

Challenges facing Pre-Primary Mobile School Teachers in the teaching of Arts Education: A case study of the Kunene Region of Namibia

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Abstract

Arts education has been acknowledged as a subject that enhances holistic child development as it helps learners to develop skills in creative problem-solving, motor, language, social, decision-making, risk-taking and creativity. This study aimed at investigating challenges that pre-primary teachers experience in teaching arts education in resource-challenged, mobile schools in Kunene region as well as ways in which to enhance the prevailing practice of teaching and learning. The study employed a qualitative approach, using a case study research design. A total number of six pre-primary, mobile government schools: Three from Epupa and three from the Opuwo circuit respectively were purposively selected for the study. Interviews and observation were used to collect the requisite data while a purposive sampling technique was used to select the interviewees. The study found that, despite the growing importance of arts education, there are numerous challenges that are continuing to impact adversely on the effective teaching of arts education in pre-primary mobile schools in the Kunene region. These challenges include inadequate teaching and learning resources, teacher and socio-economic factors as well as financial constraints. Based on the study's findings, we propose formal training workshops for teachers on arts, support from the regional office and other stakeholders as well as the appointment of advisory teachers for non-promotional subjects such as arts education as possible ways in which to overcome the challenges and improve the teaching of arts education in resource-challenged environments.

***Keywords:** Arts education, holistic child development, Kunene region, Namibia, resource-challenged pre-primary schools, mobile schools, circuits*

Arts education has been acknowledged as a subject that enhances holistic child development as it helps learners to develop creative problem-solving, motor, language, social, decision-making, risk-taking and creativity skills (Ali, 2018). However, lack of resources, particularly in pre-primary mobile schools in Kunene region may constrain the effective teaching and learning of arts hence, subsequently, retarding child development. This article presents the

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findings from a study that aimed at investigating both the challenges that pre-primary teachers in mobile schools in Kunene region of Namibia experience in the teaching of arts and also ways in which to enhance the teaching of arts in remote mobile schools in light of the opportunities available.

The focus of the study was on pre-primary schools because they provide the foundation for all levels of a child's education. In the child development context, holistic refers to the growth and development of a child as a whole and includes cognitive, affective and psychomotor development (Moffett, 2021). There is no doubt that early childhood education has the potential to impact on the future of any nation as it serves as a foundation for all other educational levels by equipping the children with the skills, attitudes and competences needed for both individual and national development (Wilson, 2015). It is through holistic development that a child is enabled to grow into a fully developed individual within a society.

However, in a resource-challenged learning environment, holistic childhood development may not be effectively achieved because of a lack of resources (Wilson, 2015). The people of Kunene region, particularly northern Kunene (former Kaokoland), are generally politically, socially and economically marginalized and often seen as out of step with the rest of the country. These are nomadic people who move around in search of pasture, as a result children are unable to attend conventional schools. To provide access to education for children from these communities, the Namibian government has established mobile schools. Since this region is generally marginalized, it is not surprising if these mobile schools in Kunene region will have their unique challenges and constraints.

However, no study has been conducted so far to substantiate this claim as evidenced in the lack of literature. It is for this reason that this study sought to investigate how arts education is taught in resource-challenged pre-primary mobile schools in the Kunene region, the challenges that teachers face in teaching arts education and the potential opportunities available that may be considered in an effort to enhance the effective teaching of arts education and, subsequently, promote child development.

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To explore the types of arts education which are implemented in resource-challenged pre-primary mobile schools in the Kunene region to enhance child development.
2. To examine challenges that teachers face in teaching arts education in resource challenged pre-primary mobile schools.

Theoretical framework

This study was grounded on the Ecological System Theory of Urie Bronfenbrenner, revised by Guy-Evans (2020), which focuses on the quality and context of the child's environment. Ecological system theory was deemed to be relevant to this study as it posits that child development does not depend on the teacher alone but on the entire environment of the child. Furthermore, the interaction of children with the environment provides the means for the development of thinking (Brittain & Lowenfield, 1987; Mazepa-Domagala, 2021). It is, thus, evident that the relationship

between the child and the environment need to be in sync for the child's holistic development. Sinclair, Jeanneret, and O'Toole (2012) agree that how children learn and what they learn through art is influenced primarily by the values of the surrounding cultures, families, teachers and the local community.

Sinclair et al. (2012) state that the teaching of arts requires the design of a thoughtfully created space; an environment that stimulates, instead of one that constraints, and provides opportunities for problem-solving, risk taking and creative connections with ideas and materials. The children's interaction with the environment helps to stimulate and enrich the learning environment in which the learners may be free to express themselves through exploring all that is within their environment (Alter, Hays & O'Hara, 2009; Sternberg, 2000).

Since this study focused on rural schools, the study explicitly demonstrated the relevance of the natural environment experiences of children from poor backgrounds and how this facilitates effective learning. The classroom environment in which art is taught should be enriched with adequate resources in order to enhance child development (Krishnan, 2010). Accordingly, the theory of Urie Bronfenbrenner was used as a lens in order to ascertain how the lack of resources in the pre-primary mobile schools may constrain the teaching of arts and, hence, child development. In addition, the theory was also used to investigate how these schools may be resourced to enhance child development.

Literature review

Rationale for arts education

Art is a fundamental human process and it is a means of exploration, experimentation and discovery as well as an expression of visual thinking (Ali, 2018). It has been found that art is a learning process whereby children are allowed to explore, experiment and discover all that is within their environment and interpret this in a creative manner. In the process of interpreting the world around them, children develop logical thinking, problem solving and interpersonal skills as well as hand-eye coordination. In addition, art also develops the child's senses at a young age if emphasised and taught well. Art education is a powerful tool in the holistic development of children especially in the early childhood stage due to its efficacy in developing the creative, intellectual imagination and expressions of children (Yorke, 2012).

The curriculum for arts education should be designed in such a way as to develop the child holistically and in a way that fosters creativity among them as it would appear that the curriculum is the cornerstone of creativity hence the ability to use skill and imagination to produce art. Sinclair et al. (2012, p. 28) indicate that "the arts are so important that they should be the centre of the primary school curriculum since they naturally address one of the most pressing demands of the 21st century: Creativity - the ability to foresee needs, problems as well as respond imaginatively, innovatively and flexibly to them". Art is a subject which has an-inbuilt facility for linking effectively with other areas of the curriculum (Ali, 2018).

Areas of holistic child development in relation to the types of arts

Child development involves adaptation and differentiation in the cognitive, physical and socio-emotional areas (Ali, 2018; Mazepa-Domagala, 2021). As stated previously, the arts play a vital role in the holistic development of children and, hence, Table 1 summarises generic areas of holistic development in children at a young age.

Table 1

Areas of holistic child development and types of arts education

Areas of holistic child development	Description	Types of arts education
Social-emotional development	Involves the emerging social skills, emotional resilience and personal self-confidence which are important in both well-being and social involvement (Play and Exploration, 2008).	<p>Visual Art: Visual Art lessons are therapeutic, they provide learners with valuable opportunities to experience and build knowledge and skills in self-expression, imagination, creative and collaborative problem solving, communication, creation of shared meanings and respect for the self and others (Odendaal & De Jager, 2017).</p> <p>Music: Music plays a vital role in the social-emotional development of a child as it enables children to express themselves vocally through songs.</p> <p>Drama: Drama lessons also allow learners to explore their emotional responses to their social environment, thus enabling them to analyse social problems with more empathy (Odendaal & De Jager, 2017; Peräkylä, 2013).</p> <p>Dance: Dance may help to release inner tension and anxiety while it also enables children to communicate their inner feelings which they may be hesitant to express verbally (Odendaal & De Jager, 2017).</p>
Physical development	Physical activity promotes overall development and stimulates neural connections and is, therefore, a foundational aspect of growth and well-being in children (Play and Exploration, 2008).	<p>Visual Art: Visual art enables children to express their ideas visually through drawing, painting, constructing, designing two or three dimension objects, and using their hands to develop fine motor skills thus increasing physical well-being (Peräkylä, 2013).</p> <p>Music: Involvement in musical activities also stimulates sensory-motor development and physical growth, especially through movement, dance and the playing of instruments with both</p>

		<p>gross motor skills as well as fine motor skills being developed (Odendaal & De Jager, 2017).</p> <p>Drama: Drama activities, such as role play with either words or through miming and storytelling, are more expressive than the other types of art as they are more physical with the children being required to perform action movements to express what the characters they are portraying feel (Odendaal & De Jager, 2017).</p> <p>Dance: Dance involves moving the body to tell a story and, in this way, it helps the physical development that enables the child to perform functional and creative movements with control, flexibility and coordination (Odendaal & De Jager, 2017; Odendaal & De Jager, 2017).</p>
<p>Intellectual development</p>	<p>The child's intellectual/cognitive development refers to the emerging powers of knowing, reasoning and understanding the physical and natural environment as well as appreciating the natural world and the child's role in preserving the environment (Play and Exploration, 2008).</p>	<p>Visual Art: Visual art provides children with the opportunity to solve problems while improving their reasoning skills as this is the pre-primary stage when children see the world and define it without words but, instead, with images (Odendaal & De Jager, 2017).</p> <p>Music: Music assists in the development of memory skills. For example, teaching action songs and rhymes to children develops the child's mind academically as it stimulates the brain to think both critically and creatively (Peräkylä, 2013).</p> <p>Drama: Drama activities may stimulate intellectual thought and reasoning as learners may be required to formulate answers to questions posed while probing and questioning the teacher to direct learners towards lateral thinking and innovative problem-solving (Odendaal & De Jager, 2017).</p> <p>Dance: The literature highlights the essential role of physical movement in brain development thus it stimulates brain activity; preparing students for deeper learning throughout the day (Donovan & Pascale, 2004; Odendaal & De Jager, 2017).</p>

It is clear from Table 1 that arts education plays a vital role in the lives of children. Social-emotional, physical and intellectual development are three important aspects of holistic childhood development. However, holistic development of these aspects in children may be retarded if arts education is taught in a resource-constrained environment.

Challenges teachers face in the teaching of pre-primary arts education

There are inherent problems that art education is facing in its development. Notable among them are shortage of qualified art teachers, inadequate teaching facilities and funding as well as poor government and social identity. In a National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) publication, entitled *Namibian Educational System*, David (2012) identified challenges that hinder the successful implementation of the curriculum in Namibia. These challenges include a shortage of both pre-primary teachers and well-trained teachers as well as a lack of facilities and resources. Particularly, lack of resources may result in teachers neglecting the art subjects especially if such teachers have no passion for the subject. This attitude, especially in marginalised schools, has resulted in primary art education in Namibia suffering from a serious structural problem (Peräkylä, 2013; Mazepa-Domagala, 2021).

Ntumi (2016) indicated that, pre-school teachers in the Cape Coast Metropolis, Ghana are faced with numerous challenges in the implementation of the early childhood curriculum with the main challenges being that most pre-school teachers do not understand the early childhood curriculum. They do not have enough teaching and learning materials at their disposal to help them to implement the early childhood curriculum and parents do not involve themselves in their children's education despite the fact the teachers are not able to do the work alone. According to Ntumi (2016), limited physical infrastructure such as classrooms, accommodation for children and teachers and libraries plays a significant role in preventing a school from operating successfully.

In a study conducted in the United States of America, Arnold, Newman, Gaddy, and Dean (2005) are of the opinion that rural schools face a unique set of challenges, primarily because of their geographic isolation. Arnold et al. (2005) point out that, despite the fact that some pre-primary mobile schools have successfully met these challenges, many continue to struggle. Therefore, it is the authors' contention that one would expect these challenges to be even worse in rural mobile schools of marginalized communities in Kunene region.

Bucknam and Szekely (2012) highlight that there is a gap in the availability of resources in most schools with various factors contributing to such limitations. The literature also offered some suggestions on measures which may be taken to mitigate the issue of limited resources; for example, getting parents involved in the funding of the school and implementing projects that may bring funding to support the school. Collections of art resources of all kinds are a very necessary aid to most forms of learning, particularly in primary schools where children should be able to touch and handle objects as this arouses their curiosity and permits them to make their own discoveries (Cinquemani & Kraehe, 2020). A healthy classroom art environment is characterised by an atmosphere of caring and delight in beauty with natural and man-made objects pertaining to the children's work on display. However, although there may be natural teaching and learning materials in the environment that may be collected to use, mobile schoolteachers may lack the skills to identify and use them. Therefore, they might only value commercial resources over the readily available natural resources.

In relation to effective learning, children need to go through the six levels of Bloom's taxonomy in order to learn effectively. Bloom's taxonomy is a classification of cognitive objectives that demonstrates how thinking skills may be organised into six levels; from lower-

order thinking such as remembering and understanding to higher-order thinking such as evaluating and creating (Jacobs et al., 2011; Mazepa-Domagala, 2021). These six levels enable teachers to organise learning resources in remarkable ways which stimulate and develop the child's ability to think as well as enables them to teach effectively (Bucknam & Szekely, 2012). Accordingly, the art syllabus should be linked with the content which should be in alignment with the cultural background of the Namibian communities for whom it is designed. It is, therefore, imperative that the core values of arts policies and importance are stipulated within arts education syllabi.

A study based on teachers' perception of the problem of teaching arts in primary schools was conducted in five countries - Namibia, South Africa, Australia, United States of America and Ireland. Problems identified as impacting the teaching of arts included lack of knowledge about the syllabus, teachers lack time to prepare effective arts lessons, lack of personal arts experiences, lack of adequate resources within the schools and a lack of priority for arts education (Ali, 2018). It is relevant to state that these problems are faced internationally. Their recommendations were to give arts education adequate funding, time, priority as well as to provide strong, clear advocacy for the arts.

With the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Finland, the National Institute of Educational Development (NIED) developed an art and craft guide that was launched in 2006 (Ministry of Education, Arts & Culture, 2015). The aim of the guide was to support primary school teachers in the teaching of art and craft. It was also designed to be used as a supplementary guide to the syllabus as it encourages the use of recycled material as well as economical use of materials and tools. In view of the fact that there are challenges in the implementation of the junior primary art syllabus in Namibian public schools, this study was conducted to find out whether similar challenges are experienced by mobile school teachers for arts education in Kunene region. This is to confirm whether the content in the art assessment guide was relevant and whether it was being used in teaching and learning to assist holistic child development.

Opportunities available in pre-primary mobile schools to enhance the teaching of arts

The literature reviewed revealed that there are potential opportunities to enhance the teaching of arts. These are:

Support and partnership for mobile schools' teachers. Sinclair et al. (2012) mention that arts partnerships may come in many different forms and may be a powerful means of supplementing and/or bringing arts education into primary schools and into the classroom. Such partnerships may take the form of a generalist either working with an arts specialist in the school or connecting with a network of experienced arts teachers in the local area. Sinclair et al. (2012) also suggest that teachers may approach parents in the community with arts expertise or others with connections to arts organisation and agencies in order to ascertain the type of support they may offer.

Teachers' experience in the teaching of arts. It is essential that teachers possess relevant skills in the field of art if they are to be effective in the teaching of art. Creative teaching is an art. Creative teaching involves finding imaginative, unusual, surprising and adventurous approaches to putting across concepts and knowledge as well as also making skill building enjoyable and motivating. This will result in the children learning more effectively and engaging more fully with the lesson, regardless of lack of creative opportunities (Wilson, 2015).

Possible creative enhancement arts activities. Creative partnership builds community capacity and capability. It also revitalises teachers, providing fresh perspectives on diverse learning styles and creative ways to help more children reach higher levels of achievement (Perso, 2011). The study also looked at ways in which the community may be involved in the teaching of art as well as looked at projects that would promote community involvement through conducting workshops to train art teachers on how to use the available resources within the environment in a more traditional manner. This may not only benefit the school but it might help children to be grounded in their own culture, know who they are and where they come from thus giving them a sense of belonging. The starting point for teaching and learning is the fact that the child brings to the school a wealth of knowledge and social experience gained continually from the family, community and through interaction with the environment.

Methodology

This study employed a collective/multiple case study design using qualitative approach and the interpretive paradigm. According to Mertens (2015), case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores multiple, bounded cases over time through a detailed, in-depth data collection process involving multiple sources of information. The reason for this collective/multiple case study design is because of its potential and relevance in relation to accessing data for the purpose of observing social reality. The site selected for the purpose of this study was the Kunene region. The majority of the inhabitants are nomadic and, hence, mobile schools' concept was introduced into the region. In a research context, the population is the group to whom the researcher wishes to apply the research results (Mertens, 2015). The population in this study comprised of all 37 pre-primary mobile school teachers' in the Kunene region while the unit of analysis comprised of all the pre-primary class teachers teaching arts education at the selected schools. This study used a purposive sampling technique to select only pre-primary mobile schools which were accessible by vehicle. The purposive sampling technique was further used to select the teachers in the participating pre-primary mobile schools who would be interviewed. A total number of six (6) pre-primary mobile government schools, three (3) per circuit, were purposively selected with one (1) teacher per school being interviewed. The total number of the sample size is six (6) mobile school arts teachers. The reason for selecting the six 6 schools was due to the fact that they were some of the most severe cases due to their geographical location in the region.

The instruments for data collection were interview guides and an observation checklist. Combining two or more data collections methods, for example interviews and observation enhances the credibility of the study (Creswell, 2007; Leedy, 2010). Interviews remain central to the authenticity of the data collected for qualitative studies and are best suited for the identified

research paradigm (Adhabi, 2017; Purnamasari, 2020). A total number of six participants were individually interviewed and responses from the participants were recorded in a notebook. The classroom environment was observed including observation of live lessons using the observation checklist to record the findings. A total number of six teachers presenting live lessons were observed. The data collected through observation were used to complement and validate the data collected via the interviews.

Findings and discussion

As has been mentioned in the introduction section, this study sought to explore challenges facing pre-primary mobile school teachers in the teaching of arts education in Kunene region of Namibia. Kunene region while being known for marginalized communities may be constrained by commercial teaching and learning materials, but is rich in materials naturally available in the environment. The question is whether teachers have capacity to identify and use these naturally available materials instead of only valuing commercial materials that may not be readily available. The findings of the study are presented based on the following themes that were informed by the research objectives.

Theme 1: Types of arts education undertaken in pre-primary, mobile schools in Kunene region

The aim of the first research questions was to ascertain the types of arts taught in the resource-challenged, pre-primary, mobile school. The types of arts taught in their schools as mentioned by the participants are summarised in the Table 2.

Table 2

Types of arts taught with more emphasis in the Kunene pre-primary, mobile schools

Mobile schools	Participants' responses
U	Music and visual arts
V	Music, dance, visual arts and drama
W	Music, dance, visual arts and drama
X	Music and visual arts
Y	Music, dance and visual arts
Z	Dance and visual arts

As depicted in Table 2, the left column shows the six schools listed in alphabetical order from letter U to Z while the right column shows the types of arts that the participants had mentioned as receiving most of the attention in their arts teaching. Similarly, participants were coded from A to F. Table 2 provides a clear indication of the types of arts taught, namely music, visual arts and dance. One of the reasons that visual art emerged so prominently may be because most of the resources that are supplied by the regional office has to do with the teaching of visual arts such as paint, modelling clay, crayons, pencils, and workbooks.

All participants in interviews mentioned that they put effort into the teaching of music and visual arts in their classes. Participant E stated that “visual art is vital in developing small muscles since the children mostly use their hands.” Participant A stated that she perceived music to be important especially in relation to helping the children express themselves through singing a variety of songs and, thus, helping them to build vocabulary as it develops intellectual abilities. Similarly, participant F mentioned that through teaching music such as rhymes and a variety of songs, learners become creative thinkers in the way in which they express themselves from a young age.

The study deduced that arts education plays a vital role in holistic child development. However, if the child is to develop holistically, it is essential that all four components of the arts (i.e. music, dance, visual arts and drama) be taught. It was found that there was greater emphasis on music, visual art and dance as opposed to drama. It emerged that the pre-primary, mobile school teachers tended to teach the art subjects for which resources were available, which were less complex to teach and which required little initiative. Drama was definitely neglected with the majority of the learners not fully engaging themselves in the drama lessons as they appeared to lack self-confidence. It was not clear as to why this is the case, perhaps drama is not a natural part of the culture in these communities.

Theme 2: Teaching methods teachers may use in arts education

This theme refers to the presentation of the types of teaching methods that may be applied effectively in the arts classes. The discussion focuses on the most effective and applicable methods which may be used in pre-primary, mobile schools. Table 3 presents the types of methods the participants used in teaching arts in the pre-primary mobile schools in the Kunene region.

Table 3

Types of methods participants used in teaching arts

Teacher-directed method	Mobile school	Learner-centred method	Mobile school
Story-telling method	All	Discussion method	All
Scaffolding method	All	Cooperative learning	U, W and Z
Demonstration method	All	Project method	None
Questioning method	All	Role play method	U, V, W, X and Y
		Experimentation method	U, X and Y

Table 3 depicts the two major types of teaching method approaches namely, the teacher-directed and learner-centred teaching methods as well as other methods that fall under these two. The study focused on the methods which the majority of the participants used and which methods were effective in the art class. The teacher-directed method is teacher-centred and is the traditional teaching method. However, one of the disadvantages of this method is that it does not encourage critical thinking. Participants A, B, C, D and E indicated that they often used this method in their teaching. Participant C stated that:

We make traditional dolls that the children use for storytelling and role playing – by doing this, children learn to express themselves. This is a very effective method of teaching art as it may be used even in other promotional subjects.

The learner-centred approach is child-focused with child-based activities at its core and usually results in effective learning e.g. brainstorming, cooperative learning, experiments, explorative activities, discussions, role-play, etc. Learner-centred methods are based on the belief that teachers should not simply transfer their own knowledge directly to learners but, instead, that reality should be discovered by both (Ali, 2018).

Table 3 indicates that teacher-directed method was found to be the popular approach while the learner-centred approach was found to include a few selected methods that were convenient for the participants. The learner-centred approach requires significant preparation, time and effort on the part of the teacher and it is for this reason that, in general, only a few of the learner-centred methods are used. The discussion method is the easiest as, essentially, it requires the learners to provide their input in group discussions. The cooperative learning method requires the learners to work cooperatively in small groups. This is especially important in music, drama and dance as this method encourages learners to share their ideas and learn from one another. Participants A, C and F indicated that they often used this method; with Participant A stating that “I personally prefer the grouping method as it helps me have more control over my class. Most importantly, it makes assessment an easy and fast process.”

Teaching methods are extremely important in the sense that they encourage creative teaching, improve teaching strategies and assist and support the teachers’ way of teaching thus resulting in effective learning and enabling the learners to reach their full potential. The project-based method involves learners working either individually or collaboratively to collect and present information on a selected topic. This method extends learning beyond the classroom into the real world. Most of the participants indicated the use of this method. However, in view of its complex approach it may not be relevant at the pre-primary level. The role play method is extremely important especially in a drama arts lesson as the learners are involved and interact with one another.

With all schools becoming increasingly multicultural, the learners are bringing with them the richness of their art and culture, family and different home museums of objects with which they were raised, thus arts teachers have vast opportunities for creating curricula with real cultural relevance to the students (Bucknam & Szekely, 2012; Purnamasari, 2020). The teacher should allow the learners to engage in practical activities and initiate their own learning. The types of teaching methods that an art teacher uses should encourage aspects of creativity, critical thinking and self-expression as well as allow learners to exhibit their works in their community.

The experimentation method allows learners to experience reality and discover things for themselves. To experiment means to test an idea. According to Table 3, Participants A, D and E used this type of method in their art teaching lessons. Participant D mentioned that:

I allow my pre-primary learners to go into the environment and collect objects from nature that we can use. Especially in the visual art lessons, we use a lot of objects they have found. For example, boxes, sticks, stones, bottles, animal skins and leaves. Children explore the environment and experiment with the materials they collect from the environment.

Ecological system theory (Guy-Evans, 2020) was found to be relevant to this study as it encourages children to explore and experiment with the resources available in their environment thus enabling them to use these resources creatively and in new ways. In addition, teachers could take the initiative to involve parents should they lack the necessary knowledge and/or expertise. A teacher’s attitude determines whether the teacher is prepared to make an extra effort and become fully involved in facilitation of learning (Purnamasari, 2020). This enables them to explore their own creativity and find new ways of teaching effectively.

Based on the foregoing study findings, it can be deduced that teaching methods play a vital role in the arts education classroom in the sense that they encourage creative teaching, improve teaching strategies as well as assist and support the teachers’ methods of teaching in ways that facilitates effective learning thus enabling the learners to reach their full potential. It also emerged that the teachers have to demonstrate a positive attitude towards the teaching of arts and engage themselves fully in the subject by using the teaching methods applicable to the children’s ages and the environment. The study also found that all teachers who participated in the study focused more on a teacher-centred approach as compared to a learner-centred approach.

Theme 3: Challenges that arts education teachers experience in the teaching of arts education

The study identified and explored several challenges which pre-primary arts teachers in mobile schools experience. Table 4 summarises challenges that emerged from the participants’ responses.

Table 4

Challenges that pre-primary teachers face in the teaching of arts education

Mobile schools	Distance to the nearest town	Circuit name	Challenges experienced
MS U	47 km	Opuwo	Limited resources and financial limitations
MS V	60 km	Epupa	Limited resources, poor infrastructure/facilities, financial limitations and environmental setting
MS W	14 km	Opuwo	Limited resources and poor infrastructure/facilities
MS X	18 km	Epupa	Limited resources and environmental setting
MS Y	20 km	Opuwo	Limited resources and environmental setting

MS Z	40 km	Epupa	Limited resources and financial limitations
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Table 4 depicts the challenges encountered by pre-primary arts teachers in the Kunene region mobile schools. The six schools are all situated in two different circuits. The table also shows the distance between each mobile school and the nearest town. Mobile school V was the furthest from the nearest town and was one of the schools with significant challenges. The table also shows the circuits in which the mobile schools are situated. Some of these challenges maybe due to geographical location as most of the mobile schools are in isolated areas hence it may be challenging to reach the schools on time or transport resources to these schools.

In addition, the study found that the majority of the classrooms were poorly built with inadequate ventilation. The environmental setting of the majority of the pre-primary mobile schools was seen as a challenge by some of the participants as it did not enable the effective teaching of arts subjects. According to Urie Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (Guy-Evans, 2020), it is of the utmost importance that the classroom environment is equipped with the relevant resources needed to develop the child holistically. The study also identified financial difficulties as many of the rural schools lack the funding required to improve the quality of the school environment hence it is clear that without government funding many rural schools will continue to struggle to meet learners’ needs.

The study found that all teachers who participated in the study (teaching arts in mobile schools at pre-primary level) were not qualified to teach the arts. It was found that it was extremely difficult for the pre-primary, mobile school teachers to understand the syllabus and interpret the curriculum as the curriculum does not address the needs of the community in relation to mobile units as it appears to have been drawn up from an urban perspective. Advisory teachers usually focus more on the promotional subjects that learner awards are usually presented for, thus discouraging those learners with creative abilities. If education in the rural schools is to be successful and effective, it is vital that attention is paid to the barriers/challenges encountered by teachers which hinder effective teaching of arts in mobile school.

Theme 4: Arts education enhancement initiatives

It is vitally important to enhance the teaching of arts through the implementation of practical arts activities that enable the holistic development of the child. Based on the participants’ views, observations as well as the existing literature this theme focused on enhancement activities within the school community that may be used to improve the effective teaching of music, visual art, drama and dance in the pre-primary mobile schools. Teachers who wish to promote creativity in their learners must be able to model and share the range of creative experiences from their own lives as individuals working in communities which are shaped by engagement in and resistance to the wider social, economic, cultural and political arenas in which education take place (Wilson, 2015).

The study found that an environment that is enriched with sufficient and adequate resources is in an ideal position to develop a child holistically. It is, therefore, incumbent on teachers to be innovative in the way they teach and use the resources at their disposal to teach art. This is in

alignment with Participant A's view that some of the practical ideas that teachers may use to teach arts are within their reach in the environment which may offer resources with which the children are familiar. She shared that she used empty bottle tops to make necklaces and bracelets in the visual art lesson with the learners. When teachers use resources from the environment, they convey the notion of exploring the resources in the surroundings thus helping children to realise the importance of their environment and teaching them to use resources in their surroundings in a sustainable way. Participant C also cited a valid point in line with what Participant A had said when she stated that: "I re-use resources from the environment, such as putting stones in a calabash to create a musical traditional shaker that may be used both for music and dancing."

The researchers observed that the children were very much engaged in the music lessons especially as their culture is grounded in music. During the interviews, one of the teachers (Participant B) revealed that she used sticks from a tree in her visual lessons with the learners chewing the end of the sticks and using them as paint brushes. Participant D, on the other hand, mentioned that;

I usually need resources to be delivered by officials from the Ministry of Education as early as possible in the year to start with effective, immediate teaching and learning. In my visual lesson, I use coals that the learners use as pencils to draw on boxes that I collect from the nearest town. There is also an animal theme and I allow my learners to go out on field trips to the surrounding environment and explore the environment as well as collect cow dung to which they add clay and mix with water to model animals.

Similarly, participant C indicated that she made traditional dolls that children could use for storytelling and role play. She further stated that "the families in my community make necklaces with seeds and sell these necklaces to earn money. This inspires the children in the community to be creative and learn what it means to work hard even at a young age.

It was clear from these findings that some of the teachers use resources available in the environment while others only wait for commercial materials to be delivered by the officials from the Ministry of Education. Therefore, it is worth mentioning that arts teaching may be enhanced through the use of a variety of creative activities using environmentally available resources to compensate for the lack of the commercial resources required in teaching music, dance, drama, and visual art. It may, therefore, be concluded that the teachers' input contributes significantly to enhancing the effective teaching and learning of arts thus highlighting the importance of using a variety of creative ideas that may compensate for a lack of resources.

Conclusion

This study concluded that arts education as a subject is crucial in enhancing holistic child development. However, a lack of resources may constrain the effective teaching and learning of arts which may retard holistic child development. Teaching methods are essential in the sense that they encourage creative teaching, improve teaching strategies and assist and support the teachers to teach in ways that will ensure effective learning thus enabling the learners to reach their full potential. The contemporary methods highlighted in the relevant literature and that has been found to be effective included discussions, cooperative learning, projects, role play and experimentation.

However, only a few teachers were using some of these methods. In addition, the study found that the majority of the teachers in pre-primary, mobile schools had no formal training or qualifications to teach the arts. It could be concluded that if teachers do not have formal training in the subjects that they teach, they will not be able to address the financial, environmental, inadequate facilities and limited learning resources challenges they face. Thus, training opportunities for teachers to obtain formal qualifications are recommended. It was also clear that there is a need for in-service training opportunities to capacitate teachers to be able to use the learner-centred methods that have been proven to be effective.

Lack of financial resources to purchase teaching materials emerged as one of the challenges hindering the effective teaching of the arts. In addition, there is also a need for support from the regional office, the business community and other stakeholders. However, teachers do not value natural resources freely available in the environment unlike commercial materials that cost money. The study concluded that the teachers' input plays a significant role in enhancing the effective teaching and learning of arts in relation to the variety of creative ideas that may be used to compensate for a lack of resources. This includes using indigenous knowledge and the recycling of materials that are readily available in the environment. However, it emerged from the findings that only two of the participants indicated that they were implementing some of these initiatives. This could be attributed to a lack of creativity, motivation and/or support. It could also be the result of de-valuing indigenous resources and regarding them as "primitive" compared to the "Western" materials.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and discussions, it is recommended that:

- Arts education teachers in the pre-primary, mobile schools should use their creativity to devise ideas on how to teach the arts creatively regardless of the limited resources in the areas.
- Arts education teachers should integrate the teaching of arts education with indigenous knowledge to ensure that learning benefits from the use of prior, existing knowledge in the environment.
- The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture should provide capacity building training programmes to the arts education teachers to enable them to develop professional competencies to become creative and teach effectively despite resource constraints.
- Arts education teachers must participate in in-service training activities in order to acquire new skills on how to effectively teach in resource-constrained, mobile schools.
- Arts education teachers and the community must work together to develop creative ideas that may be used to teach arts in a traditional way so that it benefits the children effectively.

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