

Teachers' perceptions about the value of Arts at the Lower Primary Phase in Namibia

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' perceptions about the value of Arts at the Lower Primary Phase in Namibia. The researchers adopted an interpretive orientation for this qualitative case study. The selected research design and approach helped the researchers to shape the success of this study. Placing this study within the interpretive orientation facilitated the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data in a manner that helped the researchers to address the research objective in a meaningful way. In this study, the researchers used four methods to collect the data. These included interviews, focus group interviews, classroom observations and document analysis. The findings in the study revealed teachers' awareness of the role and value of Arts education at the Lower Primary Phase to be a particularly positive aspect of the study. The common and important value cited by these teachers during interviews was that Arts at the Lower Primary Phase stimulates the learner's imagination and creativity.

Keywords: Arts; Perceptions; Value; Lower Primary Phase

Introduction

Arts or Arts in Culture is defined as an interdisciplinary subject combining culture with visual and performing arts and crafts (Ministry of Education, 2006). This is simply indicated as "Arts" (Grade 1-4 and 5-7), while the subject at Junior Secondary Phase is "Arts in Culture" (Grade 8-10). All these phases include the disciplines of literature (the art of writing), visual arts and design (the arts of painting, sculpture, photography, video, crafts, architecture, landscape and interior design, product and graphic design), performing arts (dance, music, opera and musical theatre, drama), and media arts (film, television, radio) (Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture, 2001a). These Arts components are viewed as essential areas of learning for the all-round development of the learner and the development of culture in Namibia, and therefore the content of learning should mirror the arts in society (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, 2001b).

There are essentially two contentions pertaining to the importance of Arts as a subject in formal education. The first includes:

- The enjoyment that comes from experiences in the Arts to the development of learners as social beings. Huntley's (1992) argument that; "Art is something that everyone can enjoy", emphasizes its universal appeal (p. 1).

The Arts are seen to foster group expression, critical and innovative thinking and to provide participatory and experiential learning opportunities across the school curriculum (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2001). The Arts are viewed as able to develop creativity, a capacity that is not only an aspect of arts practice, but one that forms the performance of any task in any field requiring originality, innovation, imagination and improvisation (UNESCO, 2001). In addition, learning in the Arts benefits students and the learning process as it engages students' interest and enthusiasm, and encourages students to actively participate in the classroom (UNESCO, 2005).

The second contention focus on the social and psychological development of the learner.

- According to Jameson as cited in Jenkins (1986, p. 14), "Art is language first". This means that "for children, art can be a means whereby they reconstruct and assimilate the experiences they have had" (Barnes, 1987, p. 1). What might have been an "incomplete inner vision" can become clear enough for them to give meaning to what they encounter and can help to build up concepts of themselves in relation to the world (Barnes, 1987, p. 1). "Arts promote the balanced growth, socialisation and development of the creative ability of a learner" (Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 119). This means that the subject area is a means through which the process of unfolding, stimulating and capturing the learner's imagination and self-expression takes place. Through this subject area it is claimed that learners explore their inner selves, their environment, and make discoveries about communication through arts media (Ministry of Education, 2005).

Research objective

To investigate teachers' perceptions about the value of Arts at the Lower Primary Phase in Namibia

Literature review

The value of arts in the lower primary education: The international perspective

The incorporation of the arts into school curricula, especially in the Lower Primary Phase continues to have considerable support and a variety of claims are made to support its role in schools. These vary from the enjoyment that comes from experiences in the Arts to the development of learners as social beings. Huntley's argument that; "Art is something that everyone can enjoy", emphasizes its universal appeal (1992, p. 1). According to Jenkins, (1986, p. 24) "much joy comes from an awareness and aliveness to beauty, in every object as well as in art forms". He further states that "and what joy and delight can accompany creating something that never existed before! This can offer real meaning to existence" (Jenkins, 1986, p. 24). Huntley (1992, p. 1) further states that Arts is "not for the rich few, and it's not for especially talented people but it is for everyone".

The second claim focuses more directly on the complementary role the Arts play in the cognitive development of the child. The Arts are seen to "foster group expression, critical and innovative thinking and to provide participatory and experiential learning opportunities across the school curriculum" UNESCO, 2001, p. 9). Furthermore, the Arts are viewed as being able to "develop creativity, a capacity that is not only an aspect of arts practice, but one that forms the performance of any task in any field requiring originality, innovation, imagination and improvisation" (UNESCO, 2001, p. 9-10). In addition, learning in the arts is viewed as beneficial for students and the learning process as it engages students' interest and enthusiasm, and encourages students to actively participate in the classroom (UNESCO, 2005).

The third set of claims focuses on the social and psychological development of the learner. According to Jameson as cited in Jenkins (1986, p. 14), "Art is language first". This means that "for children, Art can be a means whereby they reconstruct and assimilate the experiences they have had" (Barnes, 1987, p. 1). Their verbal ability may be limited, but they can express sophisticated concepts and complex ideas through drawing and painting (Jenkins, 1986). What might have been an "incomplete inner vision" can become clear enough for them to give

meaning to what they encounter and can help to build up concepts of themselves in relation to the world (Barnes, 1987, p. 1).

Fourth, the Arts also have a historic role in the struggle for social justice, equity, democratic values and human rights, in the struggle of historically marginalized communities and in the affirmation of heritage and history (UNESCO, 2001, p. 9). In these times of globalization, the Arts promote the recognition and value of different cultures and diversity. The contribution of the Arts to understanding across cultures is seen as vital in the promotion of personal and national identities. The claim that they help us rediscover a cultural heritage that has sometimes been forgotten and contribute to the establishment of a common culture and help reinforce the dynamics of social integration, based upon the interdependency and mutual benefits of artistic expression (UNESCO, 2001, p. 9).

The fifth set of claims focuses on the emotional value that Arts provides to the learners. According to Jenkins (1986, p. 15) "Art is a great safety valve to drain off tensions and feelings that might pile up and become destructive to oneself and others". This means that if a learner studies Arts, they can develop an attitude of being able to turn these destructive feelings and tensions into creative channels that will help and protect them from emotional overload (Jenkins, 1986).

Finally, Arts is important to the children at the Lower Primary Phase because it helps to induct them into their oral tradition, for example stories, songs, simple poems, riddles, nursery rhymes and games (UNESCO, 2001).

The researchers construct the analysis of teachers' perceptions about the value of Arts at the Lower Primary Phase on the points mentioned above.

The national perspective

The education policy documents such as *Toward Education for All*, the *Arts Policy*, the *Curriculum Guide for the Lower Primary Phase: Grades 1-4* (Syllabus for Lower Primary Phase) and the *Curriculum for Basic Education* reflect the national perspective on the value of Arts in the Lower Primary Phase.

Education policy "Toward Education for All"

The education policy document (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993) states that our children learn about family and community and more generally about how societies are organized in school. It states that in order to respect and deepen our cultural awareness the curriculum needs to incorporate a sense family and community in learning and teaching (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993). The policy continues to state that our education system should draw on the practices of all of our people as models. Our curriculum and material should include images that reflect the diversity of our country, and that our teaching should, at every level respect not only the customs but also the ideas and the ways of knowing of everyone (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993). It further says that our cultural challenge in Namibia is to recognize the values embedded in our everyday activities and to make sure they become everyone's values (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993). The education policy document (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993) argues that in order to enrich our national culture requires that we all take pride in our diversity and that we all need to honour all our ancestors, restoring the voice to those whom our recent history has silenced.

Arts policy

According to the Arts policy document (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, 2001b) Arts and Culture must be part of all levels of education ensuring that values and ethics are taught. The policy document argues that aesthetics should not be confined to the elite unless we wish to create conditions for vandalism and other forces of alienation in our society (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, 2001b). The document states that the Department of Formal Education and the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) should ensure that all primary and secondary schools implement the compulsory arts subject as stipulated in the curriculum for basic education. It goes on to suggest that advisory services should be provided and subject panels should be requested to investigate the feasibility of making Arts and Culture promotional subjects (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, 2001b). The Arts policy continues to states that competitions between schools, such as in drama and other arts, should be encouraged, especially with support from the private sector and that those learners with special talents should be provided with opportunities for the further development of their skills,

through a variety of strategies (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, 2001b). Provision should be made for the employment of specialized arts teachers at schools in each region, to support the implementation of arts subjects in the curriculum (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, 2001b, p. 17).

Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (2001a, p. 28) states that the “main aim in providing Arts education is to ensure cultural literacy for all learners”. This means that the learners discover and develop their own expressive abilities, and learn how to understand cultural expression in their local environment, in the nation and in the world at large. “In order to discover where a learner’s expressive potential lies, the policy emphasizes the need for all learners to have some experience of the major forms of cultural expression throughout their basic education” (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, 2001a, p. 28).

Curriculum for the Lower Primary Phase: Grade 1-4 (The Arts Syllabus)

The Arts syllabus for the Lower Primary Phase (Ministry of Education, 2005) aims at introducing the basic concepts of the arts without losing sight of the interconnectedness of activities across the curriculum. This syllabus further emphasises outcomes aimed at developing a spirit of enquiry and experimentation, fostering skills of observation and creativity, and reinforcing work in other areas of the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2005). The Lower Primary Phase therefore presents considerable opportunities to introduce learners to many aspects of the Arts and to stimulate their interest in various aspects of the Arts. This phase, therefore, ought to be laying the foundation for the personal and social developmental objectives identified as particular strengths of exposure to the Arts (Ministry of Education, 2005).

The belief expressed is that: “Arts promote the balanced growth, socialisation and development of the creative ability of a learner” (Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 119). This implies that Arts is viewed as a means through which the process of unfolding, stimulating and capturing the learner’s imagination and self-expression takes place. Through this subject area it is claimed that learners explore their inner selves, their environment, and make discoveries about communication through arts media (Ministry of Education, 2005).

The curriculum for Basic Education

Arts at Lower Primary Phase level are seen to be important not only for the opportunity to engage learners’ natural ways of learning and creativity, but also to start enriching their means of communication by developing literacies other than reading and writing. They should also be able to interpret and express their ideas and feelings about themselves and the world around them (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 17).

Methodology

Research orientation (paradigm)

This study was located within the interpretive paradigm. This research paradigm seeks to understand the meaning which people give to their own social interactions (Southwood, Carstens & Brauteseth, 2004). It was a learning experience that involved a dialogue between the researchers and that which the researchers were trying to understand (Scott & Usher, 1996). The task of the researchers in using the interpretive paradigm was to focus on understanding the situation of the topic being studied, because this was the primary emphasis (Connole, 1998). The researchers decided to locate the study in this paradigm because “it assumes that all human action is meaningful and hence has to be interpreted and understood within the context of social practice” (Scott & Usher, 1996, p. 18). By interpretation, the researchers mean that he was to search for perspectives on the situation being studied and also for theoretical understanding. Since the researchers were interested in finding out the value that teachers attach to Arts, the interpretive paradigm was a useful tool in my research. For the purpose of this study, the researchers use a qualitative research approach to investigate teachers’ perceptions about the value of Arts at the Lower Primary Phase in Namibia.

The specific method of the research was a qualitative case study. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995, p. 317) defined a case study as a collection of detailed, relatively unstructured information from a range of sources about a particular individual, group, or institution, usually including the accounts of the subjects themselves. Given the nature of the study, the researchers used a case study approach to investigate teachers’ perceptions about the value of Arts at the Lower Primary Phase in Namibia.

The researchers worked with Lower Primary teachers from two different schools within the town of Katima Mulilo, in Zambezi region. The first sample group consisted of five teachers who currently teach in the Lower Primary Phase at Wooden Combined School. The second group consisted of two teachers; one of them (Ellis) was also part of the focus group interviews as she teaches at Wooden Combined School. Rachel was from NHE Primary School and did not form part of the focus group interviews. For the purpose of this study, the researchers selected the six lower primary teachers to investigate their perceptions about the value of Arts at the Lower Primary Phase in Namibia.

Data collection strategies

The researchers used multiple data collection strategies. In this study the researchers used the following data collection methods: Interviews, focus group interviews, class observations and document analysis.

Interviews

One of the most effective modes of gathering data in an inquiry is through the interview method. Allison, O'Sullivan, Owen, Rice, Rothwell, and Saunders (1996), defined interviews as face to face situations in which the researcher sets out to elicit information or opinions from a subject. The researchers chose to use this method because it has the advantage of "allowing the interviewer to probe areas of interest as they arise during the interview" (McKernan, 1996, p. 128). Specifically, semi-structured interviews were used because in this type of interview "the interviewer has certain questions he or she asks of all interviewees, but also allows the respondent to raise issues and questions as the interview progresses" (McKernan, 1996, p. 129). The researchers conducted semi structured interviews with the two selected Lower Primary teachers before observing their classes. The researchers also had a focus group interviews with five Lower Primary teachers from Wooden Combined School, in order to investigate their perceptions about the value of Arts at the Lower Primary Phase in Namibia. The five Lower Primary teachers who were part of the focus group interviews teach from Grades 1 to 4. This group was comprised of two grade 1 teachers, one grade 2 teacher, one grade 3 teacher and one grade 4 teacher. According to McKernan (1996, p. 166), "studies have shown that in adult life a person is at least three times more likely to exchange meaningful information with others by speaking than by writing". All the interviews and the focus group interviews were conducted in English. The researchers recorded the interviews with the two teachers and video recorded the focus group interviews.

Class observations

Observation "is the observation and recording of events or circumstances in which the researcher is present" (Allison, O'Sullivan, Owen, Rice, Rothwell, and Saunders, 1996, p. 26). The researchers observed three lessons of each of the two selected teachers from the two different schools. The researchers video recorded all six of the classroom observations in order to cover everything that was happening in class and for easier transcription purposes.

Document analysis

Document analysis provided the researchers with the secondary sources of data that was needed. The documents that the researchers used were mainly written texts which related to the situation being studied (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). These documents included learners' work, teachers' daily lesson preparations and the Curriculum guide for the Lower Primary Phase: Grades 1-4.

Data analysis

The researchers transcribed and analysed the data using qualitative data analysis. This process "involves discovering and deriving patterns in the data, looking for general orientations in the data and, in short, trying to sort out what the data are about, why and what kinds of things might be said about them" (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 295). The researchers transcribed the two interviews and the six class observations that were conducted with the two teachers from the two different schools. The researchers also transcribed the focus group interview

that was conducted with the five Lower primary teachers at Wooden Combined School. The researchers then identified categories to classify all the data that was collected.

The researchers went on to analyse the documents that he felt could give him the necessary information according to the categories that he had already identified when transcribing the interviews, class observations and the focus group interview. The documents that the researchers analysed included:

- Teachers' daily lesson plans, see appendix 2
- Learners' work
- Curriculum guide for the Lower Primary Phase: Grades 1-4

Findings

The value of arts at the lower primary phase

In this section the researchers presents the findings of the responses of teachers on their understanding of the value of Arts at the Lower Primary Phase. The data for this section was generated from the initial semi structured interviews, focus group interview, class observations and document analysis.

Rachel's understanding of the value of Arts at the Lower Primary Phase

When asked about the value of teaching Arts at the Lower Primary Phase, Rachel responded by saying that Arts supports and enhances the skills needed in other subjects for example, curriculum guide promotes the following aims for Arts:

- *It enables the learners to contribute to the development of the culture in Namibia*
- *It promotes a wider intercultural understanding*
- *It stimulates the learner imagination and creativity and*
- *The last one, it encourages learners to self-expression confidence and communication with others*

In the three lessons the researchers observed, Rachel demonstrated the values she ascribed to Arts. In two of the three lessons the researchers observed she started the lesson with songs that gave meaning to the topic. In the first lesson, the topic was miming and the song below was sung at the start of the lesson.

Silozi

Lubone mo lubinela, inge lipizi za mwanaheni ×2.

Mubinelo wa luna inge lipizi za mwanaheni ×2.

Piyoo, piyoo

1, 2 lwanefuka, 3, 4 lwanefuka, 5, 6 lwanefuka, 7, 8 lwanefuka, 9, 10 lwanefuka.

English

See how we dance, we dance like Zebras ×2.

Our dance is like Zebras ×2.

Piyoo, piyoo

1, 2 we are bending, 3,4 we are bending, 5, 6 we are bending, 7, 8 we are bending, 9, 10 we are bending

When singing this song, the selected learners were dancing in front of the classroom demonstrating how the Zebra dances.

Rachel brought some teaching aids that were used to clarify what she meant by miming for example, she brought drawings that showed the faces of people when they are happy, sad or angry. In this lesson she was also able to incorporate drawing to enhance the topic.

She then gave homework to learners saying “*in our next lesson for Arts tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, I want you to find out the way other birds and animal like Monkeys cry, do you understand? Ask your parents how a zebra cries (sounds)*”.

When Rachel taught the topic on Patterns she demonstrated the value of Arts in the context of culture in her introduction when she said that:

Silozi**Topic: Patterns/Shapes.**

Mapeteni ki lika ze sebeliswa haiba kuli batu ba swanisa. Cwale u bata ku bonahaza siswaniso seo bunde, kapa u swanisa kwana, kapa mane u I bupile ka mazoho a hao, cwale nako ye u bata ku I bonisa bunde fande, ku I beya bukabali.

English**Topic: Patterns/Shapes.**

Patterns are commonly used especially when people are drawing. This can be done by drawing a calabash or modelling it using your own hands or making it look beautiful outside by putting Patterns.

Rachel's lesson plans focused on objectives and basic competencies for Arts that matched the curriculum guide for the Lower Primary Phase grades 1-4. The way she structured and developed the topics she taught revealed her awareness of the importance given to Arts in this phase in the curriculum and her lessons demonstrated her views about the value of this area.

Ellis's understanding of the value of Arts at the Lower Primary Phase

When the researcher asked Ellis about the value of Arts at the Lower Primary she responded by saying that "Arts to my Lower Primary Phase learners is where I identify those who can do well in different components like drama, music and Visual Arts". She said that in Arts lessons she gets to know her learners very well. Ellis went on to say that in Arts learners build on the foundation of developing skills which will help them throughout their lives. She continued to say that even their talents are identified when they are still at the primary phase so, "it is easier for them to realize what they are going to do when they reach adulthood". She gave the example of when the learners were busy with a singing lesson and they were asked to improvise a dance she could see that most of her learners were able to imitate what they see on television from the Namibian artists. She added that learners were able to perform songs made popular by Namibian artists.

When Ellis was teaching about weaving in one of the three lessons that the researcher observed, she gave an example in the introduction of the lesson that demonstrated the importance of Arts in our daily lives by saying that; "Without chairs we could sit on the floor. Without chairs it could be difficult for us to write in the classroom. We could not manage to write unless if we could use our knees to kneel down". She said that if learners finish school and they don't get a job, then they can help themselves by weaving baskets or traditional mats.

Aline, Rose, Karen and Molly on the value of Arts from the Focus Group Interview

When asked about the value of teaching Arts at the Lower Primary Phase level, four of the five teachers who formed part of my focus group interview each identified a particular benefit of Arts. Aline indicated that Arts always motivates her learners in many ways. The first way Aline cited was that if learners come to school and they are not in the mood for learning, once they start singing or dancing in the Arts lessons, they are always motivated. She went on to say that if a learner is not feeling well or maybe the parent is sick at home, once the learners are in the Arts lesson they will forget those issues and come back to class motivated by other people who are dancing and singing. The second example that Aline cited was how Arts becomes enjoyable when they are involved in constructing objects from various materials which not only helps to motivate learners but in turn motivates the teacher. Aline continued saying that the teacher is motivated by participating learners and that Arts discourages absenteeism in her class.

Aline went on to say that she has observed that Arts in the Lower Primary is valued "the same as Mathematics, English, Environment Studies and like anyone of those special subjects. From grade 1, learners start learning Mathematics and Natural Science up to grade 12. Those learners once they complete their school they will become doctors, pilots or get any job because of these subjects". Aline said that the same situation applies to Arts. She elaborated on this saying "from grade 1 doing Arts, is where we get those creative people in drawing, carving and modeling, at last those learners can become artists in singing, drawing and earns a living". She referred to the many Namibians who earn their living through Art. To continue motivating the value of Arts at the Lower

Primary, Aline gave another example that one morning she came in another teacher's class and she was jokingly singing a song from a DVD that she normally watches at home and she was singing "Kulenyani, Kulenyani ni ka ku mpulaya, wa kataza, wa siyeza, ki musali wa ka". "You see those people, that group of Kulenyani "Culture Spears" they are getting their lives on doing that, which is part of Arts". She indicated that the Culture Spears group is well received and that nearly every home has a DVD of this group, thus revealing the possibilities there are to follow a career in the Arts.

Rose said that Arts is very important because it enhances and develops thinking. She said that when a child is given a task in Arts to work on, that child will have to think before doing that task.

Karen said that "you will find that Arts helps our learners to be innovative and creative, especially when you give them something to draw. It also helps most of our learners to socialize if they work in groups because they learn from one another". She went on to explain what she meant by creative by giving an example that "if we are on a certain theme like modelling or creating, we sometimes send learners to bring bottle tops, wires and cutters that can be used to create wire cars, and these can be used to demonstrate the means of transport to others in a class". Karen said that sometimes she does not always tell them what is needed in the lesson but learners just come up with the different materials in class to be used when they are busy creating such an object.

Molly said that Arts can help learners who are not talented in other subjects. She continued to say that Arts is vital for everyone and especially young learners. She gave an example saying "I still remember last term, one of my learners in class won a first prize of N\$100.00 in a drawing competition that was initiated by a private school whereby 5 schools were competing".

Three of the teachers shared the same understanding of the value of Arts at the Lower Primary Phase by saying that Arts stimulates the learner's imagination and creativity. They felt that by encouraging learners to explore their creativity through Arts we maintain the practice of the arts through drawing, carving, modeling and music. Though they shared this same understanding, they again cited different values of Arts at the Lower Primary Phase such as:

- It enables the learners to contribute to the development of the culture in Namibia
- It promotes a wider intercultural understanding
- It encourages learners to self-expression, self-confidence and communication with other
- "Arts to my Lower Primary Phase learners is where I identify those who can do well in different components like drama, music and visual Arts"
- Arts is whereby learners build on the foundation of developing skills and things which will help them even when they grow

Discussion of findings

The role of arts in the lower primary

The purpose of this section is to examine and analyse the understanding of the teachers about the value of Arts at the Lower Primary Phase. The researchers refer to the aims promoted by the Lower Primary Phase syllabus for Arts and in the curriculum guide for Namibian schools (Ministry of Education, 2005; Taylor & Andrews, 1993). These are to expand learners' imagination and creativity through finding solutions to stimulating situations, individually and in groups. The three teachers who were interviewed shared the same understanding of the value of Arts at the Lower Primary Phase by saying that Arts stimulates the learner's imagination and creativity. They said that it is through Arts that we get creative people in drawing, carving and modelling. They went on to say that Arts helps learners to be innovative, and become creative, especially when they are given drawing tasks. Given the understanding of these teachers of the value of Arts at the Lower Primary Phase, the syllabus further emphasises outcomes aimed at developing a spirit of enquiry and experimentation, fostering skills of observation and creativity, and reinforcing work in other areas of the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2005). Arts is viewed as able to "develop creativity, a capacity that is not only an aspect of Arts practice, but one that forms the performance of any task in any field requiring originality, innovation, imagination and improvisation" (UNESCO, 2001, p. 9-10).

The second value of Arts according to the responses of the teachers and the evidence obtained through class observations revealed that learners actively participated in Arts lessons. For example, learners participated

through singing songs, dancing and group activities. This helps learners to socialize especially if they work in groups because they learn from one another. This aspect of Arts has been supported by the UNESCO (2005) document that states that learning in the Arts is viewed as beneficial for learners and the learning process as it engages learners' interest and enthusiasm, and encourages learners to actively participate in the classroom.

The third value as stated by Rachel was that Arts "enables the learners to contribute to the development of the culture in Namibia". This means that the learners discover and develop their own expressive abilities, and learn how to understand cultural expression in their local environment, in the nation and in the world at large (Ministry of Education, 2005; Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, 2001). The songs sung by learners during the lessons displayed the diverse cultures of Namibia. For example, songs sung were in English, Silozi and Oshiwambo. The education policy document (Ministry of Education, 1993), encourages teachers to develop a sense of cultural belonging which requires that notions of family and community must be incorporated in learning and teaching. (Ministry of Education, 2005; UNESCO, 2001; Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993) argue that in order to enrich our national culture we should all take pride in our diversity and honour our ancestors.

The fourth value was that Arts is important to the children at the Lower Primary Phase because it helps to induct them into their oral tradition, for example stories, songs, simple poems, riddles, nursery rhymes and games (UNESCO, 2001). The two teachers that the researcher observed, started their lessons with telling learners stories and by singing a song in the introduction or conclusion of the lessons. Telling stories and singing songs is part of the Lower Primary Phase syllabus and it is stated that learners can "perform songs in their mother tongue, other Namibian languages, English and from neighbouring countries" (Ministry of Education, 2005, p.125).

The fifth importance of Arts that Aline cited was that, "if learners are making art works out of any materials, Arts becomes enjoyable and learners are motivated, which in turn motivates the teacher". Huntley's argument that "Art is something that everyone can enjoy" emphasizes its universal appeal (1992, p. 1). The teachers who were interviewed said that Arts is enjoyable to learners when they are involved in constructing objects out of various materials because it motivates them. (Ministry of Education, 2005; Jenkins, 1986) argue that "much joy comes from an awareness and aliveness to beauty, in every object as well as in art forms" and "what joy and delight can accompany creating something that never existed before. This can offer real meaning to existence" (Jenkins, 1986, p. 24).

The last importance of Arts as cited by these teachers during interviews was that Arts helps learners to build on the foundation of developing skills that will help them throughout their lives. The policy set out in (Ministry of Education, 2005) as well as Lancaster (1990) states that in order to ensure that children learn a range of pertinent practical skills so that they develop an expertise in using both materials and equipment correctly they have to be involved in experiencing and learning an artistic visual grammar and also through specific studies in using the elements of Arts. This aspect was mentioned by the teachers as a benefit but was not implemented in the Lower Primary Phase due to lack of teaching and learning materials for Arts in their schools.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the research objective, this study provided the researchers with a number of useful answers and insights as well as raising other questions. The findings revealed in the study are that the teachers' awareness of the role and value of Arts at the Lower Primary Phase to be a particularly positive aspect of the study. The common and important value cited by these teachers during interviews was that Arts at the Lower Primary Phase stimulates the learner's imagination and creativity. The researchers learnt from this study that these six Lower Primary teachers were interested in, and had the courage to teach Arts at the Lower Primary Phase despite the fact that they were hampered by the unavailability of Arts materials at their schools and their lack of a deep understanding of the theory and ideas underpinning the subject.

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