

Ministry of Education Human Resource Development Youth and Sports
Castries
St. Lucia

Report on Arts Education Conference

In response to UNESCO's request for contribution towards work documents for the World Conference on Arts Education, the Ministry of Education conducted two conferences with school teachers and other persons involved in community Arts Education. Thirteen of the twenty persons, who were invited, attended the conferences. These participants represented the various art disciplines; music, creative writing, visual arts and theatre arts -dance and drama.

Information was also obtained through the use of questionnaire and informal interviews and discussions with persons who were unable to attend.

The first conference reviewed the following:

- The status of Arts Education in St. Lucia
- The objectives of the World Conference on Arts Education
- The panel discussion topics
- Workshop themes for the conference

The second focused on the implementation of quality arts education.

This report summarizes the contributions by participants at the conference and other persons with whom discussions were held.

Embracing UNESCO's Focus s on Quality Arts Education

Participants applauded UNESCO's initiative to pay special attention to the implementation of quality arts education. They welcomed the opportunity to be part of this forum on Arts Education. They were of the view that Arts Education in the St Lucia had received little attention in the past .There was little evidence that it was regarded as an area of priority in curriculum reform especially at the primary level. This fo

rum was seen as an opportunity to begin the process for improving an area which is so crucial to the future development of the country.

The conferences helped to break new grounds as it was the first time that Arts educators had met in a forum of this nature. They all shared common concerns about the place of the Arts in our education system and agreed that there was a need for the Arts to be embedded in the School's curriculum. Each Art should be taught for its own sake and not for the purpose of enhancing other subjects on the curriculum.

Participants identified the immediate need to form an Arts Educators Association which would advocate support for community based arts education and the development of a well structured arts education program for schools. An association of this nature would help in guiding the structuring and implementation of programs.

Review of the Present Status of Arts Education in St. Lucian Schools

There was a general consensus that Arts Education in most schools were generally dealt with in a haphazard manner. Schools chose to do what they wanted and how they wanted. There were few structured programs guiding what should be taught and how it should be taught. In many instances Art activities catered for a gifted few as the focus is mainly on extra curricular. There is a great need for a focus on Arts Education for all.

Curriculum

Secondary Curriculum

The Ministry of Education recently revised the lower secondary Music curriculum and produced a Theater Arts Curriculum. It is expected that schools will expose all students at the form 1, 2 and 3 to these Arts subjects. Other areas of the arts are guided by the requirements of the CXC syllabus.

Primary Curriculum

There is a K-6 Music curriculum that is due for revision. The Ministry is also in the process of producing a Music Instruction Package for General Classroom teachers at the K - 6 levels. It is expected that the package will assist teachers untrained in music to expose all students to General Music Education. A primary Art Curriculum has been in existence for over ten years and has not been revised. Curriculum has not been developed for other areas.

Instruction and Assessment

Secondary Level

At a few Secondary Schools, where trained teachers are available, Arts Subjects Examined by CXC is included in the Schools' Program. These include visual arts, Theater arts and music. Theater arts is the most recent to be introduced by CXC. Music was introduced in 1999. The numbers of students opting to do exams in these areas are few. Students, parents and others who guide students in career choices do not see the arts as offering reliable opportunities for livelihood.

Some schools offer the Visual Arts in forms One and two to all students and in three, four and five for students who intend to pursue it at CXC level. About 70% of the island's schools expose students at the lower secondary level to Music. For most schools that would be only up to form 2 (grade 8). The other 30% may expose a few students through interest groups/clubs. Theater arts is dealt with mainly as extra curricular. Three schools have attempted to carry the subject to the upper secondary level -forms 4 and 5 (grades 9 and 10).

20% of the schools have a steel pan ensemble, 30% a wind ensemble and 20% a combo. The Ministry of Education has collaborated with the St. Lucia School of Music to establish a combined Secondary Schools Wind ensemble, a String Orchestra and the National Youth Choir.

Drama and dance festivals organized by individual schools and others jointly organized between the Ministry of Education and the Department of Culture have helped to expose a few students to Theater Arts Performance.

Some schools have encouraged students to write the Associated Board of Royal School of Music Theory Exams up to grade five level. Other students involved in the strings, woodwind combined Schools Ensemble or receive private tuition at the St. Lucia School of Music take the annual practical exam. Some students have been able to perform at grade 6 level by the end of their Secondary Education.

Mode of assessment of music some schools are not based on modern assessment strategies. End of term exams are based mainly on a written paper which tests theoretical knowledge.

CXC Arts Examination

Most secondary schools attempt to offer the visual arts at CXC level. With the recent introduction of Theater Arts one secondary School has entered students for the exam. Only three schools have been able offer music up to that level. Other students who opt for the music exam have to access private tuition offered at the St Lucia School of Music.

Primary Level

At the primary level, there is incidental use of arts for enhancing the teaching of the more academic subjects or for school shows. Exposure to some form of artistic experience exists through school clubs or enrichment activities once a week where students choose an area of interest. These activities target performance with no specific learner outcomes. This approach does not cater for “Arts Education for All”

Although a primary music curriculum exists few schools engage all students in general classroom music. About 40% of the Island’s primary schools expose every child to General Music Education. These programs are conducted by Teachers who were trained in General Classroom at the St Lucia school of Music. Others focus on a small school choir, a recorder ensemble or general assembly where children sing together.

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The Ministry of Education initiated a string program at the primary level two years ago to ensure that young students were exposed at an earlier age to the string instruments. The program is conducted at four schools and is coordinated by the St. Lucia School of Music.

The Ministry provided instruments to begin the program. Parents are very keen in this instrumental program. Those who can afford have found it necessary to purchase instruments for their children. The program is doing very well. The students’ level of achievement of their instruments is remarkable. It is expected that the program will expand once teachers and instruments are available.

Festivals/competitions

The Ministry of Education has re-introduced National festivals and competitions to help improve level of performance and for early detection of musically gifted children. Individual School districts organize Concerts /Festivals at the end of the first or third term. This gives an opportunity to involve the younger student in Art Drama Dance and music. Other Government Ministries or non-governmental organizations sponsor competitions which involves artistic productions.

Teacher Training

Most teachers at the Secondary have been trained in one art Discipline. The Majority of those who teach have not been trained in Arts education although they are skilled and knowledgeable in the discipline. They are guided by syllabus/curriculum that are available.

Fifteen years ago the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the St Lucia school of Music training program in music education for teachers. The program included a basic and advanced level. The basic level prepared teachers for the Primary Music Education and the Advanced for the Secondary level. There has been no local training for the past eight years. However two teachers from the Secondary level have pursued further training in Music Education. One has completed a first degree. Only Five St. Lucians possess Degrees in Music Education

The local training of teacher in Arts Education has been available only in Music. Some aspect of the various art disciplines is done at the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College but is not geared toward teaching of the Arts. It is only done as an elective. There is no guarantee that teachers completing studies in teacher Education at the college can manage the teaching of all arts at the primary level. There are more Secondary teachers trained in Visual arts and creative writing than in other areas of the arts.

Community Based Arts Education Programmes

Community based Arts Education programs contribute significantly in filling in some of the loopholes created by the lack of Arts education in schools. These programs, however, cater to a gifted or fortunate few.

A number of Dance Companies /schools exist where children and teenagers are trained in performance. Two of these, The St Lucia School of Ballet and Modern dance and the Chrystilites Dance Academy are directed by qualified Dance Education Tutors. Students are prepared for external examination and have records of high standards of achievement in spite of the lack of general public support for the programs.

The St Lucia School of music is the leading institution in music Education. It facilitates the training of teachers, performers, composers and other persons who want to use music as a leisure time activity. The institution has turned out a number of young budding St Lucian Musicians. Students continue to excel in External Examinations.

A music Education Centre operated by a Singing group from the small fishing village of the Anse la Raye is raising the image of a community considered to be one of

the poorest in St Lucia. Children from underprivileged families as well as other talented children are given the opportunity to be engaged in musical activities ranging from singing to playing a range of affordable instruments. The work of this centre supports the musical performance of the students at the village's primary school. The students have been able to excel in external music exams.

The Cultural Development Foundation organizes summer activities in Visual and performing arts. These summer activities are usually held in at least four zones on the Island. Although these are very good activities, the less fortunate who may possess the talent are not always able to access them.

The Cultural Development Foundation has from time to time organized the Production of Musical and other plays targeting young performers.

Problems Facing Arts Education in St Lucia

Participants at the conferences identified the major problems affecting the progress of arts education as follows:

- Lack of trained teachers in the various Art disciplines
- Inadequate facilities – rooms, equipment, resource materials
- Society's Ignorance about the social and economic value of Arts Education
- Absence of a Policy on Arts education
- Poor investment in Arts Education by Government at the School and community level
- Absence of Curriculum Guides for some art subjects especially at the elementary level.
- Lack of encouragement or support by principal, parents and teacher of non art subjects for students who show interest in pursuing studies in the Arts
- Music teachers are faced with the challenge of dealing with students who have not had sufficient musical experiences required to take the CXC music exam. The Music class at Form four becomes a dumping ground for students whom other teachers consider failures and unfit for business, language or science subjects.

Achievements in Arts Education

- The St Lucia school of Music has established branches in the North and South of the Island
- Music Scholarships are awarded annually by the St. Lucia school of Music to Needy talented students
- There has been Collaborative work between the Ministry of Education and the St. Lucia School of Music for teacher training and instrumental training for students at the primary and secondary level
- There are Private Dance Institutions attempting to meet the needs of the talented Students
- Efforts by teachers of the Literature and Creative Writing at the Secondary schools to provide students with the experience of writing, producing and acting in the absence of Dance and Drama teachers or a Curriculum Guide
- A lower Secondary curriculum in Theater Arts Curriculum was produced recently and the Music Curriculum has been revised.
- A K-6 music curriculum guide has been for produced
- The Arts ,especially drama have been used to educate young persons about HIV/Aids and other social problems
- The arts have been included on the priority list for training at the first degree level.

Recommendations for the Implementation of Quality Arts Education

- Considering the increase in violent behaviour among children and teenagers, the increasing rate of school dropouts and the many under achievers in academic subjects at the primary and secondary level the implementation of quality arts Education must be tackled with urgency.

★ Changing Mentality towards Arts Education

In order to successfully implement Arts education, the first step is to change the Society's mentality about Arts education. There is need to educate parents, principals, teachers and those who manage the education system and implement policies about the value of placing the arts at the same level as other subjects on the curriculum. Parents Society and administration who do not have a wholesome acceptance of the arts prevent and stifle its development. Children must not be allowed to look like failures in the system because they have not excelled in Maths Language and Science.

★ Curriculum, Instruction and assessment

Arts Education must develop side by side with the academic subjects and should be made compulsory from grades K - 8. Earlier training in arts education will create a greater impact on the Society

There must be a clear definition of the Arts education is meant to be in the Curriculum. Educators must be aware of what it should entail and what its outcome should be. There must be a distinction between elective arts and a required arts program .A general arts education program is recommended for all students from K-8. An elective is recommended from grades 9-11. Talented students at the K-8 level should be recruited in musical ensembles, dance and drama groups, visual art and creative writing clubs/groups. Scholarships can be secured for talented students to study at private studios when the school is unable to offer this facility.

Cultural Biases must be avoided in planning curriculum to meet the need of particular societies. Learning process should take children from what is known to them,(their cultural heritage) to the unknown. Arts must be expressed first in language(oral and symbolic) that represents their mother tongue (their first language). The appreciation and know

ledge of one's identity is important in human development. Development best starts by knowing who you are.

The problem of curriculum overload must be considered in the implementation of Quality Arts Education. There is the tendency to integrate art subjects with academic subjects. This creates a situation where the art subject is used to facilitate learning in other subjects. Arts should not be taught as a means of enriching other subjects. With this practice the concepts, skills and values directly related to the art subject are often neglected. Integration is recommended when necessary among art subjects.

Careful planning and mapping of the School's curriculum can avoid duplication of certain concepts and skills, attitudes and common to Arts and some academic subject. This will help to avoid the neglect of outcomes of the Arts curriculum. Integration is recommended for grades K-2 but must be carefully planned so that students are not robbed of any knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that must be achieved by grade Two.

One must guard against situations in which examinations drive the curriculum. Unless the arts are included in the National assessment of students' achievement the arts will be given little attention. When teachers are under pressure to accomplish complete objectives in Math, Science, Social Studies, and Language Arts, for examination purposes most elementary teachers will quickly put aside the arts. They do not find it possible to add arts to their teaching load. The arts therefore should be part of National assessment of educational achievement.

Standards must be developed for Arts education and there must be a distinction in standards required for elective (specialized instruction for talented) and required arts (General Arts Education for all students) instruction.

With the initiation of the Caribbean Single Market Economy (CSME,) Caribbean countries should consider setting common standards for Arts Education.

Assessment strategies must be carefully considered lest the arts be treated as information based subjects and create additional experiences of failures on the part of students. The use of rubrics and rating scales from Excellent to poor can help to make qualitative assessment of Students' achievements. Students must be given an opportunity to judge their performance and make adjustments. They should discover the areas of the arts in which they are most capable of success. They should be assessed by the progress they have made rather than the areas in which they are not capable of performing.

★ Teacher Training

Arts Education must be sequential learning taught by a trained teacher. Unpleasant experiences due to poor teaching of the subject may scar individuals and cause them to develop a negative attitude to the subject. Arts subjects must be handled delicately as it involves not merely transmission of knowledge about the arts but brings persons into contact with themselves. It deals with the education of the senses. Teacher training must therefore be seriously considered in planning for implementation of arts education. Teachers' training institutions should ensure that teachers, especially those trained for Elementary Education receive some exposure to General Arts Education. Where Elementary

eachers have not received training they should be assisted by a specialist teacher. Secondary school teachers should possess a first degree or its equivalent.

Structures should be put in place where teachers can be trained locally in methodology if they have performance skills or theoretical knowledge. It is necessary for teachers to understand the philosophy and goals of arts education in order to execute arts instruction effectively. One must recognize that a degree in the practical or theoretical or practical aspect of a subject does not necessarily make this person an effective teacher.

★ **Recognition of Arts Teachers**

Art teachers must be made to feel important and gain the same recognition as other teachers on staff. If the value of the arts teacher is not recognized, they may resort to private instruction or making money as a performer/producer. Schools will continue to be short of qualified arts teachers.

They should not be viewed as persons who have nothing else to do or whose work requires no effort. Art teachers on staff should not be considered floating teachers who replace any missing teacher and rob students of an enriching Arts class.

★ **Advocacy**

Arts educators must become advocates for the arts. Arts educators must come together and speak with one voice in order to create a positive impact on the mind of those who guide policies for education. The formation of Arts Educators' Associations will certainly play a major role in creating the kind of impact required.

There is need for a department of arts education in countries where one does not exist. The department can work closely with the Arts Educators Association.

Governments, and non-governmental agencies particularly those of developing countries must be willing to invest in Arts Education if Quality Arts Education is to be implemented successfully. They should open up avenues for careers in the arts so that students may be encouraged to pursue the arts as a career choice.

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