

Community Involvement in the Teaching and Learning of Arts and Culture in Primary Schools: Case Study of Four Primary Schools in Botswana

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Abstract

Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) programme was introduced in Botswana primary schools to help children acquire knowledge and understanding of different cultures among others. Despite its value, arts education studies in Botswana, report that, this area is not given serious attention in primary schools due to teachers' limited knowledge and skills in the area. It is under this context that this study investigated the extent to which Botswana communities were involved in the teaching and learning of the arts and culture in schools to strengthen arts education. The study further came up with possible mechanisms which could be adopted by schools to enhance the teaching and learning of arts and culture. Qualitative case study approach was adopted whereby; lesson observation and in-depth interviews with the teachers and school managers in the Southern and Northern districts of Botswana were used. Participants were selected through purposive and simple random sampling to avoid biasness. Relevant documents such as education policies were also examined to find out the extent to which they promoted arts and culture education. The findings revealed that teachers did not involve the community in arts and culture education and they did not effectively integrate culture in their teaching of the arts since they were not familiar with the culture of the communities they served. The results further showed that art and craft and design and technology objectives did not suggest culture as part of the content therefore, teachers did not recognise it as important in children's education in those areas.

Keywords: Creative and Performing Arts, Arts and culture, community involvement, integration, artists in residence schemes.

Introduction

Community involvement according to Kumar (2010) is rated second in the world as the most significant discussion in children's education. The involvement of the community in children's education is dire to effective schooling. Thus, the Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE, 1994) suggests that "Parents Teacher Association (PTA) should provide an effective forum for the school to keep in close contact with the communities they serve and therefore ensure that parents take an interest in, and contribute to the education of their children" (p. 50). Botswana is a country with many fascinating cultures, due to the ethnic

diversity of the country. It has a rich history and a unique culture because of its numerous ethnic groups; and hence the Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) syllabus for Botswana primary schools through its attainment targets; advocates for the recognition of culture in the teaching of the arts disciplines. CAPA subject include music, art and craft, physical education, design and technology, home economics, entrepreneurship, dance and drama. Suggesting the integration of culture in these disciplines could have posed a big challenge for teachers who could be having limited knowledge and experience in some of these subjects and children's cultures. Thus, it is important for schools to recognize the primary role of the community and engage them in academic school activities such as the teaching of arts and culture.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine community involvement in the implementation of the Creative and Performing Arts curriculum; with special reference to the teaching and learning of arts and culture in primary schools; and opportunities for their involvement in the children's academic work.

Research Questions

The study sought to address the following research questions:

1. To what extent do teachers' CAPA teaching plans or preparations for arts and culture include the community's input?
2. To what extent are communities involved in the classroom teaching of arts and culture in primary schools?
3. To what extent are communities engaged in arts and culture activities and/or projects in primary schools?

Literature Review

"Historically, teachers and schools have been expected to be the exclusive experts at 'delivering' education to children. They are supposed to be all knowing, make no mistakes, be completely organized, have everything 'under control' and have all students 'on task'" (Amatea (2009, p. 8). Sharing the same sentiment, Molefe, Pansiri and Weeks (2009) argue that parents tend to regard teachers as a source of all knowledge. This indicates that in the past, the communities were not involved in the teaching and learning of their children. Presently, research has indicated that community-school relationships are of great significance in the education system. Parents need to participate actively in school programmes if their children are to achieve the best and develop their potential (Gelsthorpe and Burnham, 2003).

As aforementioned, the Botswana primary school Creative and Performing Arts is a discipline which encompasses art and craft, music, design and technology, physical education, home economics, entrepreneurship, dance and drama components. It emphasizes among others children's awareness of culture, practical and problem solving skills, critical thinking, self-reliance, creativity and the awareness of emerging issues. Thus, school-community relationships can help children gain these knowledge and skills. Learners are part of the society therefore; it is important that they learn about their own arts and cultures so as to appreciate it. Presently, arts education reports in Botswana have observed that the discipline is not been given the importance it deserves in the developmental of Batswana children (Curriculum Development and Evaluation Unit, 2004/2005, Phibion 2006 and Phuthego, 2008). This could be due to limited or no involvement of elderly members of the communities in the teaching and learning of their children. Botswana Vision 2016 document

notes that “there is a challenge to be more innovative in development programmes to define the significant role for elderly population. The elderly should be perceived as they truly are—a human resource of senior citizens who are the custodians of Botswana’s cultural wealth, values, and wisdom as well as historical knowledge” p. 19. The education in Botswana does advocate the importance of cultural values and norms in developing a holistic individual who is well rounded.

“The arts are a subdivision of culture, composed of many creative endeavours and disciplines” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/retrieved> 7 February, 2013). They encompass visual arts, performing arts, music, theatre, dance and film among others. Before the introduction of Western education in African countries especially in Botswana, communities communicated their cultural values through various arts such as drama, dance, music, visual arts and design. According to Chanda (1993) African countries used to integrate and celebrate different aspects of life through the arts. Mannathoko (2009) also shares his experience on the communities’ contribution on the arts education by stating that elderly men in the African communities like Botswana used to pass craft skills such as wood carving to younger boys and taught them male morals through myths presentations, whilst elderly women passed skills such as; knitting, weaving, pottery and huts designs to girls including woman morals through folktales and myths presentations.. The introduction of contemporary arts which was brought by the Western countries drifted the responsibilities of African elders in the community from passing traditional and cultural values through arts to the ‘classroom teachers’. The alienation of the community elders in the participation of passing cultural information to their children through the arts seem to have had an impact on young people who now have limited knowledge and appreciation of their culture and that of others.

According to Chanda (1993) the arts were highly valued by the African communities including Botswana as knowledgeable people in the society used various traditional arts media to communicate their dreams, ambitions, feelings, successes, failures and concerns through arts disciplines. Presently, the Botswana education system seem not to value the arts as it is not among the examinable subjects in primary schools and given less time in the time-tables whilst in secondary, it is taught as an optional subject (Dichaba, 2002 and Mpowe, 2002). This could be a result of lack of arts knowledge and skills by most of the educationists in the country. Lack of knowledgeable community members’ involvement in the teaching and learning of the arts could have contributed to the late introduction of the arts disciplines in schools as teachers had limited knowledge and skills in the area. Cleave and Sharp (1986) advise teachers to facilitate liaison between school and community members acting as links between the school and local and national bodies, involving the community and governors in arts activities and making use of natural resources. Well-managed schemes can provide opportunities for further work and development with the communities or groups concerned.

Research Methodology

A case study method was adopted within the qualitative research design. This strategy was opted for, because of a number of reasons. It allows the researcher to interact with the subject of the research and therefore, enables the researcher to focus on complexities and qualities in educational action and interaction that might be difficult to attain through the use of standardized measures (Kumar, 1999). It involves explanation and understanding of events as both the interviewer and the interviewee has opportunities to explain and understand given statements or content. The approach may give deeper insights of the events unlike the quantitative methods, which give objective questions and answers (Yin, 2003). The qualitative domain was used in this study to explore the extent to which communities were involved in the planning and teaching of arts and culture within the

Creative and Performing arts syllabus. Sixteen class-teachers were interviewed and among them eight were observed teaching CAPA. Eight school managers were also interviewed. The interviews were recorded and the data transcribed. In addition, a sample of the teaching notes for case study teachers were examined to find out the extent to which the community involvement was considered at the planning stage of CAPA lessons. Government documents including education policies were also examined as they inform the curriculum development and evaluation unit on the country's requirements in education sector. The retrieved and recorded data was analysed across the four schools in terms of responses to interviews and first-hand classroom observation of CAPA lessons.

Population

The population of the study was sixteen primary school class-teachers and eight internal school administrators making a total of twenty-four participants. According to Creswell (2003) in qualitative approach, smaller but focused samples are needed rather than large samples to acquire thick descriptive data. Purposive and simple random sampling were used to identify the eligible participants. Respondents were from the South Central and Central North regions of Botswana. The South Central Region was opted for, as it is the biggest in both size and the number of primary schools; therefore it provided the opportunity to choose from a variety of case study schools. The Central North Region was chosen because it had a variety of ethnic groups than other parts of the country and hence had remote, remotest, sub-urban, and urban locations which was representative of all characteristics and variables of the country as a whole (Mannathoko, 2009).

Findings and Discussions

The study involved twenty-four participants, seventeen females and seven males who were primary school teachers and internal school management team. None of the case study teachers including the school management had specialised in any of the CAPA disciplines. Six (25%) of them said they did some of these areas as generalists (non-specialists). The main findings of the study will be presented, analysed and discussed in themes derived from the research questions.

Community's Input in the Planning/Preparation for CAPA Lessons

Having read and discussed the scheme of work and lesson plans with the sixteen class teachers, I observed that there was no evidence of community involvement in the teaching of the CAPA curriculum disciplines during the planning stage of lessons either when scheming or making weekly lesson plans. There were no columns to note content to be taught, lesson activities and teaching aids in the ready-made scheme of work format. Teachers copied the topics and objectives from the CAPA syllabus as they were into their scheme books. In contrast, the lesson preparation ready-made format had columns for content and activities to be taught; but none of the teachers' notes had shown evidence of having the community involved in the arts activities or projects. Lesson notes included; definition of concepts, techniques and processes of creating products and materials used, for example, in a 'painting' topic the lesson notes included; definition of painting concepts, techniques, media and painting activity which was 'painting natural/made objects'.

However, during the interviews, all the case study teachers shared the same sentiment that resource people should be involved from the initial stages of planning. Extracts from the participants' views included: planning should show who will present the lesson and how, should state who will give activities, should indicate the sources of information, should incorporate the resources' activities such as teachers' and learners' activities, resource people should plan the lesson, the teacher should plan with the resource person. When

asked why their plans did not show any evidence of community involvement, they concurred that they did not include the community at their planning stage since they were not going to engage them in any of their arts activities.

Generally, it seems common that teachers undermine parents' pedagogical content knowledge and skills in all the curriculum disciplines. They view the community senior citizens or elders especially in villages and remote areas to be having limited knowledge of what children learn in schools therefore; do not consider inviting them to participate in teaching any subject or topic (Mannathoko and Major, 2011). Botswana is rich with senior citizens who are the custodians of Botswana's cultural wealth, values, and wisdom as well as historical knowledge; who could share cultural issues with young children in schools. All the arts disciplines have history. We cannot separate the arts from culture. The arts help pupils to understand cultural change and differences because they are characteristic expressions of any culture and evolve as part of it (Chanda, 1993). Children need to learn different cultures and both traditional and contemporary arts in order to understand them chronologically and hence appreciate the arts of different times (Dash, 2007).

Community Involvement in Arts & Culture Classroom Teaching & Learning

The results from both the classroom observation and the interview responses indicated that none of the teachers had ever involved the community in the planning, teaching and learning of the arts (CAPA disciplines) although most of them had limited knowledge and skills in these areas. Reasons for not involving the community included the following; most of the community members have limited knowledge of what children learn in schools therefore; we cannot involve them in arts projects (mostly remote area dwellers), parents in towns are working therefore, don't have time, parents are not interested in their children's school work, they were not trained to teach, not everyone can teach, CAPA syllabus is very difficult for teachers therefore, parents cannot handle it; we don't teach culture but arts content and techniques of producing products and parents can't cope unless if they are arts educationists; parents never come when invited to school meetings except for independence celebrations; they will tell us they are not paid for that; always accuse teachers for producing poor results and will be very bitter if you can ask them to teach; what do they know about school curriculum? they can confuse children; we have never thought of doing it, but I think it is a good idea; parents here don't co-operate, they always blame teachers on their children's failure without assistance; children cannot take parents serious because they know they are not teachers and they can fail; can confuse children as they don't have the teaching skills; can claim to have contributed to good results when children pass while they only came for one topic; primary school examinations base questions on curriculum objectives therefore; we cannot invite parents for something which will not benefit pupils in their tests; CAPA disciplines are not examined; we only seek for assistance in children's behaviour or accompanying students in educational trips. These responses indicate that most case study teachers did not recognise the community as resourceful in primary school curriculum.

I posed a question on culture to find out how teachers integrated culture when teaching the arts, since their classes were of multicultural groups and these are extracts from participants' responses: we focus on cultures we are comfortable with; we ask children to come up with traditional songs and games without seeking for their origins; we only integrate culture where objectives dictate that aspect for example; 'traditional games' for physical education and 'traditional music and dances' for music subject, art and craft and design and technology objectives are silent about culture, therefore, we don't have any challenge on what to teach and we don't infuse it when teaching these disciplines. This indicates that since art and craft and design and technology curriculum objectives were silent about culture, teachers did not integrate it in their teaching therefore, they did not have any

challenge leading to inviting the community for assistance. However, although art and craft and design and technology disciplines did not emphasise culture in their objectives, the CAPA syllabus attainment targets suggest that students should be exposed to cultural issues when teaching the arts (music, physical education, art and craft and design and technology). For example; the Lower primary syllabus under the attainment target 'Attitudes', states that "at the end of the lower primary education, learners should have developed awareness and appreciation of the value of culture and tradition" (p. iii). One would expect teachers to have adopted this recommendation and integrate culture in the art and craft and design and technology activities where parents of different cultures in the community could be invited to present arts and culture lessons.

If involved, the community can contribute insights and knowledge that could complement teachers' professional knowledge and skills in the field of arts disciplines & hence influences the developmental and educational progress of children (Gelsthorpe and Burnham, 2003). "An education which sets out to help people make sense of and contribute to the world in which they live, must be concerned with helping them to investigate their own values and those of others. Artists are characteristically concerned with such things: with the evaluation and re-evaluation of the world around them" (Robinson, 1982, p. 12). In multi-cultural society such as African countries, schools have important responsibilities with regard to cultural education. Visual arts are important here in the sense that both the practice and the discriminating enjoyment of visual arts involve observation, analysis and evaluation of personal and social experience. Secondly, the arts are integral parts of the social culture and are among those things pupils need to experience in coming to understand it. Education is concerned with the right raising of pupils and the provision for them of a good future; and this involves moral values which the community elders could incorporate in their arts and culture lessons.

One of the critical issues for schools could be how to involve the community in the schooling process. Although parents in rural areas are often marginalized in schools due to race, class, and cultural differences, many school personnel suspect them of not caring about their children's education. Various Western countries' articles highlight how small groups of educators and parents could actively work together in school arts projects focusing on their own cultures. Teachers' preparation of programmes should explore the power of a culturally relevant approach to working with the community for the benefit of their children. Nurturing partnerships between schools and the community in the arts subjects would help pupils develop practical arts skills and promote their knowledge and understanding of various cultures as advocated by the Botswana Creative and Performing Arts syllabus. Some studies in the arts disciplines have proven that effective schools have high levels of parental and/or community involvement in that area. To foster learning in Creative and Performing Arts subjects, schools and community members should share responsibilities in educating their children. Schools need to recognize knowledge and skills that the community can offer in the arts disciplines and establish arts programmes which can engage the community in Creative and Performing Arts disciplines.

Community Engagement in School Arts and Culture Activities and/or Projects outside the Classroom

Data collected from both the class-teachers and school managers through semi-structured interview revealed that the community especially, parents for children attending in individual schools were actively involved in social activities such as raising funds for sports and music, price giving day and other school developments. There was no evidence of teachers involving communities on issues related to pedagogy such as 'arts and culture projects'. Reasons given by respondents for not engaging the community in arts and culture school activities outside the classroom included the following: we don't involve parents in

arts projects because they are also busy at work; we give children homework to seek information from the community; we never have arts activities outside the classroom, no one cares about the CAPA disciplines because they are not examined; there is no time for outside classroom activities; these days we work eight hours only; we involve them in social activities such as raising funds for sports and music; price giving day and other school developments; we only have art projects for trade-fares and 'Moso' competitions but we don't involve anyone because we want children to show their individual skills without assistance.

This seems to be a common practice in most of the schools globally as Reali and Tancred (2003) shares their experience that Brazilian communities were also "involved in school activities such as; fund raising and controlling their children's behavior" (p. 7). As aforementioned, teachers seem to undermine communities' pedagogical content knowledge. Teachers mostly in remote areas indicated that most of the community members had limited knowledge of what children learnt in schools including the arts therefore; they could not invite them to participate in the teaching of any of the arts topics or engage them in any arts project except seeking for assistance in children's behaviour or accompanying students in educational trips. "They value 'book knowledge' than 'common sense knowledge'. For teachers, not going to school or not having teaching certificate indicated that parents were not knowledgeable of the school curriculum" (Mannathoko and Major, 2011).

It is of great importance that teachers should consult or involve communities in curriculum implementation especially where they need assistance. Most of the arts topics are related to culture therefore, communities are more knowledgeable in their culture and could transfer arts and culture knowledge and skills to their children. Mannathoko and Major (2012) suggest that teachers should adopt the effective models in the teaching and learning of the arts called 'Artist in Residence Scheme' or 'Artists in Education Schemes' which have been recommended by Lancaster (1990) and Robinson (1982). An arrangement is made for interested community members to visit schools to work with children on an agreed theme and period, for example, twice or thrice a month. This does not only deepen learners' understanding of local artists' work but also brings them into direct contact with local artists for joint working projects and hence gain knowledge of various cultures. This is still viewed as an effective approach in countries like Britain and Australia as locals are involved in the creative partnership schemes with schools whereby; children and teachers work on art projects with local artists (Robinson (2005). The scheme should include the community members and local traditional groups to transfer their cultural knowledge and skills in areas such as crafts, textiles, sculpture, traditional music and dances and drama.

Community elders could share knowledge and skills through folktales and myths presentations which could motivate children's art then later, introduce pupils to traditional media, techniques and methods of painting, printing, etc. We should be aware that there is no proper understanding of the contemporary world and the individuals' society without having some knowledge and understanding of the roots of traditions and the institutions which we inherit. Everyone's culture stands on the shoulders of all that has gone before. Thus, we can only appreciate the meaning of the present and grasp the possibilities of the future by hooking onto the frameworks of the past. Equipped with this knowledge and skills, children will be able to look deeply into the artworks they see and critically view it to obtain some purchase on the meaning of the piece of work and hence consider the art elements and principles of design when creating their work; talking about their work and that of others. By so doing, they will learn to appreciate other people's artwork as they will be more able to interpret and obtain some meaning from it. According to the National Curriculum for England (1999) pupils who demonstrate such skills are able to engage in an enquiry method in visual arts projects; which offers an important strategy in teaching and learning as it involves both the teacher and pupils with interesting and worthwhile issues of evaluation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Both the classroom observation and the interview results revealed that there were no school-community relationships in pedagogy that existed in the case study schools although the country is rich with senior citizens who could share cultural values and arts skills with young children in schools. Schools did not effectively engage parents in the pedagogy aspect of the arts. Communities were only involved in non-academic activities although both class-teachers and school managers had limited knowledge, understanding and skills in some of the arts topics. Literature has shown that the arts are integral parts of the social culture. It further reveals the importance of exposing children to the diverse roles and functions of the arts in contemporary life, and in different times and cultures and the importance of involving the community in the teaching and learning of arts and culture. Education is concerned with the right raising of pupils and the provision for them of a good future and this involves moral values.

Moreover, it is significant to see the arts not as separate and different from children's other experiences inside and outside schools, but as emerging from them. Thus, schools should view the community as sources of information especially, in arts and culture education and involve them starting from the planning stage of their lessons. We form human communities and cultures by making art through stories and songs, drama and dance, painting and sculpture, architecture and design which the community elders had been practising in the past and could share the knowledge and skills with teachers and children. This therefore calls for:

- the teacher education institutions to infuse the community-school relationships education in their curriculum in order to prepare teacher-trainees on the techniques of involving the communities in arts and culture teaching and learning.
- education centre officers to sensitize both the teachers and the communities about the importance of community-school relationships in the learning of the child and the community's role in children's arts and culture learning.
- Schools and education teacher-training institutions should adopt models such as 'Artist in Residence Scheme' recommended by Lancaster (1970), Robinson (2005) and Deventer and Kruger (2003) whereby the community will be engaged in the arts and culture teaching and arts projects.

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