

The Role of 'Political Will' in implementing Arts Education in Tanzania

Vicensia Shule

Developing the capacity of arts education practitioners: education and training system

University of Dar es Salaam & International Drama/Theatre and Education Association (IDEA), Tanzania

vicensiashule@yahoo.com

Paper

Key words: Africa, Arts, Education, Tanzania, Theatre

Introduction

Perhaps one can argue that there is no such a thing like arts education without political will in Tanzania. This statement sets to describe the scenario in which arts education should be argued for or against. Looking at the global economic trend of neoliberalism, it is equally important to argue for education which will not only develop children cognitive skills but also act as a foundation for their life skills to survive global challenges. This paper reviews the process of mainstreaming arts education in Tanzanian secondary education and highlights the challenges faced in fulfilling such demand. It argues that although there are some social and economic setbacks, lack of political will remains as fundamental challenge in the promotion of arts education. It further argues that there is a need to re-consider introducing arts education and make it compulsory from the primary to secondary levels, since the former is a right to every child in Tanzania and many African countries. This will be in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and UNESCO Road Map respectively (UNESCO, Road Map for Arts Education, 2006).

In analysing the way arts education is conceptualized in Tanzania, it is important to differentiate on how it is perceived. There are several cases to describe it. Sanga (2009, pp. 18-25) described theatre as a subject, as a teaching pedagogy and as an extracurricular activity. In addition arts education can be described as empowerment and liberation approach.

Arts education Case Studies

In 2008 Tanzanian government decided to introduce art subjects such as theatre in the secondary school curriculum as examinable subjects. This was part of the 1997 Tanzania Cultural Policy implementation. The policy outlines the need for such inclusion as part of children's mental development and a strategy for 'national culture' restoration (Wizara ya

Elimu na Utamaduni, 1997). Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates the right for individuals to enjoy art. To complement this provision, UNESCO Road Map provided for such need and right for arts education.

The concept, content and context in which arts education phenomena is described in Tanzania is not abstract. There are several case studies to prove its effectiveness. This paper will describe two examples i.e. Children Theatre Project (CTP) and *Tuseme* (Let's Speak Out) girls' theatre empowerment project. The CTP which started in 1989 and *Tuseme* which was initiated in 1996 have proved to be one of the key approaches in raising children and students' participation in school and out of school discussions. CTP as for *Tuseme* were coordinated by Professors; Amandina Lihamba and Penina Mlama under the auspices of the Department of Fine and Performing Arts at the University of Dar es Salaam. CTP which targeted pupils in primary schools proved that theatre plays a crucial role in the development of children mentally, socially, physically and psychologically. "The experience from that programme [CTP] taught us that in the contemporary Tanzanian society children were not provided with enough opportunities in which art and culture were part of their education and development" (Lihamba, 2007, p. 8).

Seven years later after CTP *Tuseme* was initiated. *Tuseme* was prompted by the positive outcomes of Children Theatre Project (CTP). The initiative to come up with *Tuseme* was also a result of a research which showed girls' performance in secondary schools as lower in comparison to that of boys. In describing the initiative Lihamba (2007, p. 10) argues that:

Tuseme was a response to issues of girls in secondary schools. There were clear signs and evidence that the few girls who managed to enter secondary education either dropped out before completion, did not perform as well as the boys or completed with a number of problems which acted as obstacles to their future development. Research had shown that girls dropped out of school due to unwanted pregnancies, pressure to enter into early marriages, sexual harassments within and outside schools and the factor of poverty (Lihamba, 2007, p. 10).

Therefore, in general, *Tuseme* aimed at increasing the enrolment rate, developing the retention abilities and improving the performance of girls in secondary schools. As a theatre process, *Tuseme* envisions a society in which girls excel in academics and are self-confident and able to fight for their basic rights, both in their communities and in the country as whole (Nyoni, et al., 2004, p. 6). Mlama (2005, p. 15) clearly points out that "many women display characteristics of disempowerment which include lack of self confidence, assertiveness and self esteem, inability or reluctance to make decisions, fear to challenge injustices, helplessness in fighting the injustices meted out to them and lack of courage to fight for their rights or to speak out". Considering women's disadvantaged upbringing and the disempowerment they suffer as a result of this, it becomes important for artists to intervene in

their educational development. Therefore, *Tuseme* was geared towards addressing socio-cultural practices which hindered girls' performance in secondary schools and reduced their chances of entering university.

After ten years of being a pilot project, *Tuseme* as well as CTP were mainstreamed in the Tanzanian education system in 2005. Thus, they were adopted as best practices not only to facilitate the Education for All (EFA) goal of 2015 but also to serve as a tool for the attainment of the national *Vision 2025*. *Vision 2025* is a Tanzanian developmental vision which mapped Tanzania as a developed country both socially and economically through assumed processes and objectives. At the time of mainstreaming, 25 schools in all the 21 mainland regions in Tanzania were already introduced to *Tuseme*. These schools were jointly coordinated by the Department of Fine and Performing Arts of the University of Dar es Salaam and Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) - Tanzanian Chapter. FAWE is an African organization dedicated to the promotion of girls' education in Africa. FAWE aims at forging intellectual links and networks with scholars, activists, students, and policy makers inside and outside Africa, and participating actively in continental and global debates on issues specifically relevant or related to African women.

Tanzanian Cultural Policy and Arts education Challenges

The challenges of implementing arts education in Tanzania is also related to the areas in which it is practiced i.e. as a subject, as a teaching pedagogy, as an extracurricular activity as empowerment and liberation approach. Children Theatre Project (CTP) and tried to balance between these areas in relation to arts education in Tanzania. To some extent, the enactment of the Cultural Policy of 1997 supported the findings and achievements of both CTP and *Tuseme*. The policy provided various provisions which calls for the need to have art especially theatre arts subjects as part of the curriculum. The 1997 Cultural Policy's clauses 2.1.2 (1997, p. 4) and 6.2.5 (1997, p. 19) both state the necessity of introducing arts (music, fine art, sculpture and the performing arts) as examinable subjects in both primary and secondary schools. However it is not until 2008, that the government implemented such provision. Although the outcomes are yet to be realised, a number of challenges can be identified.

Looking at art as a subject in secondary schools, insufficient teachers, teaching and learning materials are some of the challenges. Taking an example of 2007, Mmasy (2009) evidences that there were only five teachers' graduates from Butimba Teachers Training College; the only art teachers' college in Tanzania. Regardless of having few teachers, over crowd in classes and lack of reference materials is another challenge. One should understand that the

process of producing learning materials for students in Tanzania is coordinated by the Curriculum Development Department in the Ministry of Education. On the other hand in secondary schools, students are being taught in the English language, which prevents them from understanding arts as a simulacrum of their culture, which is mainly reflected in the language of Kiswahili. On the other hand, Sanga (2009, p. 21) shows clearly that art subjects such as theatre, are not regarded as subjects in primary schools but rather they are categorised as vocational skills.

Using art as a teaching pedagogy has proved to allow students to participate in the learning process i.e. learner's centred approach. Lack of trained teachers in arts education results into poor implementation of the teaching pedagogy. In some cases, teachers argue that art as a teaching pedagogy confuse students in understanding the content of the subject (2009, p. 20). Regardless of the attitudinal confusion propagated by some teachers, it has been observed that art especially theatre acts as a foundation for good and harmonious relationship between teachers and students in the learning process (Mmasy, 2010).

Another challenge of implementing arts education lies on the fact that there is no time allocated for extracurricular activities in the schools' timetables (Sanga, 2009, p. 24). The school teaching contact hours are pre determined by the Ministry of Education. It is difficult therefore to insert art within such rigid teaching schedule as the ministry responsible does not provide guideline on the systematic way to go about it. Furthermore, practicing art as extracurricular activity is associated with prostitution especially for girls as compared to boys (Sanga, 2009, p. 25).

Moreover, the process of using arts education as empowerment and liberation approach becomes more sensitive in a place where the dominant class prefers to continue to dominate. Using Children Theatre Project (CTP) in primary schools and *Tuseme* project in secondary schools, cases of students 'over empowerment' were reported. In such a scenario one may describe it as a reflection of crude teaching methods which are basically teachers' centred rather than the opposite.

Generally, arts education faces a lot of challenges which are political than social or economic. Since the Ministry of Education has failed to provide a guideline and allocate budget for its implementation, art is always marginalised and perceived as a burden to the school management. Others argue further that as a subject art cannot produce students who can compete in a global market (Sanga, 2009, p. 27). This neoliberal attitude which is market centred, forgets the fact that individual skills contributes more to the labour market as they

are in most cases unique and creative. Such uniqueness is the one which adds value to the labour market.

Conclusion

Several studies have outlined the challenges of implementing arts education in Tanzania and other sub Saharan countries in Africa from social and economic perspectives. This paper tried to associate or link such challenges with the governing politics and policies. Lack of political will to implement arts education in primary and secondary schools has resulted into a decade delay in implementing the 1997 Cultural Policy in secondary schools in Tanzania. In primary schools no clear directives have been provided on whether art to be taught as examinable subject or not.

Looking at the challenges of implementing arts education in Tanzania there is evidence that, there is a fundamental setback which hinders such right to children. It is important also to note that, the Ministry of Education is aware on the values in which art adds to the children social and mental growth. The research done and experiences for Children Theatre Project (CTP) and *Tuseme* lays a foundation to argue that, it is not out of ignorance that arts education is not implemented but due to lack of political will. It is for the Ministry of Education to provide a way forward for primary schools and allocate enough resources for secondary schools so as to facilitate arts education as one of the alternatives to global challenges and hence provide sustainable development.

Works Cited

- Lihamba, A. (2007). *Gender Perspective in Arts and Cultural Education*. Bagamoyo: The Norad Programme in Arts and Cultural Education (ACE).
- Mlamba, P. (2005). *Education for Rural People in Africa: Policy Lessons, Options and Priorities*. Addis Ababa: FAO, IIEP/UNESCO and ADEA.
- Mmasy, G. (2009). *Setbacks on Implementing New Theatre Art Syllabus*. Retrieved August 11, 2009
- Mmasy, G. (2010). *Theatre Arts for Children and Youth*. Retrieved April 7th, 2010, from thebrightshadow.blogspot.com: <http://thebrightshadow.blogspot.com/>
- Nyoni, F., Makoye, H., Mwakalinga, M., Ndomondo, M., Shule, V., Njeweale, D., et al. (2004). *Tuseme Guide Kit*. Dar es Salaam: University of Dar es Salaam.
- Sanga, D. N. (2009). *Why Do Schools Need Theatre? Experience from Primary School in Tanzania*. MA Dissertation: International Institute of Social Studies, Netherlands.
- UNESCO. (2003). *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2003/4*. UNESCO.
- UNESCO. (2006). *Road Map for Arts Education*. Lisbon: The World Conference on Arts Education.
- Wizara ya Elimu na Utamaduni. (1997). *Sera ya Utamaduni*. Dar es Salaam.