



# Art and Design Discourse: A Critical Review of Botswana Lower Primary School Creative and Performing Arts Texts for Curricula Relevance and Alignment

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## Abstract

A textbook is an indispensable resource in both traditional and modern classrooms. It is especially critical to the beginning teacher as it spells out the material to be learnt and the appropriate pedagogical strategies. Critical texts for the lower primary school in the CAPA curriculum include teachers' guides and learners' textbooks. This study investigated the extent to which art and design textbooks at lower primary are aligned with the national CAPA curriculum with special reference to art and design as a discipline. The study examined the curriculum and the accompanying reference texts for relevance and alignment. A qualitative case study was employed whereby eight teachers and four practical subject supervisors were purposively selected and interviewed. Discourse analysis of critical texts triangulated the elite interviews. Teachers raised concern that both pupils' textbooks and teachers' guides partially covered the curricula topics. They expressed preference for teachers' guides to textbooks arguing that the former better articulate lesson objectives. Nevertheless they acknowledged the role of textbooks in providing activities that cut across curriculum subjects. Thus, the study recommends review of the texts for better curricula alignment and improved articulation of topics and objectives of the art and design curriculum.

**Keywords:** Creative, Performing Arts, Art and Design, Lower primary, Learners' textbooks, Teachers' guides, Curricular relevance.

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## INTRODUCTION

Lower primary in the Botswana education system involves standard one to four classes which are the first four stages of the seven levels in primary school education. Practical subjects at this level were introduced in 2002 and are grouped and taught as one subject termed Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA). The combination of practical subjects was a result of the recommendation by an American consultant called Cream Wright (1995). Wright (1995, p. i) justifies, “this in turn would contribute to the critical task of transforming Botswana’s educational goals and aspirations into viable programmes that promote high quality basic education in the country.” The subjects include: art and design, music, drama, physical education and design and technology. This subject was introduced to prepare children for upper primary and later secondary school education where children are required to take practical subjects as optional courses. The Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation (CDED) (2005, p. 11) justifies the main aim of the CAPA’s introduction as, “to help students develop their creativity, aesthetic, psychomotor skills and the love for the arts” among others.

Despite its importance, the introduction of practical subjects syllabus posed a challenge to the education system as most teachers lacked knowledges and skills in some or all these disciplines. The Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation (2006, p. 36) states that:

“An issue related to the integrated nature of CAPA was that some teachers are knowledgeable in only one aspect of the subject and invariably face problems in others. For instance, those who studied Music may have difficulties in Design and Technology or any other specialized aspect of CAPA. In this case, teachers seem to have a lot of problems with Music and Art than any of the aspects of CAPA”.

Mannathoko (2009) reveals that the study was undertaken to identify the major constraints in the implementation of the lower primary CAPA syllabus and to provide feedback to inform the upper primary implementation programme, “The intentions of the department’s evaluation were of good use to the development of these new programmes” (Mannathoko, 2009).

The CAPA syllabus was accompanied by the teacher’s guide designed by the Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation to guide teachers in the planning and teaching of the subject. Pupils’ textbooks were also designed by various publishers to simplify and supplement the content delivered by teachers. These references were designed to advise teachers on the approaches, methods, content and activities to provide pupils for effective learning. Thus, the CDED report (2005, p. 11) explains that “instructional materials are kingpin to learning. It is important that Councils provide adequate recommended books at least core texts, to schools and reduce infiltration of non-recommended materials as, in most cases have been rejected for sound reasons.” Relevant information would enhance the teaching and learning and guide teachers with limited knowledge in the arts hence provide quality education. The Human Resource Development Council (HRDC) cited in (ETSSP, 2015-2020) advocate for a shift from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based economy aligning with the Botswana Education policy frameworks such as; Education and Training Sector Strategies Plan (ETSSP, 2015-2020) and National Curriculum and Assessment Framework (NCAF, 2015) whose mandates and

priorities include improving the quality and relevance of education among others. Providing relevant textbooks with exercises made to engage learners in independent learning will address the Outcome Based Education (OBE) which is to be introduced in Botswana Education system effecting 2019. Art and design by nature is a discipline which promotes independent learning as it deals mostly with development of practical skills and attitudes.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study intended to examine the extent to which art and design reference texts at lower primary are aligned to art and design content in the national Creative And Performing Arts curriculum.

### **Research Questions**

This study was framed to answer the research questions below:

- To what extent do art and design reference materials cover the topics and objectives of the syllabus?
- To what extent do art and design reference materials address the topics, attainment targets and objectives of the syllabus?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Textbooks, just like other teaching and learning media have to appeal to learners if students are to benefit from the resources. They heighten conceptual grasp and understanding by learners. Thus effective visual cues and other sensory elements have to be effectively utilised for maximum learning. Rwambiwa and Driscoll (1984) cited in Oyedele, Rwambiwa and Mamvuto (2013) observes that pupils' retention levels are as high as 30% if visual are effectively used. This means visual learning strategy is enhanced. Montgomery (1995) argues that visual learners grasp concepts better as they think in pictures and images. This complements other learning strategies such as auditory and the kinesthetic/tactile. Dale cited in Oyedele, Rwambiwa and Mamvuto (2013) agrees in his cone of experience that visual representation is a key concept in textbook formulation and organisation. This is in addition to how textual materials are organised for effective conceptual grasp at the lower primary school level critical for later learning. I used this as a theoretical lens to understand the effectiveness and impact of textbooks for the Botswana lower primary school.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Art and design education in Botswana primary school is among the practical subjects, which are combined as one subject under the umbrella Creative And Performing Arts as per Cream Wright's (1995) recommendation. CAPA programme according to Mannathoko (2009) was prompted by the Botswana's Vision (2016, p. 18) which argued that "education has not been adequately geared to the needs of the country, and the job market." Vision 2016 suggests that emphasis be on technical and practical subjects and business studies to address education for 21<sup>st</sup>

century. According to CDED (2005) CAPA was introduced as a multidisciplinary subject to ensure that learners acquire creativity, critical, self-reliant, problem solving skills among others. Research has proven that Botswana primary school teachers encountered difficulties in implementing the CAPA syllabus due to limited knowledge and skills in the arts area. As a result they depended on teachers' guides and pupils' textbooks as source of information. Teachers in teacher education institutions specialise in one or two arts disciplines and have difficulties in implementing other CAPA disciplines within CAPA syllabus. It is even more challenging as some of these schools do not have teacher's guides and teachers depend on pupils' textbooks.

Botswana as a developing country depends on textbooks as the main source of information for teachers and learners. It is therefore essential that these books be of high standard to meet the intended syllabus objectives. Thus, art and design textbooks need to be aligned to the syllabus content and objectives. Characteristics of a good textbook include: its suitability to the level and age of the learner. Aggarwal (2013) argues that a good textbook must match the ability, age and interests of the learner for whom it is intended for. It should cater for child-centred approach. Taking from Aggarwal (2013) this will help achieve the intended goals. The art and design lower primary texts should have content matching their age and level of learning with relevant content to the one in the syllabus. Visible and relevant images should be included to enhance the content as children at this stage grasp content easily when presented in visual form. Thus the textbooks should be child friendly to be easily read by pupils independently.

Dey (2012) advises that textbooks should be attractive. He suggests that lower primary textbooks should be colourful to aid the teaching and learning. Visuals should be supported by brief text to attract and sustain learners' interest. With the same view, Trollope (2013, p. 13) notes that "good textbook should have graphic support to the text and appeal to visual learners." In context, art and design is a practical subject which deals with images and colour as one of its primary elements therefore activities in pupils' textbooks should be a combination of colourful and relevant images and text to assist learners in the exploration of media and techniques. Thus, designing relevant textbooks covering the art and design content will promote quality learning advocated by the recently designed policies in Botswana (ETSSP, 2015-2020; NCAF, 2015) which argue for quality education. If activities included promote child-centred approach, it will cater for the introduction of pathways in early schooling in order for teachers to identify children's talents and nurture them at an early age.

Textbooks should be rich in content as in some instances it is the only source of information especially in developing countries. Archie (2010: 134) argues that:

"textbooks condense vast amounts of knowledge into a source that can be covered during the academic year. Since the sole purpose of textbooks is to inform, they provide a balanced presentation of information. One textbook can replace many other sources, providing the teacher and students with all essential information on a given topic. Textbooks also synthesize knowledge according to academic level, so students can study the same material at various depths".

Thus, relevant art and design textbooks can address teachers' phobia in teaching art and design due to lack of knowledge in the area as they will be guided by activities stipulated in the text. Archie (2010, p. 183) contributes to this debate by arguing that:

“textbooks offer thorough, systematic instruction. Information is generally presented incrementally, and each lesson builds on the previous one. Homeschoolers who are taught with these programs generally perform well...Instead of spending hours creating lessons and schedules, parents who use these programs can simply open the teacher’s guide and teach”.

Furthermore, textbooks promote efficient use of time by presenting information in a straight forward manner with the use of illustrations and activities. It is in this context that art and design textbooks should be aligned to the syllabus so as to ease the teaching, learning and assessment of the subject. A textbook works hand in hand with the teacher’s guide. A teacher’s guide often has a detailed outline of the methodological approaches that the syllabus takes. It is very useful as it dictates how the pupil’s textbook is organised and the suggested activities in the textbook.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study investigated the extent to which art and design primary school reference texts are aligned to art and design content and objectives in the national Creative and Performing Arts curriculum. The study took place in four government primary schools in the South-Central and Central-North regions of Botswana. Qualitative research method was employed considering its strengths on this type of study. The approach gave opportunity to interview participants in their natural sites and hence interact with them. This enabled me to interact with respondents and familiarise myself with the working environment as per Best and Kahn’s (2014) advice. Participants had the opportunity to consult the CAPA reading sources during interviews for reference as they were the focus of the study. Sharing the same sentiment, Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen and Walker (2014) note that qualitative design offers a deeper and complex understanding of what is going on in a setting. Thus, complex issues were addressed adequately.

A case study design within the qualitative paradigm was opted for as it provides opportunities to clarify why certain things happen more than just finding out what happened (Bell 2010). The study examined the CAPA syllabus and the accompanying reference texts for relevance and alignment. Discourse analysis of critical texts triangulated the elite interviews. It further reviewed education policies such as the Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) of 1994 and Basic Education curriculum to identify their contribution in terms of reference materials.

Four practical subject supervisors assigned to supervise arts education and eight lower class teachers; two representing each case study school; were engaged in the study making a total of twelve participants. Interviews took an average of forty minutes. Purposive sampling was applied in selection of class teachers in single streamed schools in Central North region and supervisors. Practical subject supervisors were chosen by virtue of their positions as leaders for CAPA disciplines which include art and design. Researchers such as Gray (2014) argue that purposive sampling is suitable when the researcher desires to study a particular group of people who are anticipated to provide valid data to the study. The interview procedures adopted and adapted Parlett and Hamilton’s (1972) model of illuminative evaluation which advises researchers to recognise the contexts in which educational programmes function (Mannathoko & Major, 2013). Use of a solo instrument (interview guide) designed for various informants within

the study is praised by researchers such as Burns (2000) who argue that it accounts for data triangulation as different questions are involved thus, producing various responses which answer the same research question.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The findings are presented as generated from lower primary teachers and supervisors' interviews. Eight class teachers and four CAPA supervisors contributed to the study by sharing their views on the alignment of art and design content in CAPA syllabus and the prescribed pupils' textbooks and teachers' guides. Data is presented in themes adopted from the research questions.

### **Art and Design Reference Materials' Coverage of Syllabus Content**

#### **Teachers' Voices**

Teachers were first asked how the introduction of CAPA teachers' guides and pupils' books improved their teaching. Responses from teachers of different levels showed same views that teachers' guides were of help to teachers as they addressed almost all the syllabus objectives contrasting experiences with pupils' textbooks where distinct responses were displayed. Excerpts include: *teachers' guides brought changes because it helps with teaching content as textbooks do not address some of the objectives; they helped some of us who lack art experiences but the teacher's guide is better than the textbook as it covers all the objectives in the syllabus. These references made changes to our teaching as they help those with limited knowledge in art, textbooks supplement what we teach and children can work on their own; we do not have standard four teacher's guide, I depend on a textbook but it does not cover some of the topics; the textbook is not that helpful because its information is difficult for us and learners but it is better than nothing, we used not to teach art because it is very difficult to those who never did it in schools; the textbook in some instances helps as it provides learners with activities but it is very shallow; textbooks just like teachers' guides brought changes because it has activities which supplement the teaching; attainment targets are achieved as children develop most of the skills required by the CAPA syllabus; attainment targets are met because learners gain understanding of material and equipment use.*

When asked the extent to which these reference sources covered the syllabus topics, attainment targets and objectives, the responses revealed that both pupils' textbooks and teachers' guides partially covered the curricula content. However, most interviewees expressed preference for teachers' guides to textbooks arguing that the former better articulate lesson objectives as illustrated in the following extracts: *the teacher's guide is better than the textbook because it covers all the objectives in the syllabus; teachers' guides are good; they need to be improved by adding pictures as they are better than textbooks; I do not have a teacher's guide, I depend on the pupil's textbook but it does not cover all the objectives stipulated in the syllabus; the teacher's guide is better although it excluded few information, it helps me because I am not an art specialist; the textbook does not address objectives which sound to be difficult; textbooks have little information; the textbook does not allow teacher's to give home work because it is shallow but the teacher's guide is comprehensive and useful for people who have not studied*

*art; The textbook doesn't promote child- centred approach because its information is scanty, teachers need to say a lot; the teacher's guide covers all the topics and most of the objectives.*

Trollope (2013, p. 13) is of the view that “a good textbook provides various and effective teaching and learning methods to foster logical thinking, inquiry, problem solving, reasoning and application based on concepts and rules.” This will guide teachers with limited knowledge in a specific subject and give pupils the opportunity to approach activities independently following instructions in the textbooks.

I posed a question to find out who are involved in the selection of the textbooks and informants concurred that specialists from colleges of education and primary school teachers work with the CAPA representatives from the Curriculum Development and Evaluation Department (CDED) to select pupils' textbooks following a guide designed by CDED. However, five interviewees were concerned that most of the primary school teachers involved are not experts in the arts. This could be one of the contributory factors to selection of irrelevant sources with inadequate information. Meldrum and Clandfield (2008, p. 77) emphasises that “one primary advantage of using textbooks is that they are written and designed by experts in the topics discussed. Textbook writers keep up-to-date with the research in a particular subject area, which means that teachers and students are presented with the most valuable information in that subject field. If teachers didn't have these experts to rely on, they could miss some of the important advances in a particular area. Textbook writers can be viewed as a teacher's and a student's valuable aid”.

On the other hand, Mahmood (2011, p. 170) advises that “the selection of an appropriate textbook is a process that needs careful attention” because textbooks play a vital role in the teaching and learning of any subject. He viewed textbooks to be essential in the teaching and learning process especially in developing countries such as Botswana arguing that they are accessible sources that teachers and learners can employ according to their needs. Thus, art and design subject experts could write appropriate information relevant to the syllabus content hence helping attaining required targets. According to case study teachers, in cases where more than one text were selected from different publishers, individual schools had the opportunity to make choices on which ones they preferred for their schools hence they used varying textbooks.

## **Desk Research**

CAPA pupils' text books were examined to find out the extent to which they relate to the syllabus. This was found to be vital as it gave a true picture of the relevance of art and design textbooks to CAPA curriculum. The information also triangulated teachers' views on the alignment of the reference sources to the syllabus and data is presented in the table 1 below.

Table 1: Percentage of objectives addressed at the four levels (standard) of learning

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Objectives Addressed</b>	<b>Objectives Omitted</b>
1	71	29
2	74	26
3	68	32
4	97	3

Data in the above table shows that among the 100 specific objectives for standard one, 71% were addressed by the textbook while (29%) were omitted. For standard two, 74% were covered while (26%) were omitted, in standard three, 68% were addressed and (32%) left out and lastly, ninety seven covered in standard four and three omitted. This supports what was expressed by most teachers who viewed art and design textbooks as excluding most of the objectives. However, with standard four, only three objectives were excluded from the 100 objectives which could not have had much impact in pupils' learning compared to the three counter parts.

## **Art and Design Reference Texts' Relevance to the Topic Objectives in the CAPA Syllabus**

### **Teachers' Voices**

The questions asked sought to get teachers' views on the relevance of reference texts to the art and design topic objectives and these are some of the responses:

*The teacher's guide is the only tool I depend on when teaching art, it gives me activities which are relevant to address the objectives in in the syllabus; textbooks can mislead you especially if you are not a specialist; some of the content is wrong; teacher's guide matches well with the syllabus topics but they have used jargons which can only be interpreted by you lecturers; some pictures in the textbooks are not clear; textbook sometimes can embarrass you because some of the pictures are irrelevant and cause lots of arguments among learners; teacher's' guides are comprehensive & relevant while textbooks are so scanty with limited practical activities; some pictures do not relate with the notes; textbooks have more questions than answers, both teacher's guide and pupil's text have relevant content which helps me and learners as I have never studied art; both the references are very useful and relevant to the syllabus as they guide on what to teach; if these references were not there, many of us could not be teaching art because we never went to school for art, they are relevant to the syllabus.*

The presented data shows distinctive views on the relevance of text to art and design content in the syllabus with most teachers favouring the teachers' guide as relevant to the syllabus. However, with limited knowledge and skills in the discipline some teachers encountered difficulties in interpretation of the content and viewed both the teachers' guides and textbooks relevant and useful. Dushi (2012, p. 98) view textbooks as:

“Teachers' best friends at the beginning of their teaching career. They generally contain everything that students are supposed to learn within a certain time frame, so new teachers can focus more on how they teach than on what to teach. Most textbooks are accompanied by a teacher's guide that spells out clearly and in detail every step to be taken in teaching a certain lesson or chapter. They also provide lesson plans, materials and ideas for additional activities”.

Thus, a textbook makes it easy for teachers to align the content they teach to the learners' level of learning. This is achievable with the use of the teacher's guide which helps with suggested activities and methods to apply. In the case of art and design well designed textbooks include media and techniques to be explored.

## **Critical Review of Textbooks**

### **Teachers' Guides**

I had an opportunity to browse the CAPA teachers' guide with the attention on art and design section which is the focus of the study. I did not identify any irrelevance within the teacher's guides. It was comprehensive, covering all the topics and objectives in the syllabus mostly suggesting activities to given to learners.

### **Textbooks**

Unlike the teachers' guide which is adequately addressing the topics and objectives textbooks could have in some instances disadvantaging learners because of its limitations. For example; some pictures in the standard two textbook under the topic 'printmaking, were invisible. It was difficult to tell whether it was a picture of a stone, cloth or any other item. Irrelevant content was also evidenced in one of the textbooks as natural and manmade were listed as types of drawing instead of 'observation, memory and imagination. Invisible images could negatively affect children's learning as Dale cited in Oyedele, Rwambiwa and Mamvuto (2013) argues that visual representation is a key concept in textbook formulation and organisation. These were clearly elaborated in the teachers' guide. The other observation was that there were limited instructions for children to explore media and techniques and this could be a barrier to pupils' development in practical skills. The texts displayed more of listing art and design materials and their images. Nevertheless, some of the teachers acknowledged the role of textbooks in providing activities that cut across curriculum subjects.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The study revealed that art and design teachers' guides are comprehensive and adequately aligned with the national art and design content in the CAPA syllabus hence evidence of achieving the lower primary attainment targets. This is in contrast with the pupils' textbooks which mostly emphasise materials than exploration of art media and techniques. As a result most teachers were worried that textbooks in some instances confuse both teachers and pupils because of scanty content and unclear or vague images. Despite these challenges, teachers viewed both references as of value to the teaching and learning of art and design explaining that teachers' guides suggest content and activities to be given to pupils while pupils' textbooks supplement the taught content. It was also observed that there were similarities and differences of some of the teachers' views in some instances. Desk data validated most of the respondents' views as it was observed that teachers' guides were more comprehensive than pupil's textbooks but textbooks were not found to be as scanty as teachers emphasized. Only few objectives were not addressed in the pupils' textbooks especially in standard one and four.

## Recommendations

In view of the limitations identified from the art and design references the study recommends review of the textbooks for better syllabus alignment and improved articulation of topics and objectives of the art and design syllabus. Education authorities should also liaise with art and design education experts in developing and selection of pupils' textbooks for improvement of art and design education at lower primary. The local government could ensure that all art and design classrooms have adequate reference materials. This will help those teachers with limited art and design knowledge and skills.

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