

An Investigation of The Teaching Strategies for Arts at Lower Primary Phase in Zambezi Region, Namibia

Dr Stanley C. Chombo

Faculty of Education and Human Sciences
School of Education
Department of Applied Educational Sciences (DAES)
University of Namibia
Katima Mulilo Campus
schombo@unam.na

Dr Gerald Kela

Faculty of Education and Human Sciences
School of Education
Department of Intermediate and Vocational Education (DIVE)
University of Namibia
Katima Mulilo Campus
gkela@unam.na

Abstract

The purpose this study was to investigate the teaching strategies for arts at lower primary phase in Zambezi region, Namibia. The researchers used multiple data collection strategies. In this study the researchers used the following data collection methods: Interviews, focus group interviews and class observations. The researchers transcribed and analysed the data using qualitative data analysis. Most of the teaching strategies which were cited by these teachers during the interviews and used during class observation were the same such as: group work, telling stories, singing songs, drawing, questioning and answer, using learning support materials, individual work and demonstration. The use of homework as a teaching strategy was mentioned by one teacher.

Keywords: Teaching strategies; Arts; Lower primary phase;

Introduction

In planning art lessons, teachers must adopt an appropriate teaching strategy that enables learners to acquire knowledge efficiently and holistically, encouraging the creative solving of art tasks (Birsa, 2018, p. 187). This implies that, the teacher must carefully consider devising a strategy that will encourage the learners to efficiently acquire, connect, and upgrade their knowledge, as well as to adopt a creative approach to solving art tasks. The purpose this study was to investigate the teaching strategies for arts at lower primary phase in Zambezi region, Namibia. The study presents a list of several art teaching strategies that promote the motivation and creativity of students in artistic expression and encourage the holistic development of artistic abilities.

Literature review

Teaching strategies for arts

According to Clement (1986) teachers need to provide children with a rich variety of visual and personal experience in support of their learning programme at school. Role play, mime, dramatization and artwork are used as part of learner-centered teaching methods in other subjects (Ministry of Education (MOE), 2005, p. 120). Developing the learners' skills in these areas in arts will help improve their learning when they apply them to other subjects and thus enhance learning across the curriculum (MOE, 2005, p. 120). Clement (1986); Jenkins (1986); Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), (1995) identifies various teaching strategies that a teacher can use to focus children's attention and these include: talk and interaction, prepared outlines, patterns, assigned topics and group work.

Talk and interaction

Clement (1986, p. 55) suggests that the most important teaching strategy that any teacher can use is that of enquiring through talk, whether through exposition, questioning, discussion or interaction. This strategy is appropriate especially at the Lower Primary Phase level where good class teachers who have had very little experience or training in Arts are able to generate work of considerable quality through their ability to focus children's observation and perception through good talk in support of their observation (Clement, 1986).

Prepared outlines

This teaching strategy will require learners to colour inside the lines that someone else drew, as with colouring books or workbooks (Jenkins, 1986).

Patterns

These are shapes drawn or cut by another person (teacher) or the learners themselves which they have to duplicate or assemble, as directed (Jenkins, 1986). The main advantage of this technique is that materials can be tried out and moved around before being stuck down (Barnes, 1987). Scissor cutting skills are just as important as tearing paper, and awareness of shape can be encouraged by cutting repeated units. For example, "children can cut shapes which represent fish scales, or feathers and carefully use them as units to build up their own designs of fishes or birds" (Barnes, 1987, p. 131). This strategy of teaching Arts will help learners by comparing the effect of sticking dark paper shapes over light ones, or light over dark (Barnes, 1987).

Assigned topics

A general topic and materials to be used are given to learners by the teacher. The child can express and organize the topic in his or her own way (Jenkins, 1986).

Group work

Group work is a teaching strategy that uses interactions between learners as part of the learning process (MEC, 1995). The policy states that when using group work, the teacher has to distribute responsibility for learning among learners. These statements find support in the policy document MOE, (2005, p. 121) that "learners can work together as a group, or they can work in pairs or individually within a group to solve a problem or discover a solution". The document states that the learners may look to the teacher for help and information, but they can also seek help or information from each other (MEC, 1995).

Research 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). 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. 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 and class observations.

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 researchers sets out to elicit information or opinions from a subject. 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 teachers. 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.

Data analysis

The researchers transcribed and analysed the data using qualitative data analysis. 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.

Findings

In this section, the researchers present my findings on the different teaching strategies that these teachers used in teaching Arts at the Lower Primary Phase. The data in this section was generated from interviews, focus group discussion and class observations. The table below indicates the strategies generated from these data collecting tools.

Table 1: Strategies mentioned by the teachers

Strategies	Rachel	Ellis	Aline	Rose
Strategy 1: Group work	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strategy 2: Telling stories	✓	✓		
Strategy 3: Singing songs	✓	✓	✓	
Strategy 4: Drawing	✓	✓		
Strategy 5: Role play and dramatisation	✓	✓	✓	
Strategy 6: Questioning and answer method	✓	✓		
Strategy 7: Using learning support materials	✓	✓		
Strategy 8: Individual work	✓	✓	✓	
Strategy 9: Demonstration	✓	✓		
Strategy 10: Homework				✓

Rachel's use of teaching strategies

When responding to the question of methods which she normally use when teaching Arts Rachel said that she used methods like questions and answering. She added to this saying that “*group work is there, but it needs a teacher to help them*”. She also said that “*learners are given different tasks to discuss in groups, later or afterwards they will be given a chance to give feedback to the whole class*”.

During the class observations, Rachel used the following teaching strategies in her lessons:

Strategy 1: Telling stories

In Lesson 3, the lesson plan indicated that the teacher was to tell a story about colours in the introduction of her lesson. This she did as follows:

“I will tell you a short story. There were three friends and they were all ladies. The three ladies had different names. The name of the first lady was...” She then wrote their names the chalkboard.

The first lady was Red

The second lady was Yellow

The third one was Blue.

The three ladies were very good friends. One day, Yellow invited Blue and Red to visit her at her place. The first one to go and visit Yellow was Blue.

Strategy 2: Singing songs

In Lesson 1 and 2, the lesson plan indicated that the learners would sing songs in the introduction while she invited other learners to dance to the songs in front of the class.

We are in Arts. I do not know who can lead us in our song which says “See how we dance, we dance like Zebras”. I also want a few learners who can dance for us because we cannot dance all of us.

While the Zebra song was sung a group of learners performed an improvised dance depicting the Zebras.

Strategy 3: Drawing

The learners' work books indicated that learners have drawn pictures of road safety and patterns. During the class observations she told learners to:

Think about your grandmother's calabash, stand up and come in front and draw the Pattern that was used on it. You can draw the calabash or just draw the Pattern that is on the calabash. Show us the Pattern that is on your grandmother's calabash.

We will not just draw anything, but we will draw a Pattern that I will draw here. Let us say that this is your paper. We will draw a very simple Pattern. Each one will draw the same Pattern on the papers that I will give you. I will give you papers. Take out your papers on the desks, I will give you papers. When you get your papers that I will give you, draw a very simple Pattern on it.

You will draw these small boxes on your paper and they should be straight. When you finish drawing, I will give you some colouring pencils or crayons. We will draw the same Pattern all of us. Do you understand?

Copy the Pattern that I will put on the chalkboard, we must copy the same Pattern all of us. The Pattern we are going to draw is the “V” shaped Pattern but the “V” has to face down.



Pattern drawn by a learner in Grade 3

Strategy 4: Questioning and answer method

Asking questions about colours was another teaching strategy that she indicated in her lesson plan. Rachel used different questioning strategies in her lessons including the following:

Where do you always see Patterns?

Where do you always see decorations?

Who likes the Red Colour?

What Colours are not obtained by mixing other Colours together?

What colour do you see?

Who did not obtain the Green colour when they mixed the two (Blue and Yellow) colours?

All of us we obtained the Green colour?

Strategy 5: Using learning support materials

Although Rachel indicated that she used learning support materials in Arts the only materials observed were the drawings she used in the lesson on mime

Strategy 6: Group work

Group work was indicated as a teaching strategy on the lesson plans and it was used during the lesson presentation when learners were discussing colours and miming the acts of animals and people.

Strategy 7: Individual work

Learners worked on creating patterns as individuals. When the teacher was teaching about mime she invited individual learners to demonstrate or mime to their friends.

Sinvula! Stand in front and show your friends how the face of a happy person looks like. Show them how your face will look like when you are happy.

Sinvula! "Mimes" shows the face of a happy person to other learners.

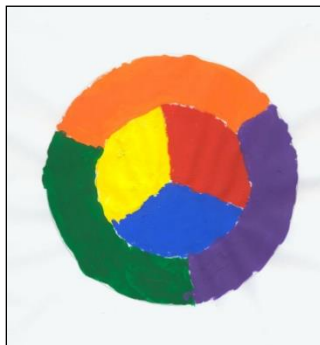
Another one should mime someone who is angry, to be very angry.

Strategy 8: Demonstration

When Rachel was teaching about the colour wheel, she used demonstration in her presentation by telling learners that:

Look here! In block number four you have to paint that colour that you were saying that it is Purple. The colour we obtained when we mixed Blue and Red. The colour you were saying that it is Purple, it is Violet. Paint Violet in block number four. Paint the numbers that are in the blocks.

Our colour wheel should look like this when we have finished.



Colour Wheel painted by a group of six grade 3 learners

Strategy 9: Role play and dramatisation

During one of the lessons that I observed, Rachel chose learners to mime how the faces of people look like in different situations. For example she said:

"This one will mime for us how a Lion roar, the other one will mime how a cow bellows".

Can you mime for us how an elephant eats!

Teaching strategies used by Ellis

During the interview, Ellis stated that she normally uses various strategies when teaching and the following were also observed in the three lessons with her:

Strategy 1: Group work

When responding to the question of strategies which she normally uses when teaching Arts Ellis said that whenever she teaches learners Arts she often introduces the lesson having groups sing, tell a story or do role play. She also uses groups when they need to construct something. She gave the example of when learners were making cars they worked in a group in order to complete the tasks within the given time.

She said: *“when we started with group work in the beginning it was a bit of a problem but now learners have tried to understand even the rules of working with groups”*. She said that whenever she gives group work to learners, some of the learners want to dominate others, so she makes sure that in each group everyone should participate. Ellis said that she always make sure that the learners constantly swap roles each time she does group work

Strategy 2: Telling stories

The first strategy that she used was telling a story in the introduction of her first lesson about Nekoto, the daughter of Nauwandjoba. This story was told in the village of Oshari, near Okongo. It was told by Olivia Shiwila, a 73 year old woman, to Betty Hango.

Strategy 3: Singing songs

She then went on to teach learners the song about Nekoto which is sung as follows:

Nekoto, Nekoto la Nauwandjoba

Ame onde uya okuteka

Nekoto, Nekoto la Nauwandjoba

Ame onde uya okuteka

This was an Oshiwambo song, but if it is in English we could sing it Like this:

Nekoto of Nauwandjoba

Goodness I have come to fetch water

Nekoto of Nauwandjoba

Goodness I have come to fetch water

Ellis concluded her lesson one by leading learners to sing this song:

The more we are together, together, together.

The more we are together, the happier are ×2

Your friends are my friends

My friends are your friends

Strategy 4: Drawing

Another teaching strategy Ellis used was drawing and she told learners that *“now you are going to draw map of the story. Each and everyone should follow the, what we talked about the story of Nekoto”*. She then chose five learners one after another to retell the story of Nekoto using their drawings about the story of Nekoto.

Strategy 5: Role play and dramatisation

Ellis also chose learners to dramatise the story of Nekoto.

Strategy 6: Questioning and answer method

Other strategies involved questioning the learners during the lesson and at the end of the lesson and these are some of the questions that she used:

What was the name of the girl? ×2, Candy!

Nekoto, and Nekoto was a daughter to!

Who told the story? ×2, Yes, Robbins!

Who told the story ×2, Yes, Aggy.

An old woman, was having how many years? Yes!

Do you always like stories from your grandmothers?

Who will finish the mate?

What is Andy doing? Yes, Candy!

Do you like it?

Now if you are finished with your mat, what are you going to use it? Where are you going to take it?

What kind of objects you need to make a card loam? Vicky!

Teaching strategies identified by Aline and Rose in the focus group discussion

When responding to the question of methods which she normally uses when teaching Arts Aline in the focus group discussion said that different teaching methods are included in Arts. She then cited group work as useful in teaching Arts. She went on mention other teaching methods like role play, singing and dancing in groups, in pairs and individually.

Rose responded to the same question by saying that Arts involves a lot of teaching methods like giving homework to learners to go and work at home with the help of their parents or family members. If it is during class time she said that learners can be given a topic that allows them to work together in groups.

Most of the teaching strategies which were cited by these teachers during the interviews and used during class observation were the same such as: group work, telling stories, singing songs, drawing, questioning and answer, using learning support materials, individual work and demonstration. The use of homework as a teaching strategy was mentioned by one teacher.

Discussion

Most of the teaching strategies that were cited by these teachers during the interviews and used during class observation were the same such as: group work, telling stories, singing songs, drawing, questioning and answer, using learning support materials, individual work and demonstration.

Strategy 1: Group work

Both teachers that the researchers observed used this strategy and two of the teachers mention it during the focus group discussion They said that learners are given different tasks to discuss in groups, then later or afterwards they will be given chance to give feedback to the whole class. From the interviews and class observations conducted, it was evident that teachers knew how to implement this strategy. They said that whenever they give group work to learners, some of the learners always want to dominate others, so they made sure that in each group everyone participated. Another example that was given was that when the learners draw if three learners are busy drawing the pictures, the other ones participate by colouring the pictures, while the others give feedback to the whole class about what they learnt in their group.

Group work is a teaching strategy that uses interactions between learners as part of the learning process (MEC, 1995). The policy states that when using group work, the teacher have to distribute responsibility for learning among learners. From the evidence collected, it is clear that these teachers understood how to implement this strategy according to the policy.

Strategy 2: Telling stories

Though this strategy was not discussed in chapter two, it is one of the teaching strategies commonly used by the two teachers that the researchers worked with in my study. Telling stories according to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), (2001, p. 17) is “the main focus that should be integrated into children’s learning process at the Lower Primary Phase, with children being encouraged to act out parts of the stories”. For example, one of the teachers while teaching learners about the topic of story (plot) she said that I am going to tell you a story about Nekoto, the daughter of Nauwandjoba. This story is told in the village of Oshari, near Okongo. After the teacher had told the learners this story, she chose five learners to retell the story to other learners in class using drawings about the map of the story of Nekoto.

Telling stories to learners is part of the themes and topics in the curriculum guide for the Lower Primary Phase: Grades 1-4 syllabus (MOE, 2005, p. 126) under the learning objectives states that learners should “develop an awareness of how the story (plot) structures a drama”. These teachers have an understanding of how to implement this teaching strategy required by the curriculum guide.

Strategy 3: Singing songs

This teaching strategy was not discussed in chapter two, but it is used by the two teachers the researchers observed. They often started and ended lessons by making learners sing songs to introduce the lesson with another song at the end. Singing songs was a topic in the curriculum guide for the Lower Primary Phase: Grades 1-4 (MOE, 2005, p. 125) which stated that learners could “perform songs and song games together in their mother tongue, other Namibian languages, English, and from neighbouring countries”.

The songs sung by learners during the class observations were relevant to what the approaches in the curriculum guide for the Lower Primary Phase: Grades 1-4 required. The learners’ work books in Rachel’s class also indicate that learners had written the National Anthem. This indicated that these teachers had an understanding on how to implement this teaching strategy and recognize its value.

Strategy 4: Drawing

Drawing was used by the two teachers that the researchers observed. For example, during one of the class observations, Ellis told her learners to draw the map of the story of Nekoto that she told them. After drawing the map she chose five learners one after the other to retell the story of Nekoto using their drawings about the map of the story of Nekoto.

Though Rachel has done little drawing work with the learners, the learners’ work books indicated that learners have drawn pictures of road safety and patterns. This was an indication that the teachers were attempting to implement this teaching strategy in their classroom.

Strategy 5: Role play and dramatisation

The Arts policy 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 further development of their skills, through a variety of strategies” (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (MBESC), 2001, p. 17). Ellis seemed to know how to implement this teaching strategy in her class. For example, she chose learners to dramatise the story of Nekoto to others saying: “*now we are singing the song for the Omakishi, now we will see what Nekoto will do. Now because the Omakishi will be busy dancing, now Nekoto will draw water from the pond, now she will go home*”.

Rachel chose learners to mime how the faces of people look according to their mood during the lessons that the researchers observed. Role play and dramatisation is an important teaching strategy in the Lower Primary Phase whereby learners can “present group planned mime, role plays, dramas and puppet theatre with characterization and structure” (MOE, 2005, p. 126).

Strategy 6: Questioning and answer method

A questioning and answer method was a common teaching strategy used by the two teachers that the researchers observed. Questions were asked during the introduction, in the middle of the lesson while teaching and during the conclusion of the lesson. Most of the questions asked were closed questions and did not require learners to think critically. For example: *Where do you always see Patterns? What was the name of the girl? ×2, Candy!*

Though the two teachers asked questions they did not consider the different questioning strategies that could have required the learners to think critically.

Strategy 7: Using learning support materials

According to Clement (1986, p. 55) an “Art teacher who fills his classroom with interesting collections of natural and man-made things, good photographs and reproductions of works of art, and who directs the children’s attention towards the environment that surrounds the school, is more than half way towards ensuring that the children have sufficient to feed the mind’s eye”. This teaching strategy was used by Rachel where in one of the lessons she taught she brought pictures of people showing the different moods in which people tend to find themselves such as happy, sad and angry. The researchers felt, however, that teachers could have made greater use of displays, especially of cultural artefacts and crafts that are easily available in these communities.

Ellis also brought a number of teaching aids when she taught the story of Nekoto. She brought a bucket of water, a cup and a traditional costume to class that she used to clarify some aspects of the story.

Strategy 8: Individual work

Both the teachers that the researchers observed including Aline from the focus group discussion implemented this teaching strategy. One of Rachel's lesson plans indicated that learners were going to work on creating patterns as individuals and this was done as planned. She also invited individual learners to demonstrate or mime to their friends when she taught the topic on miming. Ellis told learners to draw the map of the story of Nekoto as individuals. Though they were a number of problems encountered by the teachers in using this teaching strategy, it worked out well for all the two teachers observed.

Strategy 9: Demonstration

The two teachers who worked with the researchers in this study used demonstrations in some of the lessons that the researchers observed. For example, when Rachel was teaching about the colour wheel, she used this method in her presentation by telling learners that: "Our colour wheel should look like this when we have finished". The lesson plan also indicated that Rachel would invite individual learners to be demonstrating or mime to others.

Ellis demonstrated what learners were supposed to do when teaching learners about making a card loom. While learners were working on their card loom, she also continued to work on hers. Although this strategy was not discussed in chapter two, the two teachers seemed to know how to implement it in their classrooms. This teaching strategy was effective because learners could observe from what the teacher was doing and continued to work on their practical activities.

Conclusion

In reviewing the findings obtained from this study in relation to the official report that triggered this study on the status of Arts education in Namibia, what the researchers found to be particularly noteworthy is:

- The extent to which teachers attempted to include different dimensions of Arts in their teaching.

References

- Allison, B., O'Sullivan, T., Owen, A., Rice, J., Rothwell, A., & Saunders, C. (1996), *Research skills for students*. London: Kogan Page.
- Barnes, R. (1987). *Teaching art to young children 4 – 9*. New York: Routledge.
- Birsa, E. (2018). *Teaching strategies and the Holistic acquisition of knowledge of the Visual Arts*. CEPS Journal, 8(3).
- Clement, R. (1986). *The art teacher's handbook*. London: Hutchinson Education.
- Jenkins, P. D. (1986). *Art for the fun of it: A guide for teaching young children*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture. (2001). *Policy on Arts and Culture of the Republic of Namibia*. Windhoek, Namibia.
- Ministry of Education. (2005). *Curriculum for the lower primary phase: Grade 1– 4*. Okahandja: NIED.
- Ministry of Education and Culture. (1995). *Tools of the trade: Skills and techniques for environmental education in Namibia*. Swakopmund: Desert Research Foundation of Namibia.
- Southwood, S., Carstens, N., & Brauteseth, C. (2004). *Glossary: Education research*. Grahamstown: Rhodes University.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2001). *EFA global monitoring report* (p. 9-10). Paris: Unesco.