

# Cultural festivals in Botswana: Just entertainment or a teaching and learning aid in the CAPA classroom- Teachers' perspectives

**Shirley Marang Kekana**

Department of Primary Education, University of Botswana

**Kelone Khudu – Petersen**

Department of Primary Education, University of Botswana

**Abstract-** Cultural festivals play a vital role in promoting culture, ensuring culture preservation, showcasing the cultural arts and unearthing talent. This article examines the influence and the role played by cultural festivals in the CAPA classroom in Botswana. Eight experienced CAPA teachers who are currently teaching CAPA in primary schools in Botswana were interviewed. The study is structured in the multiple case approach involving eight primary school teachers in eight districts. An interview was made with these teachers and to reach those teachers residing at remote places, questionnaire and responses went through mobile phone text exchange. Findings of the study suggest that cultural festivals do exhibit skills and knowledge that could immensely benefit CAPA teachers. However, the study revealed that the CAPA content is purely theoretical and therefore lacks direct link to cultural festivals, and consequently do not benefit from this festivals. The study also suggests that although teachers understand the role that cultural festivals, they are not bringing the knowledge to the classroom, as it would take more of their time. As a result they would rather cover all the objectives and complete the syllabus. The paper will hence make some recommendation regarding what could be done; hopefully the synergy of the two can be exploited to benefit CAPA the classroom.

**Index Terms-** Botswana, Creative and Performing Arts, Cultural festivals, Botswana and Performing Arts

## I. INTRODUCTION

The participants in the study are teachers who are compelled to teach CAPA and all subjects where they teach. In this paper, we focus on participants' role as CAPA teachers. This paper was inspired by the authors' passion in the creative and performing arts education. Having been involved in the training of CAPA teachers for years and being part of the cultural festivals, they realized that are most of the CAPA/ Music teachers are not familiar indigenous music games, dances and other arts which is included in the curriculum.

Creative and Performing Arts form part of the primary school curriculum in Botswana, but this has not always been the case. CAPA subjects then were either offered and as extra-curricular activities or specific entities for those schools which chose to offer them. In 1977, just 10 years after independence, Botswana's first educational policy known as Education for *Kagisano* was designed. Education for *Kagisano* which means

social harmony was based on four principles namely democracy, development, reliance and unity (Republic of Botswana 2001). In 1993, a National Commission on Education was set up to revise the education system at that time. A Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) was then released there-after in 1994 (Botswana, 1994). The RNPE recommended the incorporation of practical subjects in the Botswana curriculum, hence the inclusion of the CAPA in order to address these requirements. The Botswana Creative and Performing Arts was introduced in 2002 in a inter disciplinary mode including music, Art & Craft, Design and Technology and Physical education which are grouped together and taught as one subject.

Like any other new initiative, there were some challenges with the implementation of the CAPA curriculum, the first challenge being lack of resources to implement the CAPA curriculum. A number of researches conducted locally with regard to the implementation of the CAPA suggest that teachers biggest challenges in implementing CAPA is lack of resources and instructional materials (Kekana 2016, Phuthego, 2008; Mannathoko, 2008; Phibion, 2011). The lack of resources and materials is not only peculiar to CAPA, but to other subjects as well.

Many schools across the country are not adequately equipped, particularly primary schools. This has resulted in lack of science equipment or laboratories, double shifts and schools without electricity. These are major challenges that must be met by the year 2016 Vision (Vision, 2016:18)

The other challenges were the fact that teachers found the CAPA syllabus difficult as most of them were not specialist in the subjects. Baputaki (2007:1) states, " most teachers are still struggling to teach the newly introduced subject called Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) in primary schools around the country. Furthermore, according to studies done locally, some of those schools who do implement the CAPA do not address the stated objectives (Mannathoko, 2008). As a teacher, it is imperative to always have objectives so as to know the outcomes you expect. Objectives play a very important role in the teaching/learning process as they are a roadmap of what is to be achieved. Hoffer states:

State the objectives for the class or group in terms of what students should be able to do as a result of instruction. Unless the students can provide evidence of how much they have learned, it is more difficult for a teacher to determine what should be taught in subsequent classes. (Hoffer, 2009, p. 32)

Through these festivals people get to appreciate the diverse cultures of Botswana which help them to be tolerant of each other's culture and therefore understand that no culture is inferior or superior.

There are different are so many cultural festival held every year in Botswana. Every region or district has their own festival. These include the *Kuru* Dance Festivals, Dithubaruba, Letlhafula, and Son of the soil, *Mmakgodumo*, *Khawa* dune challenge and cultural festival, *Kgalagadi* west cultural festival, *Tsodilo*, *Maun*, *Gchwihaba*, *Maitisong*, *Gutjilenje*, *Mayeyi*, *Domboshaba* and Heart of the city carnival.

At the heart of these festivals are the performing arts, the visual arts, literary arts, the culinary arts and applied arts. Popular participation in cultural activities is necessary for social justice and an effective tool for social integration and international intercourse (Botswana, 2001).

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is to find out if cultural festivals play any role in the creative and performing arts in the classroom, and if it does to what extent. The researcher has observed that, there are many cultural festivals showcasing music and dance.

### **Research questions**

The study will be framed by the following questions:

1. How do cultural festivals influence CAPA teachers in Botswana?
2. What are CAPA teacher's perceptions with regard to the role played by cultural festivals?
3. What skills and knowledge form part of the cultural festivals?
4. To what extent do teachers understand the role and values of cultural festivals?

## **II. IDENTIFY, RESEARCH AND COLLECT IDEA**

It is imperative, as the Revised National Policy on Education recommended, that the arts form part of the school curriculum. The curriculum of the education system must be based on the Botswana culture and provide programmes and facilities aimed at teaching skills of culture centred disciplines (Botswana, 2001) through cultural festivals indigenous music is preserved and there is continuity of the music as it's not documented. Indigenous music in preserved through Cultural festivals.

In the past ten years, Botswana has seen the number of cultural festivals rising each year. These festivals are good platforms to showcase indigenous music, cultural dances and artifacts, it is through cultural festival whereby people experience the practical live performance of indigenous music without reading about it theoretically and get to see the traditional instruments. Cultural festivals are held with an objective to revive and promote culture and ensure preservation. Moreover, they are held to unearth talent and showcase the arts. Different ethnic groups in Botswana showcase their cultural product including music, dances, games, costumes, food and artifacts. CAPA teachers and students could benefit from these festivals, but do they?

Delivering a key note speech at a conference in 2013, entitled: Arts Up Front: ACT Arts Education Professor Brian Caldwell Managing Director and Principal Consultant Educational Transformations had these key remarks to make about importance of Arts in education:

The Song Room study had a powerful personal impact and that is why I will take every opportunity to make common cause on the issues, hence the title of my address. I invite you to make common cause on matters related to arts education, even to the point of rattling the policy cage, so to speak, because Australia will never be a top-tier nation in school education until the arts holds the same place as mathematics and science.

With the citation below, Caldwell further stresses the importance of Art Education

Culture and the arts are essential components of a comprehensive education leading to the full development of the individual. Therefore, Arts Education is a universal human right, for all learners, including those who are often excluded from education, such as immigrants, cultural minority groups, and people with disabilities. (UNESCO 2006: 3)

Indigenous music in preserved through Cultural festivals. Through these festivals people get to appreciate the diverse cultures of Botswana which help them to be tolerant of each other's culture and therefore understand that no culture is inferior or superior. (Phibion 2012).

Phibions researches cover indigenous music, dance and traditional music instruments from several ethnic groups in Botswana. In his recent publication with Khudu-Petersen Tsutsube Dance Festival, they presented and described Tsutsube a cultural practice that they describe as rich in cultural content which can be adapted in the teaching of Social Studies, CAPA and Cultural Studies. (Phibion and Petersen 2016) bemoan disregard of cultural practices in schools as they state:

Like most communities in Botswana, this research revealed that Botswana schools in the Basarwa occupied areas do not have any of their musical genres taught or practiced. As the schools' syllabus at primary and secondary schools is designed, it calls for an urgent revival of the local traditional musical genres including

that of Basarwa, so that they are taught to the current learners before they become obsolete. The system of education should stress the value of a multicultural society and the strength that it can offer in terms of international connections and flexibility to respond to change. In addition to the performances in schools, Denbow (2006, p. 50) observes that some Sarwa healing dances are also being performed in Gaborone (the capital city of Botswana) and other urban centers as tenets of Sarwa cosmology are woven into changing Tswana culture and practice (p. 65) Our study explored whether CAPA teachers and (learners?) could benefit from festivals which are rich sources of Arts and Culture.

In view of those facts UNESCO has declared exposure to Culture and the arts as one of the universal human rights, for all learners, the government of Botswana is interested in promoting arts and culture through a variety of ways, which include the inclusion of an integrated art curriculum (CAPA) at primary school level, supporting and financing Arts, Culture festivals. Another example of effort to transmit arts and culture values are a project entitled 'Museum in the Box' initiated by UNICEF and well received by Botswana government, delegating the National Museum and Art Gallery to implement it. Khudu-Petersen (2008) elucidates the aims of the program:

Museum-in-the-Box project was supposed to teach the RAD children arts and crafts of their culture in school during weekends. -- according to the teacher participants, [‘that] RAD children seem to be gifted in hand crafts so much, that even if they do not succeed in school academically, they can learn skills that can reward them in future’. Children were taught by local cultural practitioners, recruited on voluntary basis. Skills taught included: cutting and carving (wood work), leather work, egg shell decorating and bead making (p. 77)

Although the project described above was based in schools and focused on marginalized ethnic minority learners, the involved teachers encountered too many challenges and demands regarding its implementation. Therefore, they could not take the methodology on board and use it their classroom teaching. Considering that the project had actually taken art and culture into schools, we see its failure as a missed opportunity. This observation brought us back to the question whether did not gain enough skills or knowledge of teaching of Culture Festivals, which take place and timed remote from schools, with schedules that do not correspond with the school's.

*Cultural festivals influence CAPA in a positive way, and that making CAPA to be understood and learned in a simpler way, which improves the quality of CAPA as a subject. They influence CAPA in the area of creativity. For example, as people in the community perform, maybe in drama or theatre, teachers can acquire creativity skills of how to become innovative in class. Cultural festivals also play a big role when it comes to participation in cultural activities as this emphasizes a sense of identity.*

From another perspective, Arts and Culture festivals have dramatic effects, they display different aspects of the arts; music, dance, poetry, drama and visual art displays. We therefore hoped/expected them to enrich, inform, awakening creativity and inspiring them to convert what they experienced to the pedagogical context. Teachers attend festivals at their own accord; one could expect them to be relaxed, entertained and ready to absorb knowledge and skills about different cultures. Which is why it would be interesting to hear from them what they bring back into their professional practice.

### III. FINDINGS

The study will follow a qualitative approach in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of the research problem. Eight experienced CAPA educators currently teaching CAPA will be interviewed to get their perspectives with regard to cultural festivals

#### Results and Discussions

The findings are presented as captured from the interview With CAPA teachers. Eight CAPA teachers shared their views regarding the influence of cultural festivals on the CAPA syllabus. Data is presented in themes as adapted from the research questions.

#### What are CAPA teacher's perceptions with regard to the role played by cultural festivals?

##### Teachers' voices

Teachers were first asked how they regard the role of cultural festivals in CAPA. Response from the different teachers' interview showed that they do share the same sentiments that cultural festival can bring positive to the CAPA classroom, but this is not the case because. The excerpts include: *The CAPA content at both primary and junior schools is treated purely as academic hence it lacks direct link to the cultural festivals and the outer community. The Cultural festivals on the other hand are designed to disregard the academic function that they serve especially on the young learners. Therefore, the two entities are absolutely divorced from each other, consequently denying learners the role that can be played by the performing arts content and also giving the outer community a wrong perspective about the festivals that it's an entertainment function for adults. They can contribute to in-depth knowledge of various musical cultures and offer opportunity for experiential learning*

*Festivals compliment CAPA in the sense that they add on to what is being taught, therefore what isn't being taught can be seen during this festival. They provide the practical aspect as opposed to abstract theories in the music classroom.*

*The festivals resuscitate and preserve our cultural practices which are already under threat, and this also promotes CAPA as a subject to the students, parents and community. There is a huge influence as same aspects taught in theory are put to reality/ practicality during this festivals*

*Cultural festivals play an important role in CAPA because at schools, student are taught the theoretical knowledge, therefore cultural festival can provide the practical aspect. They give order and meaning to social aesthetic and religious norms that distinguish one group of people to the other. Since culture is not taught but is caught, children observe and mimic the actions of others hence cultural growth is gained. Cultural festivals have a huge impact on the learning of CAPA, cultural ideas, activities, artefacts; song and dance from different cultures is easily imparted to the CAPA learner, most importantly through oral transmission.*

## **Question 2**

### **What skills and knowledge that form part of the cultural festivals could benefit CAPA teachers?**

#### **Teachers' voices**

Teachers were also asked if there are skills and knowledge that form part of the festivals which can benefit the CAPA teachers. Teachers do believe in unison that cultural festivals are a fountain of skills and knowledge in the arts as illustrated by the following excerpts. *The improvisation aspect in all dances and songs at the festivals is relevant to learners when it comes to virtuoso artistic expression of the self. The same improvisation element which is common and popular across various genres in festivals is ideal for CAPA content when we look at it through the lens of interdisciplinary in the arts. Documentation, research, performance knowledge, traditions, history and culture.*

*Teachers can benefit through the enhancement of their social, religious and aesthetic values thereby attaining a thick description of a particular culture. Skills and knowledge that form part of cultural festivals are ideas, knowledge, practical skills, performance skills, and indigenous arts including pottery and weaving which all from the appreciation part that students will learn from different cultural activities from many cultures that they don't know or have contact with.*

*Practical skills including artistic s and craftsmanship skills application aspects and interactive skills. The history of most of these cultural, the artefacts and practical skills Indigenous knowledge, indigenous arts, knowledge about fauna and flora, traditional healing systems, rituals, beliefs and initiatory rites.*

## **Question 3**

### **To what extent do CAPA teachers understand the value and role of cultural festivals with regard to the CAPA classroom?**

#### **Teachers' voices**

This question sought to get CAPA teachers views on the extent to which they understand the values and role played by cultural festivals in regard to the CAPA classroom. Most of the teachers felt teachers do not know or underestimate the role that can be played by cultural festivals in the CAPA classroom. Teachers are naïve because they just take these festivals as a form of entertainment for adults and do not associate the activities to the classroom. These are some of the responses. *Some teachers at primary schools who pursued CAPA as subject specialists have*

*the potential to express knowledge of how to link their content with the festivals repertoire. CAPA in relation to the festivals. Their response to the subject is purely academic and they consider the festivals to be entertainment as opposed to the edutainment concept.*

*They don't understand because of the current obsession with the coverage of objectives and teaching for marks/examination. Children's development, expression & self-actualization see not to be valued. Very little unless they come from a traditional background such that they have lived the experience of a particular culture.*

*The extent at which CAPA teachers understand the role and values of cultural festivals is very minimal. There is limited information dissemination and most lack interest in trying to know more. CAPA teachers do understand the role and value of cultural festivals but take it do underestimate the positive change it can bring to the classroom .It's taken for granted, or taken as something that belongs to a different ministry, not the education environment. Teachers do not have the interest since CAPA subject is not examined in the Primary School Leaving Examinations, they focus more on the examines subjects. It's under estimated, it's a taken as a culture thing.*

## **IV. CONCLUSION**

The study revealed that, cultural festival could be vital source of knowledge to the CAPA classroom and the teachers do understand that very well, but currently, they are just entertainment. It is revealed that teachers understand the role that cultural festivals play but do not think they can relate the two due to a number of factors. For example, they complain of limited time allocated for the subject and the subject not being part of the subjects examined for the Primary school leaving examination, which schools are judged.

Cultural festivals, if linked to the curriculum, they could provide excellent teaching and learning aids in the CAPA classroom. Teachers always complain of lack of African of resources and teaching aids, but cultural festivals could provide an alternative. Music teachers should not be daunted by the fact that Dalcroze taught improvisation on the piano (Mead, 1996), an instrument they may not have. They do not have to have to look too far for the resources they could utilize. For instance, spontaneous poetry serves to develop a sense of improvisation through speech (Phuthego, 2005). Traditional music knowledge system has the capability for promoting music education, especially as it relates to the ways, cultures and values of where it evolves (Ogunrinade, 2014).

## **V. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. My first recommendation would be that The Ministry of Youth Sports & Culture, which is responsible for cultural festivals in Botswana should share the cultural festivals calendar with the Ministry of Basic Education. This will enable CAPA teachers to plan ahead, choose wisely which festival to attend and prepare well in advance.

2. The Department of Curriculum and Evaluation, which is responsible for curriculum implementation should sensitize CAPA teachers on the importance of cultural festivals and why it is imperative for them to attend and relate to the festivals to the CAPA classroom.

3. The CAPA and Music curriculums stipulates that teachers should teach local music, of the area where they teach. Therefore, CAPA Teachers should liaise with the communities where they teach, so that they can also benefit from cultural festivals, if they are held in that community. Working closely with the community will benefit them more as part of the festivals as opposed to observers. They can invite these artists as resource persons even long after the festival.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Botswana, Republic of (1994). The Revised National Policy on Education. Gaborone. Government Printers.
- [2] Botswana, Republic of. National Policy on Culture. Gaborone. Government Printers. 2001
- [3] Botswana, Republic of. Long Term Vision for Botswana: Towards Prosperity for all. Gaborone, Government Printers
- [4] Curriculum Development and Evaluation Department (2002). Lower Primary School Syllabus, Standard One to Four. Gaborone: Ministry of Education.
- [5] Hoffer, C. R. (2009). *Introduction to Music Education* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Belmont, CA: Wardsworth G. O. Young, "Synthetic structure of industrial plastics (Book style with paper title and editor)," in *Plastics*, 2nd ed. vol. 3, J. Peters, Ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964, pp. 15–64.
- [6] Kekana, S. M. Indigenous songs and games in the classroom. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education*, 9 (3), 151-165.

- [7] Mannathoko, M.C. Interpreting the lower primary Art Education, the Botswana National Curriculum. Case study of for primary school in the South Central and Central North Region; An illuminative evaluation. Unpublished PhD Thesis, 2008. University of Cardiff.
- [8] Khudu-Petersen K (2007) Intercultural arts education: initiating links between schools and ethnic minority communities, focusing on the Kweneng West sub-district in Botswana Doctoral dissertation, University of Edinburgh
- [9] Ogunrinade, D. O. A. (2014). Teachers Perception of Indigenous Music Knowledge as a Panacea to Music Curriculum in Nigerian Schools. *Journal of Culture, Society and Development*, 3, 52-60.
- [10] Phibion, O.S. Botswana Primary School Teachers' Perceptions on the Introduction of Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA). *National Teachers Education Journal*, 4(2), 47-5. 2011
- [11] Phibion, O.S. & Khudu-Petersen, K. (2016). Tsutsube music as practiced by the Basarwa (San) of Botswana. Muziki, 1-B. Smith, "An approach to graphs of linear forms (Unpublished work style)," unpublished.
- [12] Phuthego, M. (2005). Teaching and learning African Music and Jaques-Dalcroze's Eurhythmics. *International Journal of Music Education*, 23(3), 239-248.

#### AUTHORS

Shirley Marang Kekana, MMus (Music Education); BMus (Hons)-Music Education; BA (Hons) Culture & Media Studies)-University of Pretoria, University of Botswana. [shirley.kekana@mopipi.ub.bw](mailto:shirley.kekana@mopipi.ub.bw).

Kelone Khudu –Petersen, PhD ; [khudukc@mopipi.ub.bw](mailto:khudukc@mopipi.ub.bw)

**Correspondence Author** – Shirley Marang Kekana, [shirley.kekana@mopipi.ub.bw](mailto:shirley.kekana@mopipi.ub.bw) ; [shirleymkekana@gmail.com](mailto:shirleymkekana@gmail.com) , +26771767595/ +2673554933.