in the belief that this would improve British products and thus commercial success (Design and Industries Association, 1926: back cover). It believed that the use of machinery was important to industry (Design and Industries Association, 1924: 9) but handwork was a 'national asset', as it developed creative skills and 'an appreciation of fine workmanship' (Design and Industries Association, 1918). Therefore the association had 'the greatest possible belief in the value of handwork in elementary, adolescent and adult education' (ibid.). Promoting craft education in schools was at the heart of the DIA's mission: future consumers needed to develop good taste and the future workforce needed to develop skills and creativity. In addition, the association encouraged an ethos of mutual support and cooperation between business and local art schools (Design and Industries Association, 1915).

The DIA had many ways in which it tried to exert an influence on arts and crafts education in a wide variety of contexts. First, it built up connections with political decision-makers. Peach himself had a personal relationship with Ramsay MacDonald, the Labour leader (1922–1931) and Prime Minister (1924 and 1929–1935) because MacDonald had been the Member of Parliament for Leicester from 1906 to 1918 (Laybourn, 2002). Peach tried to use this to further the interests of the DIA—for example, inviting MacDonald to a sale of work in Leicester and sending him publications (Peach, 1925c; Peach, 1926c). The association also aimed to connect with local education authorities as 'this might yield good results which could be got in no other way' (Design and Industries Association, 1916). Second, the association aimed to educate the general public about good design. One method of doing this was through exhibitions: for example, Peach was involved in an exhibition about design in printing at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London, which then travelled around the country (Kirkham, 1986). Third, in the 1930s, the wireless was also used for propaganda: the DIA organised a series of broadcast discussions called 'Design in Modern Life' (*Manchester Guardian*, 1933a). These programmes were supported by an exhibition in the Art Gallery in Manchester (*Manchester Guardian*, 1933b). Fourth, the association published a quarterly journal: according to Kirkham (1986), this was Peach's idea. Fifth, the DIA could be seen as a parent or sister organisation to bodies that were directly supported by the government: it played a part in the establishment of the British Institute of Industrial Art (BIIA) (*The Times*, 1918), which was a state-sponsored organisation for promoting modern design (Suga, 2003). Peach, together with other DIA members, was a council member of the BIIA and was also part of the committee whose role was to look for suitable artists for exhibitions (ibid.). The successor body to the BIIA, the Council for Art and Industry (CAI), founded in 1933, was led by Frank Pick, DIA president (Grosvenor, 2005).

Over the 1920s and 1930s, Board of Education views shifted very much in the directions advocated by the DIA and thus of Peach himself. The Consultative Committee (Hadow) reports of 1926, 1931 and 1933 all make claims for the important benefits of handicraft and encourage its further development as a subject (Board of Education, 1926, 1931, 1933). Some of the reasons given for this have strong resonances with arguments Peach had been making. The 1931 report on primary education, for example, argued that handwork was important because promoting creativity will allow the child to develop taste which will 'improve the quality of his adult leisure' and also 'tend to keep up the national level in craftsmanship and incidentally assist in the improvement of many products of industry' (p. 98). It also asserted that 'crafts taught should be genuine and representative of a great historic line' (pp. 98–99). The earlier 1926 report into the education of the adolescent posited that pupils should learn that 'articles in common use, such as household furniture, need not necessarily be ugly because they are designed for practical purposes' and argued for the importance for linking craft with 'drawing and applied art' (p. 233). The Handbook of Suggestions for teachers published by the Board in 1927 (sixth impression 1929) similarly argued that handwork had 'an intimate relationship to Art' and that a 'well-made object … may be in itself a thing of beauty' (p. 330).

As noted above, the DIA also attempted to influence local education authorities' approaches to handicraft. London's education authority (LCC) took an interest in promoting the subject which predated the formation of the DIA, as is evidenced by a 1912 conference, which celebrated recent expansions in handicraft provision (London County Council, 1928). Nevertheless, the alignment between the LCC and the DIA in several LCC reports written in the inter-war period is striking enough to suggest some cross-fertilisation, as Kirkham (1986) has observed. The newspaper *The Teachers' World* (1930a) described one such report, claiming that it was 'likely to have a considerable influence'. This report emphasised that the crafts should be 'authentic'; objects should be fit for purpose and that 'the true kinship of handicraft is with art' (p. 798). It was authored by the Committee of Inspectors on Handicraft in Elementary Schools, whose chair was P.B. Ballard. Ballard's *The Cultural Value of Handicraft* was published by Peach in 1914, so he had a direct connection to him and through him to the DIA (Kirkham, 1986).

Although the similarities between the Board of Education, LCC documents and DIA propaganda are striking, it is of course important to reflect on the difficulty of being completely sure of who picked up ideas from where. Indeed, it is sometimes easier to pinpoint the failures of the DIA (and associated bodies) to convince authorities of their message. One such example is a negative response to the 1935 report, produced by the CAI, entitled *Education for the Consumer*, which does not appear to have found favour with the Board of Education, provoking an angry response from the chief inspector of schools, E.G. Savage (1935) who found himself 'in almost complete disagreement' with it. He objected on moral grounds to the idea of schools attempting to shape the taste of children in a way that would benefit particular manufacturers and their commercial interests, demonstrating a fundamental ideological difference with the aims of the CAI and thus the DIA. (London County Council however, believed that the report contained 'many valuable constructive criticisms and suggestions which merit the consideration of those engaged in craft teaching' (London County Council, 1938a: 5)). The most that can be said, perhaps, is that the DIA, in collaboration with like-minded others, was pumping ideas into the ether which were generally having an impact on the national conversation and national policy. Peach was one cog in the machine moving these priorities forward. Through his advocacy and his networking, it is likely that he played his part in bringing about shifts in the approach of the Board of Education, although it would be foolhardy to argue that these changes could not have happened without him.

Peach's Work with Dryad Handicrafts: Influence Through Material Provision

Peach's company, Dryad Handicrafts, sold craft materials to a variety of customers. The resources and materials produced by Dryad were often targeted both at educational settings for children and young people, and at adult community groups (such as the WI), which is evidence of the firm's commitment to life-long learning. Dryad became the official 'Handwork Contractors to many of the leading Education Committees' (Dryad Handicrafts, 1935a: 144). It also sold to directly to schools, encouraging craft teachers to order with them in this way if they wanted to be sure to get the genuine articles (Dryad Handicrafts, [1930]. Through this impact on the material culture of schools, Harry Peach shaped the learning experiences of many children in a significant way. These products filled gaps in provision in schools which, as argued above, were often starved of the necessary resources to meet the needs of arts and crafts education. Dryad also attempted to advocate for crafts (in schools and the wider community) and to influence the form they took and how they were taught. Clearly this was in its commercial interests and yet a genuine philanthropic and educational concern was evident too. Peach was proselytising for causes close to his heart as well as his pocket.

An analysis of advertisements placed in *The Teachers' World* newspaper confirms that Dryad was pioneering and prominent in the area of providing arts and crafts materials for schools. An examination of the first three months of sample years from 1918 to 1930 reveals a rapid growth in the number of firms offering craft materials to educationalists. In 1918, only four such firms were advertising: Higgins' vegetable glue; Venus pencils; Harbutt's plasticine and Dryad. In the same period in 1930, 22 different craft business were represented. Dryad's adverts demonstrated an increasing range of interests: in 1918, the products advertised were for raffia work and basket making and these were aimed most specifically at those working with convalescents. In 1930, the firm offered materials 'for every branch of school handicraft' (*The Teachers' World*, 1930b: 1002). There were specific Dryad advertisements for embroidery, book-binding, raffia and leatherwork.

Dryad also found other ways of promoting its products. One vehicle was through exhibitions. In 1933, for example, the company attended exhibitions organised by, among others, the Middlesex Schools Guild of Arts and Crafts; the National Association of Head Teachers and the Association of Education Committees, together with a publishers' exhibition at the Church of Scotland Assembly Hall in Edinburgh and the Annual Meeting of the Association of Clerks and Stewards at Mental Hospitals in St Albans (*Dryad Quarterly*, 1933a: 24). The company opened a London showroom in 1928 (Kirkham, 1986). This was later moved from Oxford Street to Bloomsbury Street because this was a 'district more amenable to educational pursuits' (*Dryad Quarterly*, 1933b: 24).

Another marketing tool was the production of written materials, most notably the catalogues themselves, which were full of advice and information which went beyond a description of the products. The company also published craft books, and a series of leaflets written by 'skilled workers' who in most cases also had teaching experience (Dryad Handicrafts, [1931a]:1). Dryad claimed that many of the publications had been adopted by local education authorities as approved reading (Dryad Handicrafts, 1935b). There are some examples of Dryad texts in a surviving LCC requisition list from 1938 (London County Council, 1938b). In addition, the firm responded to suggestions from customers that a magazine would be 'useful' (Dryad Handicrafts, [1930]: 214) and began publishing this in 1931. It was edited initially by Elsie Mochrie but Peach himself took over in April 1932 and continued until very nearly the end of his life. In the first edition, Mochrie made the point strongly that the journal should be of use to '*all* its readers as a practical guide to handwork and its application to everyday life' (Mochrie, 1931: 3, emphasis in the original). Thus the journal addressed itself to both the school and community groups and articles and news items reflected this.

Another way that Dryad disseminated information about craft was by the hiring out of collections of objects to provide educative examples. An advert/article (it is telling that the distinction is so blurred) in *Dryad Quarterly* in 1934 stated that by this time the firm had 19 collections which could 'be borrowed per week or fortnight on payment of a small fee' (*Dryad Quarterly*, 1934a: back cover). Similarly, sets of prints were created for purchase: one was bought by Leicester County Education

Authority (ibid.). Films of craftspeople at work were also produced, such as 'Weaving a Waste Paper Basket' featuring Dryad worker and author Charles Crampton, which teachers at the Summer School of the Educational Handwork Association deemed to be a great success (Kaufmann, 1936: 90). The firm also offered teaching sessions. Instructors could be sent to schools and Women's Institutes to give sessions on crafts including raffia, weaving, embroidery and leatherwork (Dryad Handicrafts, [1923]) and lessons were also organised on the company premises, where students could benefit from seeing the workshops and also the folk art collection (Ellis, [1925]). Informal advice was given for free (Dryad Handicrafts, 1934).

Dryad was not the first to use customer service techniques of this nature: Harbutt's Plasticine, for example, were already producing a monthly magazine and publishing books that encouraged educators to buy its products in 1919 (*The Teachers' World*, 1919). Nonetheless, Dryad's prominence and success meant that it surely was the model that at least some other businesses had in mind when they too adopted this approach. *The Teachers' World* provides evidence that other firms were indeed using these marketing techniques: to give just two examples, in 1927, the leatherwork company George and Co was promoting craft books alongside its material products (*The Teachers' World*, 1927) and in 1930, the pewter firm Calipe, Dettmer and Co claimed that it provided an expert who would 'be pleased to demonstrate the work to any Teacher' (*The Teachers' World*, 1930c: 740).

Dryad's product range and written materials reflected Harry Peach's beliefs about what craft education was and why it mattered. One touchstone was an emphasis on the importance of promoting crafts with a cultural value—crafts taught to children should have historical roots and a clear line of development to either leisure or a trade in adulthood (*Dryad Quarterly*, 1932a). The firm asserted, as did the DIA, that a crafted object should be valued for following 'the old tradition of fitness for its particular purpose' rather than 'arty-craftiness' (*Dryad Quarterly*, 1932b: 3). Dryad's approach to teaching methods sat broadly speaking in the progressive tradition. In a way that chimed closely with Froebelian teachers, the firm claimed that individual creativity rather than the ability to follow precise instructions was what was most valuable: 'in the

Dryad publications the policy has been to give examples of straightforward design and to encourage individual effort rather than merely provide examples to be copied' (Dryad Handicrafts, 1934: iii). Some of the various authors writing for the publications clearly followed this line. For example, Marion Blenkinsop (1933) said that with young children 'technical excellence… should not be stressed unduly or it may hamper their freedom of expression' and, although she gave specific details of how to make paper figures, she said that children should use them to create their own themes and stories (p. 4). Other writers did, however, simply provide patterns to be copied (e.g., Dryad Handicrafts, [1921]). It is only fair to point out, however, that many progressive educators, and indeed Froebel himself, likewise struggled over the correct balance between freedom and guidance (Liebschner, 2001).

Competitors emerged in time: as the foreword to the 1931 catalogue stated: 'imitators of Dryad are numerous … the pioneer and originator of new methods and new ways may be discouraged by copyists and imitators who live by exploiting the efforts of others' (Dryad Handicrafts, [1931b]: 2). Therefore Dryad needed to create new products and services with unique selling points and in this way it continued to shape what was available and what children (and others) could make and create. One example of an innovative product that had the potential to affect practice in schools was a 'hand pat', invented by Mr M.A. Kent of Leicester. This was an apparatus that combined woodwork tools and which could be used easily on schools desks: 'it is especially useful for schools where no special accommodation is made for the teaching of woodwork' (Dryad Handicrafts, 1925a: 111). Another feature which Dryad claimed as an important innovation was its use of the Ostwald Colour theory, described in a Dryad publication by J.A.V. Judson (1935). The use of this theory enabled the firm to produce standardised colours across a wide range of materials, including fabrics, papers and paints. It argued that this allowed for greater unity between art and craft: 'schemes which are planned with the aid of paper in the art class may be put into actual practice in the handwork lesson' (*Dryad Quarterly*, 1934b: 23). Gordon Sutton (1967) has claimed that Ostwald's colour scheme 'affected the character of art in schools to an astonishing degree' as it gave children the opportunity to use colours of 'unknown brilliance' which became seen as a distinguishing feature of child art (p. 271).

Above all, though, Dryad saw its distinctive contribution in the fact that it was a supplier of good quality material. This was important for the standard of craft education in school: 'you must have good materials to do good work' (Dryad Handicrafts, [1925a]: 7). Elsie Mochrie argued in the Dryad book *Raffia Work* (1926) that working with 'harsh, stringy Raffia' was firstly wasteful and secondly led to a poor result: 'It is therefore essential that Raffia should be purchased from a reliable firm who not only supply the material but use it their own workshops' (p. 6).

What is evident here is some of the inherent tension between Dryad as a business needing to turn a profit and Dryad as an almost philanthropic organisation promoting crafts for the benefit for all. Throughout the publications, for example, there is a precarious balance between offering sound advice about what to buy and advertising specifically Dryad products. General articles about particular crafts led to particular suggestions about which Dryad materials might be needed. For example, an article in the magazine about the use of gummed shapes referred the reader to a corresponding leaflet available for purchase and explained that a sample of the shapes could be bought for 9d (pence) (*Dryad Quarterly*, 1931a). The firm's insistence that purchasers should always use high-quality materials was a particular source of blurring between promoting good practice and selling its own products. It is easy to see a dual motive in a claim, such as that made in Dryad Worker Charles Crampton's book, that 'there is always plenty of poor material offered at low prices to tempt the unwary. The good craftsman will gladly pay double the price for good quality cane' (1941: viii (first published in 1924)). Sometimes, Dryad did indeed make suggestions on how economies could be achieved: for example, a leaflet about rug-making recommends a needle rather than a hook because less wool is needed for the technique (Dryad Handicrafts, [1925b]) and the firm was prepared to quote for 'second quality' if necessary (Dryad Handicrafts, [1925a]: 16). Similarly, crafts such as making paper lampshades were recommended on the basis that they were cheap (Dryad Handicrafts, [1929]). However, in a climate where schools' budgets were severely limited, such suggestions could also make good business sense.

Peach wryly commented on the potential dilemma here when describing a visit he paid to a school in Birmingham which was beginning to teach weaving:

> It all has to be done on the minimum of expense, as beyond a few heddle stiles, reeds and bits of wood as rollers they are allowed no apparatus. There are more ways than one up the hill of truth and here we found there were more ways than wire heddles for getting good results with weaving (The Dryad Sales Department probably will not approve of this statement). (Peach, 1934: 21)

However, there is no evidence that this thought caused any long-lasting crisis of conscience or change in Peach's behaviour.

Conclusion

Harry Peach had no direct experience of working in schools or in educational administration and in that sense may be an unusual subject for a book about pioneers in arts education. He was chosen as a vehicle to explore two distinct modes of influence on policy and practice. First, he was a campaigner from the world of business who tried through political lobbying to effect changes in schools and colleges. His success is hard to capture with any certainty. In the period when he was active, Board of Education and LCC policy recommendations moved in directions which he approved, most particularly in the closer union of art, craft and design, but he was just one voice among many advocating for these shifts. Second, he was in the right place at the right time to exploit a growing market within educational settings for particular material products. The specific affordances of these materials shaped what children and teachers could achieve. His Dryad company claimed that it was a pioneer of new materials and that its products were widely imitated (thus forcing the business to continue to innovate) (Dryad Handicrafts [1931b]). It claimed that 'the rapid development of craftwork in schools is due in no small measure to our constant insistence upon quality and design and our effort to provide only first-rate goods' (Dryad Handicrafts, 1938: iii). Sources in the educational press confirm the importance of the company: an article in *The Schoolmistress* described it as ‘one of the pioneers of the recent Handicraft revival’ (*Dryad Quarterly*, 1933c: 23). This form of influence feels comparatively concrete and graspable.

Peach’s story raises questions about business and its role in education. It was to the advantage of his own manufacturing concerns (the furniture and metal work companies) to promote craft education, encouraging creativity, design skills and ‘good’ public taste in the workforce and the consumer. Chief Inspector Savage, as discussed above, had some concerns about allowing the school curriculum to be shaped by the needs of industrialists, and others may have shared these. David Thistlewood (1998: 148) has claimed that in the 1950s and 1960s, when child-centred, progressive values became dominant, ‘industrial and commercial values’ lost their influence in arts education. However, the perceived link between teaching the arts and potential financial benefits to the country has not disappeared in all forms: a recent UK government White Paper makes clear that a key justification for the promotion of cultural activities in school is the contribution the arts make to the economy and the opportunities they provide for young people to enter into ‘careers in the cultural and creative sectors and elsewhere’ (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2016: 21).

In relation to Dryad Handicrafts, Peach’s commercial incentive to promote craft education in schools and the wider community is even clearer and more direct. Companies with products to sell to schools must argue that these are educationally beneficial. A modern day parallel to Peach is government literacy advisor Ruth Miskin who sells training packages which dovetail with her self-penned resources promoting a particular approach to teaching reading and writing (Ruth Miskin Ltd, 2019a). Miskin claims to be ‘passionate’ about teaching children to read and argues, naturally, that her approach and products are the best way to do it (Ruth Miskin Ltd, 2019b). As Catherine Gidney (2019) has argued, using an example of companies selling computers to schools in Canada in the 1980s, it is easy for teachers to be beguiled into automatically associating new products and technologies with progressive teaching, allowing companies to create, foster and commercially exploit a ‘perceived need’ (p. 63).

Harry Peach's business interests and his philanthropic interests fitted together extremely neatly. Although he stood to gain financially from an increased interest in craft education in schools and the wider community, there can be no doubting the sincerity of his belief that handicrafts were of genuine benefit to individuals and their promotion would preserve a valuable cultural heritage. His story demonstrates that it is possible for business people to be keen to sell their products without being cynical and exploitative, and that their interventions into education might yield positive results. Nonetheless, it seems reasonable to suggest that educationalists should keep their critical faculties alert and continue to interrogate the underpinning values of what is being advocated and sold, keeping the best interests of children in mind at all times.

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