Contextualizing the Road map for Arts Education

Marie Petronilla Deterville

Arts Education in School and Out of School

Curriculum and Materials Development Unit,

Ministry of Education and Culture

St. Lucia

mariepdeterville@hotmail.com
Arts Education In and Out of School

Introduction
Traditionally, Arts Education, in the formal education setting in St. Lucian schools has received the greater part of the limited Government resources allocated for Arts Education. The out of school programmes are managed by groups and individuals. Some of these receive very little and others no funding from Government. In spite of the limited financial resources made available to out-of-School or community Arts Education programmes they continue to contribute significantly to the development of Arts and Culture and make up for the inadequacies of the in-school programme.

Both settings within which Arts Education take place are relevant to the development of the Arts. It is necessary to see how best one can complement the other. The impact of out-of-school arts education on family, the structured after school programmes, and the connections between out of school and in school programmes are areas worth considering, in order to reap the benefits of Arts Education in “building a creative and culturally aware society, encourage a collaborative reflection and action, to garner necessary resources to ensure the more complete integration of arts education into various social cultural and historical situations” as outlined in the Road Map.

This paper focuses on the successes and challenges of Arts Education programme in schools and the out of school programmes, the level and quality of learning that takes place, parents’ involvement and the ways in which they complement each other in the St. Lucian context.

In trying to understand the functions of the programme and what is achievable in each setting, it is necessary to consider the following existing situations.

1. Many families, particularly single parent model with a working mother are faced with the challenges and pressures of monitoring children
after school hours. The out of school programmes help provide opportunities for students to be meaningfully occupied out of the home while parents are still at work.

2. Today’s children and young people are faced with many social problems some of which include drug abuse, unemployment, parental care, gangs, teenage pregnancy. The in-school and out-of-school Arts Education programme can help change the negative trends and create positive attitudes and values among the youth.

3. It is a greater challenge today for leaders who have to plan strategies for dealing with Youth and Children at Risk. The collaborative effort between in-school and out-of-school Arts Education programmes can help address the risky behaviors that we notice in schools and in the communities.

4. There is an overloading of the school curriculum to facilitate modern trends in Education and new areas of knowledge and skills that can contribute to economic growth and deal with social problems. The school may be able to cope with a focus an integrated programme of Arts Education at the primary/elementary and lower secondary level in which standards and outcomes are clearly defined, while the out-of-school programme provide specific training for students with special talents. The out-of-school programmes can facilitate the missing elements of the in-school programmes. This seems to be what works for some schools that support Arts Education.

5. Financial constraints on the part of Government create situations in which Arts Education programme in schools are not able to get the allocation of funds required to make the programme as successful as it can be. Funding for equipment, materials and for setting up structures for the practical components may be very limited. Out of school programmes do make allowances for these needs. However, the number of students that they may be able to accommodate would be
limited. Investment by government and cooperate sponsors can help improve the quality of the services of out-of-school Arts Education providers so that they can accommodate more students, particularly those who are unable to pay private instruction.

**The In-school Arts Education Programmes**

**Music**

St. Lucia has made some significant progress in the area of Music Education in schools since the first World Conference on Arts Education.

There are two Curriculum Officers for Music attached to the Curriculum and Materials Development Unit of the Ministry of Education and Culture. There is presently a Curriculum Guide and a teacher’s Instruction Guide for the K-6 General Classroom Music. The Instruction Guide is intended for the classroom teacher who has limited music knowledge and for the teacher who has basic music knowledge but has received no training in music teaching.

Presently, about 60 percent of the eighty Primary Schools expose every child to music education through the general classroom music programme. The Ministry of Education has made allowances for schools to share music teachers to facilitate General Music Education in all Primary schools. Some school districts have not been able to utilize this arrangement because of a lack of individuals with the necessary musical skills and academic background. Many of those who posses the musical skills do not have the academic qualification to be appointed as teachers in the system.

In addition to general classroom music some schools engage students in choral and instrumental music, most of which take place during lunch break or at the end of the school day. Students are taught to play the recorder and percussion instruments. Presently, about twelve students at each of seven primary schools receive instruction in Strings during school hours.
Not all the general classroom music teachers are skilled in all the practical area of music. The presence of a choir or an instrumental group depends on the strengths of the teacher. Sometimes other teachers on staff with experience in singing are invited to assist with the choir. About 25% of the primary schools have a regular choir. Others may prepare a group for a festival or for a special school activity.

Many outstanding school choirs consist of students who are members of community or church choirs. These choir members are able to bring to the school choir skills and experiences gained from the out-of-school choir programmes

In a few schools where music is not timetabled students are exposed to some singing or recorder playing during co-curricula activities once a week.

Only three of the twenty two Secondary schools on the island offer General Music Education up to Form Five and twelve in the lower forms (I and II). Most students receive one period of 40 minutes and in some instances one hour per week. There is a Curriculum Guide for the Lower Secondary. The Upper Secondary follow the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) Syllabus.

Eight secondary schools have an instrumental ensemble conducted as extra curricular for the students. These consist of wind and steel pan groups. Most students from the instrumental Ensemble are students of the St. Lucia School of Music and community Steel Orchestras.

Due to lack of finance, trained teachers, and an over load of subjects many schools are unable to offer Music as a time tabled subject or as extra curricula.

The Ministry of Education coordinates an annual Choral Singing festival and Competition and an Instrumental Music Festival to provide an opportunity to
showcase talent and to serve as a means of measuring the success of the practical component of the Music Education programme in schools.

**Theatre Arts**
Presently, there are and two Officers attached to support Theatre Arts Instruction at the Secondary level and to establish a structure for Visual and Performing Arts Education at the Lower primary and Upper Primary Levels.

Ten schools teach Theatre Arts at the Lower Secondary Level and are unable to carry through to the CSEC Level because of a lack of trained teachers and an overload of subjects. Schools also lack the facilities/space that makes it practical to prepare students for examination. Only Three schools presently offer the Subject at the CSEC level. Six out of the twenty two secondary schools have Drama groups

Theatre Arts is not taught at as a time tabled subject at the primary level. Only one school exposes all students to a Theatre Arts programme by introducing it as a time tabled subject. A few students may be involved in activities related to theatre during co-curricula activities held for about forty five minutes to one hour weekly.

**Visual Arts**
There is not a structured programme for Visual Arts at the Primary level. However, most schools would engage students in some creative work during co-curricula activities or may have an Art and Craft period. At the Secondary Schools students are engaged in Art and Craft at the Lower Forms. Only four school presently prepare students for Visual Arts at the CSEC Level

**Dance**
Dance is one area of the Arts not developed in schools. There is no structured programme. Some element of movement is done during Physical Education lessons. Only one Secondary has a structured Dance Education programme. Some dance activity may take place during co-curricula. Many schools
depend of community Artists to assist with dance instruction when they prepare for school events or national celebrations.

A co-curricula activity is one of ways in which many schools try to cater for the arts. The concern is that there is no guarantee that students are exposed to any structured learning experience with any specific learning outcomes and few children continue to benefit from the value of Arts Education.

**Out-of- School Arts Education**

The out-of-school programmes in St. Lucia has continued to play a very important role in providing opportunities for young people to participate in performances in the Arts and for developing their talents. They have served as the source for knowledge and skills development in the various art forms and for sustaining cultural forms and practices. Students of Dance and Music are exposed to international exams and are guided in career choices and further studies. A large number of young people are also engaged in the various programmes as a leisure time activity. In discussions with leaders and students one can identify the many values and virtues (giving, sharing, cooperation, respect, responsibility, humility, patience, endurance, patriotism) that the students learn from these out-of-school programmes.

Many students who have pursued further studies in Arts education, or who have chosen careers in this field have been highly motivated by the out-of-school programmes. The majority of music and theatre teachers in the school system got their foundation training from the out of school programmes.

The following are out-of-school programmes that presently exist and contribute significantly to the development of the Arts and Culture, support the in-school programme and help in the nurturing of leaders and balanced citizens in the St Lucian society.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Coordination/Management</th>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helen Folk Dancers</td>
<td>Mrs. Theresa Hall –Retired teacher</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>Castries in the North and surrounding communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver Shadows dance Academy</td>
<td>Mr. Barry George Private Tutor</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Castries in the North and surrounding Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chrystalites Dance Academy</td>
<td>Mrs. Christine Samuel Private Teacher</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Castries in the North and surrounding communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St.Lucia School of Ballet and Modern Dance</td>
<td>Mrs. Theresa Collymore</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Castries in the North and Vieux Fort in the South and Surrounding Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St.Lucia School of Music</td>
<td>Government Assisted with a Board of Directors</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>Castries in the North and Vieux Fort in the South and surrounding communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.Cecilian Rays Choir</td>
<td>Cecilian Rays Music Organization</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Anse la Raye Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.Charles Cadet Youth Orchestra</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.Music Education Centre</td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Coordination/Management</td>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Performing Arts Company (SPAC)</td>
<td>Curriculum and materials Development Unit, Ministry of Education and Culture</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Students from North and South of the Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Arts</td>
<td>Cultural Development Foundation</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Students from north and south of the island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS Orchestra Project</td>
<td>OAS, Ministry of Social transformation, St. Lucia School of Music, Ministry of Education</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Sub-urban Community of Marchand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The numbers indicated in the table above are representative of children and young people involved in the programmes. There are other small community groups particularly in the area of folk music and dance that are not reflected in this table. The table represents the more structured programmes.

Generally, these various out-of-school Arts Education programmes provide support for each other and impact on the school system. This is evident when there are community functions, when schools organize concerts and talent shows or are invited to participate in performing arts activities organized by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Parents play a very important role in the function of these groups providing financial, technical and moral support especially when the programme are free and parents can see the benefits to the child. Parents who may see their payment of fees as their only commitment normally ensures that the child attend classes and are interested in finding out about their progress. Sometimes parents become interested in the subject and may join a class so that they can assist the child. Many parents are grateful to organizers of these programmes for the discipline and positive character that the students develop.
One can highlight a number of ways in which the St Lucia School of Music, the Helen Folk Dancers, the St Lucia School of Ballet and Modern dance, the Christylites and Silver Shadows Dance Academy, the Students Performing Arts Company (SPAC) impact on the Performing Arts Education in school and nurturing talent among the youth of St. Lucia.

One very interesting and significant impact is the Cecilian Rays Music Organization. The group established in 1981 in a small fishing village with a population of approximately 2000 people on the West Coast of St. Lucia. Twelve members of the Catholic Church Choir who were very passionate about singing wanted to explore other and forms of choral music including St. Lucia’s Folk tradition.

The Cecilian Rays has maintained an outstanding Choral tradition since 1981, established a General Music Education programme focused on listening, performing and creating in 1996 and initiated St. Lucia’s first Community Youth Orchestra in 2008. Their impact can be identified through the performance of the Anse la Raye Primary School Choir and more recently in the performance of the Leon Hess Secondary School near the City of Castries.

The Anse la Raye Primary School Choir has maintained a tradition of excellence in Choral Singing and has been the envy of many schools. They have often gained first place in the National Schools Choral Singing Championship and on a few occasions the second place. The association of many of the students with the Cecilian Rays through their membership or parents who were former members impacts on the standards that the students set for themselves and for the teacher responsible for the choir.

The string programme introduced at the Anse la Raye Primary School have developed very quickly because all the students recruited in the programme were exposed to the general Music Education programme conducted by the Cecilian Rays Music Organization. Many of these students have been recruited in the St Lucia school of Music String Orchestra. The students are
also part of the Charles Cadet Youth Orchestra building their music reading and performance skills.

A secondary school in the City where there was no music taught and no solid choral music programme was brought to fame winning the National Choral Singing Championship for two consecutive years under the leadership of two form five students who were trained by the Cecilian Rays. At least 10 members of the choir were former members of the Primary school choir and members of the Cecilian Rays Choir and Orchestra.

The Anse la Raye students decided that they could make a difference and with a strong determination put the choir together. They studied the test pieces and chose from the Cecilian Rays repertoire their songs of Choice. The students managed the choir from their own musical background and sought the additional help they needed from the Music Curriculum Specialist Music at the Ministry of Education. It was amazing that the Choir had done so well without a Music Teacher as Choral Director. The students who were also part of SPAC were able to use skills in choreography to add to the performance of their choral presentations.

In-school Arts Education programme should impact on and support the artistic and cultural life of the community. In the St Lucian context it is generally the opposite. The part that out-of-school programmes have contributed to the development of the arts in St Lucia cannot be overlooked. This situation may not be unique to St Lucia and may exist in the Caribbean and other countries. Many St. Lucian Artists and Cultural Icons have come out of the out-of school Arts Instruction.

In charting the way forward for Arts Education it may be necessary to consider investing more in the out-of-school programmes. There must be a monitoring system to ensure that these programmes are structured and operated by approved standards especially if funds are invested.