

# THE ROLE OF ART AND CRAFT

IN NAMIBIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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## TIIVISTELMÄ

Kädentaitojen rooli Namibian peruskoulutuksessa  
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Taiteen maisterin opinnäyte kartoittaa taiteen ja käsityön roolia Namibian peruskoulutuksessa. Työ keskittyy vähävaraisiin kouluihin, joissa taideopetus usein laiminlyödään. Tutkimuskysymys keskittyy taideopetuksen haasteisiin, taiteen arvostukseen ja kehitysehdotuksiin.

Opinnäyte tuo lyhyesti esiin taustatietoja Namibiasta, perusopetuksen historiasta ja nykytilasta.

Työn lähtökohtana on yhteistyöprojekti Suomi-Namibia seuran ja Namibian opetusministeriön alaisuudessa toimivan opetuksen kehitysinstituutin kanssa. Projekti loi tarpeen tutkia taustaa tarkemmin, jotta merkityksellisiä parannusehdotuksia voitaisiin kehittää eteenpäin.

Työ suoritettiin laadullisena tutkimuksena, kenttätöinä valittujen paikallisten kulttuurialan edustajien kanssa Namibiassa tammi-helmikuussa 2013. Syvähaastattelujen tukena käytettiin puolistrukturoitua haastattelupohjaa. Muu tutkimusmateriaali koostuu kirjallisuudesta ja osallistuvista havainnoista kenttätöiden aikana.

## ABSTRACT

The role of art and craft in Namibian primary schools  
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The master thesis focuses on mapping the role of art and craft as part of Namibian primary and secondary schooling. It concentrates on the challenges of marginalized schools, where art education is often neglected. It concentrates on questions; what are the main challenges that State art education is facing in Namibia, how art is appreciated and how the situation could be improved.

The thesis shortly presents general background information about Namibia, its education history and current situation.

The starting point for the thesis was the collaboration project with Finnish-Namibian society, together with National Institute of Educational Development (NIED) in Namibia. The work raised the need to research the background closer, to be able to contribute relevant improvement proposals.

The case study was conducted as qualitative research, as field work with the chosen local Namibian professionals from the culture field during January- February 2013. A semi-structured in-depth interview was used as a research method, supported by literature and participant observations in the field.

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# INTRODUCTION

While planning my research in Namibia, I came across a prejudice that art is seen as a natural part of life everywhere in Africa. People assume that others are born with artistic talents, when it comes to music, dance, hand craft skills and visual art. I observed naïve beliefs among my colleagues in Finland that traditional skills would continue unquestioned in Namibia. This thinking includes a lot of inadvertent support of Western cultural domination, where old traditions in Africa are considered static. Stereotypical thinking is still unfortunately common, and reflects the information that we are given by Western media. Our beliefs about Africa are colored by the different intentions of those publishing information. The problem of unilateral shared information is highlighted in *“The Danger of a Single Story”* by Chimamanda Adichie, a Ted Talk which was also the basis for Niina Turtola’s Namibia-related master thesis. As Adichie notes *“The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.”* (2009) Creating a fuller picture demands more effort than being exposed only to the mainstream news or old defaults.

Culture in Namibia is influenced by globalization, and traditions are challenged by changing social structures, as is happening worldwide. Urbanization is part

of migration in Namibia, as more and more people move to towns in the hope of employment. As the director of National Art Gallery of Namibia Hercules Viljoen points out, in the past the culture of art and handcraft was integrated into everyday life, but those traditions are not kept so strongly alive today. The ideal situation, where families would pass traditional knowledge on to their offspring, changes when people live in towns, rather than in traditional homesteads. Even a short visit to Namibia shows that while music can be heard and dance can still be observed, visual art and appreciation of handmade products no longer play such an important role in culture. People don’t grow up with the traditional artisan skills as they used to when functional daily items or traditional, spiritual objects were made by hand. If the chance to be exposed to the visual arts is not part of everyday life, how can handcraft skills remain?

In Finland the appreciation of handmade items has grown, notifies a recent survey done by The Finnish Crafts Organization Taito Group. (2013) Doing handicrafts is seen as fashionable, modern and shared by people of all ages. Handicrafts play a part in wellbeing through the making process, often collaborative. Even though the current success of handcraft can be seen as a trend, fitting into the spirit of the time, in Finland documentation and traditional

knowledge has been collected relatively well, to be used when needed. How is the traditional, technical handcraft know-how available in Namibia?

The value of Handicraft and art has to be constantly proved in society, no matter where we live. Even though a lot of evidence exists for the essential role of art in holistic personal development, it is often the first subject to suffer when requirements for spending cuts emerge. Thinking is really short-sighted and the general value of art as part of people’s well-being is not recognized. Art has an integral role in developing people’s problem-solving skills in every aspect of life. Art widens a person’s perspective and increases creativity, offering alternative ways to learn and see the world. How is the value of art understood in basic education?

I could generalize that, nowadays, competition and money are guiding society more and more. Schools are pressured to prove their academic success through standardized testing. Examination is not a relevant part of art teaching, so art subjects are often left out of school success measurements. The value of art as a strong support for overall learning ability is neglected. The schools’ role in saving and sustaining tradition has not been taken into account.

Finnish education is often praised for its results, where pupils learn creative, innovative approaches, rather than concentrating on pure facts. (Wagner 2013) How is the situation seen in Namibia?

Art subjects are part of the Namibian basic education curriculum in primary and secondary schools, but the practice faces a lot of challenges. Only a few of government’s 1700 schools are offering proper art education with a qualified art teacher. A lack of art education is common, particularly in the rural areas. What are the main problems preventing art being offered as part of schooling? How is the lack of basic art education affecting the appreciation of handmade goods, and understanding of creativity later on in life?

The case study focuses on surveying the current role of art as part of Namibian primary and secondary schooling. It emphasizes the situation in rural or marginalized schools.

The starting point for the thesis was the opportunity to work for the Finnish-Namibian society’s cooperative project, together with National Institute of Educational Development (NIED) in Namibia. The collaboration raised the need to research the background closer. Due to my previous experiences in Namibia, the interest in social design and the suitable schedule, the link to the master thesis came naturally.

The research opens with the general socioeconomic statistics of Namibia and its educational history, and then introduces the methods used. After the background information, the study goes deeper into the current situation in art education according to the viewpoints of the qualitative interviews’ respondents. The main challenges, the benefits of art and ideas to improve the situation are discussed. The last chapter opens up the personal research challenges, the lessons learned and the plans for the future.

## MY BACKGROUND

I find it interesting to research the meaning of handicrafts and arts, and verify my beliefs in the significance of the field. After working as a visual artist I realized that I am more and more interested in bringing art into social community projects, to use artistic approaches as a method. Within this study and furthermore in the Finnish-Namibian collaboration project, I am able to think about alternative art teaching methods, recycled substitutes for the materials and tools, and collaboration possibilities with the local communities.

I have a sincere interest in Namibia and its culture, and during my degree I have had several chances to get to know the country.

I studied at the University of Namibia UNAM as part of my Bachelor Degree in 2007 and enjoyed my time there a lot. I was lucky to form close relationships, which are alive up to now. After the experience, I did my BA work related to the country. The work consisted of acrylic paintings and photographs taken in Namibia, concentrating on the question of how I experienced being received into a different culture as a stranger. The work was exhibited in several venues, also at the Namibian 20th independence celebration in Finland, held on the 21st of March 2010 in Vantaa.

During my master studies, I did an internship with the Namibian Pambili association in June-July 2009. The internship consisted of two main projects; a beading project for HIV positive women and an employment project for marginalized youth, both in Katutura, Windhoek. For the beading project I designed marketing material for the products and helped with practical running issues, but spent most of my working period with the youth project. My role there was to improve the quality and the visual appearance

of the handcrafted products. I gave general training in designing, pattern making, pricing and marketing of the products.

I have also worked as an assistant facilitator in San Textile Workshop, in northern Namibia, Okongo and at Kunene Craft Center, Opuwo. I joined Potentials 3 workshop “*Design Management*” 2009 as a facilitator, and as an assistant tutor in Potentials 2 workshop “*Design your Action*” 2007.

Altogether I spent nine months in Namibia over three journeys between the years 2007- 2013.

Aalto University has a cooperation program with UNAM for exchange studies, and the University’s late World design research group worked closely with the Namibian craft and art field. Due to this cooperation many master or doctoral theses from the Aalto University have been related to Namibia. (List of the works is at the end of this book.)

I have been working for the Finnish–Namibian Society as a volunteer since 2008. My voluntary work has mainly consisted of organizing small Namibian art exhibitions in several cities in Finland, and one graphic workshop facilitated by Namibian visual artist Elia Shiwoohamba 2011.

Due to these adventures, I had a small but growing knowledge of the country and its culture, and many existing contacts with the people working in the art and handcraft field. Besides the experience, I want to emphasize my position of doing the research, not only as an outsider from a different culture, but also as a visual artist with no pedagogical study background. The work was a great opportunity to widen my perspective and learn.

Unpicking the words:

### ART AND CRAFT

According to the art syllabus guide, the subject called arts includes visual art, music, drama and dance in a primary school level. Handicrafts are not defined separately. (NIED 2007)

In this study, the main focus is not to emphasize any special art form, but to survey the role of the general subject. Due to my educational background, the field observations are focused on to visual arts, including handicrafts. I understand that the concept of art can be expanded to many different methods and forms.

### ART EDUCATION

Art education can be defined in two main ways; as education in art, or as education through art. The difference between the two is the approach; either art is considered as an absolute value or either it is used as a method. Anne Bamford defined education through the arts as art being widely integrated into the whole curriculum, used as a tool to support the learning in every subject. (Bamford 2009, 21)

In the Namibian context, the subject of art is an independent part of the curriculum, but in the majority of cases, the teaching practice does not correspond to the theory. This study aims to explore the possibilities for integrating art into general teaching in Namibia, if the resources for independent art lessons do not exist yet in practice.

### NOTE

In the thesis, I use the word “learner” instead of the word “pupil” to follow the Namibian practice.

### KEY WORDS

Namibia, art, craft, art education, integration of art, community collaboration



# BACKGROUND

Official name: the Republic of Namibia  
Independent since 21.3.1990  
Head of State and Government:  
President Hifikepunye Pohamba  
Parliamentary System: Bicameral  
Population: 2 113 077 (2011)  
Capital: Windhoek / population: 342,000  
Neighboring countries:  
Angola, Botswana, South Africa, Zambia  
Total area: 824,292 sq. km  
Land: 823,290 sq. km  
Water: 1,002 sq. km  
Coastline: 1,572 km  
Administrative divisions: 13 regions; Caprivi,  
Erongo, Hardap, Karas, Khomas, Kunene,  
Ohangwena, Okavango, Omaheke, Omusati,  
Oshana, Oshikoto, Otjozondjupa.  
In the four O region in the Northern-Namibia,  
in Ohangwena, Omusati, Oshana and Oshikoto  
lives 846.000 Namibians.  
Ethnic groups:  
Black 87.5%, white 6%, mixed 6.5%  
About 50% of the population belong to the  
Ovambo tribe and 9% to the Kavangos tribe;  
other ethnic groups include Herero 7%, Damara  
7%, Nama 5%, Caprivian 4%, Bushmen 3%,  
Baster 2%, Tswana 0.5%

Languages: from three language families:  
Indo-European, Bantu and Khoisan  
English (official since independence) 3.4 %  
The most widely spoken languages:  
Oshiwambo dialects by 49% of the population,  
the Khoekhoe language by 11%, Kwangali  
language by 10% and Herero by 10%. Afrikaans  
by 11% (could be considered closest to a lingua  
franca. About 60% of the white population speaks  
Afrikaans, and by most townspeople together  
with English and their native languages),  
German 1%, 1% Portuguese

Religions: Christian 80% to 90% (at least 50%  
Lutheran), indigenous beliefs 10% to 20%  
Life expectancy at birth: 52.17 years  
Median age: 22.1 years  
Literacy: age 15 and over can read and write,  
overall 90% of the population  
Climate:  
desert; hot, dry; rainfall sparse and erratic  
Terrain: mostly high plateau; Namib Desert along  
coast; Kalahari Desert in east  
Natural resources: diamonds, copper, uranium,  
gold, silver, lead, tin, lithium, cadmium, tungsten,  
zinc, salt, hydropower, fish. Suspected deposits of  
oil, coal, and iron ore (CIA 2013, NSA 2013 )

## SHORT REVIEW OF NAMIBIAN HISTORY FROM 1900

Namibia gained its independence from South African rule after a long struggle on the 21st of March 1990.

It had been colonized by Germany in 1884, and named South West Africa. The short German rule witnessed the Herero genocide, where about 80% of the Herero population was killed. The genocide was confessed by the Germans only a hundred years later, in 2004.

In 1915 South-West Africa (SWA) became a territory of South Africa, mandated by the League of Nations. In 1946, the United Nations (former League of Nations) refused to allow South Africa to keep South West Africa under its rule, aiming to bring former German colonies in Africa under UN control. South Africa refused the plan, and SWA was kept a part of South Africa until Independence, though the legality of the matter was questioned. The UN ended the mandate in the 1960s, declaring that South Africa had no right to administer the area, and setting independence as an objective for the country.

As Namibia was under South-African rule, a racial segregation's, Apartheid's policies were in power from 1948.

In 1960, the South West Africa People's Organization (Swapo) was formed from the opposition Ovamboland People's Congress. Swapo launched armed operations against South African occupation in 1966, starting the long independence struggle.

Namibia was the last colony in Africa to gain independence.

(CIA; NSA; SWAPO; Embassy of Finland/WDH; Eriksson 2005; Vakkuri 2012, 365-418)

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

The long history of colonialism and apartheid divided the country strongly into two, affecting every field; people's freedom of movement, education, health care, housing conditions, employment and agriculture. Though apartheid is in the past, farms are still divided into communal farms and commercial ranches with the so-called red line, a veterinary cordon fence. The fence prevents the movement of livestock diseases, but also separates the poorer north. (IFAD)

Even though Namibia is classified as a middle-income country, the income gap between rich and poor is one of the highest in the world. HIV/AIDS, poverty and especially youth unemployment rates are a big concern. Land distribution is extremely unequal.

The structure of the economy ranges from subsistence to modern export industry. Mining and agriculture form the base for the economy. Tourism and deep-sea fishing are important. Namibia is a primary source for gem-quality diamonds and the world's fourth-largest producer of uranium.

Namibia imports foodstuffs, petroleum products and fuel, machinery and equipment, and chemicals. It exports diamonds, copper, gold, zinc, lead, uranium; cattle, processed fish and karakul skins. (CIA)

Farming in Namibia is threatened by prolonged periods of drought, shortage of livestock access to water, land degradation and desertification. (IFA) Drought has been a serious threat during the ongoing summer of 2013, affecting every area of life, including schooling. Due to the drought, many of the communal farmers in the Northern-Namibia are moving to find better areas for the cattle to survive. The children move with their families, if the school cannot offer a hostel to stay. (Kulunga 2013)

The number of people affected with HIV/AIDS has recently decreased, but the overall number is still around 14 % within the adult population. Other health concerns are bacterial diarrhoea, hepatitis A, malaria and typhoid fever. Limited natural freshwater resources are a concern.

Overall poverty rates are high, 55.8% of Namibians live below the poverty line. Poverty is unfortunately common especially in rural areas, mainly in northern Namibia. About 60% of Namibians live in rural areas, where access to proper education, adequate sanitation, gas, electricity and health care are limited. Overall hospital bed density in Namibia is 2.67 beds/ 1,000. Undernourishment of young children living in marginalized families is a concern. Of Namibian children under the age of five years, 17.5% are underweight. 2.7 % are orphans.

Urban population forms 38% of the total, increasing annually by 3.3 %. The fastest growing areas are Khomas and Erongo regions. Growing urbanization has led to the growth of informal settlements surrounding major cities, where living expenses are affordable. Domestic violence, child abuse and alcoholism are of serious concern in Namibia. (IFA, CIA, Finnish-Namibian Society)

## COOPERATION HISTORY BETWEEN NAMIBIA AND FINLAND

The shared history between Finland and Namibia dates back to the year 1869 when Finnish missionaries arrived at Ovamboland in northern Namibia. The missionaries established the evangelic-Lutheran church, but also contributed a lot to the development of health care and education systems.

Finland supported the Namibian independence struggle and Martti Ahtisaari played a significant role in the independence plan as a United Nation's Special Representative. Finland supported SWAPO's Scholarship program during the years 1976 – 1992; as a result 65 Namibian students graduated from various Finnish Universities.

Namibia has long been one of Finland's main target countries for development, but recently cooperation has shifted from long-term Bilateral Grant Assistance to different forms of working together. Within this collaborative framework Finland aims to support commercial and economic development and research.

The trade between the countries is relatively small, but the trade in Namibian meat has grown. Exports from Finland have consisted mainly of machinery and electronics, while the biggest trade has recently been hospital equipment and a marine research vessel being ordered from Finland. Tourism is a potential sector to grow. Travel possibilities to Namibia have been exhibited annually in the Nordic Travel Fair in Helsinki.

The international, institutional partnerships between the countries include the fields of culture, science, education, churches and cities. The cooperation contract between the Aalto University and the University of Namibia serves as an example. Due to the common history, information about Namibia is relatively well available in Finland.

(Embassy of Finland/WDH, Finnish-Namibian Society, Eriksson 2005, Kaakunga 2007)

## SHORT REVIEW OF EDUCATION HISTORY

Namibian educational history has been strongly influenced by missionaries and later by the apartheid system. According to Lahja Lehtonen, the Finnish missionaries started their first literacy classes in Northern Namibia in 1870. The schools initially provided teaching in reading, writing, Bible studies and singing. The first ABD book was published in Ndonga in 1877. (The letter C does not exist in Ndonga.) Basic, modest handcraft was offered. The first Training School for teachers was established 1913 in Oniipa. (Lehtonen 1999, 14-46)

According to a Finnish missionary school's certificate in 1933, other subjects in the school's curriculum were arithmetic, geography, church history, hygiene, sewing and basketry. (Lehtonen 1999, 68) The Roman Catholics and the Rhenish Mission ran part of the missionary schools, but the majority of the schools were ran by the Finnish. (Hartmann et al. 1998, 56)

The missionary schools were taken under governmental rule in 1963. Strong emphasis was now placed on academic subjects. Due to the apartheid system, education was divided according to ethnic group. The South African Bantu education was introduced to black Namibians. The syllabus was planned by the colonial authorities for every ethnic group separately, strengthening the feeling of inequality. Aili Niinikoti mentions that this past system is still affecting most Namibians when it comes to the value of conscience. (2012, 23) *"Northern Namibians were ( ) only taught to become imitators rather than to become innovators"* (Niinikoti 2012, 24)

*"There is no place for [the Bantu] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour ... What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice? That is quite*

*absurd. Education must train people in accordance with their opportunities in life, according to the sphere in which they live."* (Dr Hendrik Verwoerd, South African minister for native affairs, speaking about his government's education policies in the 1950s )

*"The education we receive is meant to keep the South African people apart from one another, to breed suspicion, hatred and violence, and to keep us backward. Education is formulated so as to reproduce this society of racism and exploitation."* (Congress of South African Students, 1984 )

Bantu education gave a restricted curriculum to the majority of Namibians - the black people - while the white attended qualified, well-funded schools. The aim was to teach black people only the basic skills needed to obey orders from colonists, with a teacher controlled by the system. For example, mathematics was not taught. During Apartheid, the missionaries' role in developing equal education for black Namibians was important. (Nyambe, Griffiths 1999; Mortimore 2009)

After Independence, a unified structure for education administration was formed, aiming to end ethnic segregation. New schools were built, new teachers were trained and a new curriculum was designed. Yet despite the demise of apartheid, the majority of Namibian schools are still divided between white and other ethnic groups.

## BASIC EDUCATION TODAY

Compulsory education in Namibia is ten years between the ages of six to sixteen. The Government offers 12 years of schooling, seven years in primary and five years in secondary school. 94% of Namibian learners go to primary school. (UNESCO) 83% of learners keep up until the last primary grade. (UNICEF)

The structure of basic education in Namibia starts with pre-primary and lower primary grades 1-4, and continues through upper primary grades 5-7. Junior secondary grades are 8-10 and Senior secondary, grades 11-12. Formal basic education consists of the grades from pre-primary to grade 10. The grades are examined after lower primary.

After grade 10 learners can continue to formal Senior secondary education, Vocational education, training, Distance learning or to employment. (NIED) Circa 60 % of the girls and c. 50% of the boys continue to grade 12. (UNICEF)

Since the beginning of the current year (2013) education and stationary are free of charge for grades one to seven. Secondary school and necessary stationary has to be paid by the citizen. The school fee varies from school to school. Parents are required to buy school uniform for their child, for both primary and secondary school. Examination and if required, hostel accommodation, form other indirect costs for schooling. (NIED)

Many private schools operate in Namibia, partly as a relic of history. This study does not cover the education that they offer.

## LANGUAGE

Since Independence in 1990, English replaced Afrikaans as the official language of Namibia.

The change created a big challenge to teachers, which still affects general school success in Namibia. The majority of teachers have inadequate English skills. Some pedagogical methodologies may remain unclear due to language difficulties. Unqualified teachers can hinder learners from starting to build a strong language base from an early age. (Coetzer)

Teaching is offered in the area's main mother tongue at low primary level, for grades one to three. All of the country's 13 languages (number differs a

little according to a source) can be used, but teaching in the mother tongue cannot always be provided in the towns, where learners come from many diverse backgrounds. Establishing different schools according to language would emphasize the ethnic differences and is not recommended.

During grade four, the teaching language gradually changes to English, with the aim that from grade seven teaching is given only in English. (NIED 2010)

## GENERAL CHALLENGES

As has been pointed out in the chapter on socio-economic factors, Namibia can be seen as a country of contrasts. The nation is divided with several different language groups and ethnic backgrounds, and, unfortunately, unequal income distribution. The income gap affects also equality of education.

School premises, teaching resources and teacher's qualifications differ a lot within schools. As a volunteer from a Greenwell Matongo Library pointed out, *"(the issue is) not any longer black and white, but poor and rich, and ever poorer - the money is the difference."* (Greenwell Matongo, 2013)

The late Namibian minister of education Dr. Abraham Iyambo (1961-2013) passed away during my field work in Namibia on the 2nd of February 2013. He was considered an enthusiastic, passionate and hardworking developer of Namibian education and his passing was widely mourned. The announcement of free primary education was one of his achievements. Dr. Abraham Iyambo was succeeded in the post by the former Deputy Minister of Education, Dr. David Namwandi.

The late Dr. Iyambo pointed out challenges in education, highlighting the big dropout rates especially after grades five, eight and ten; inadequate classrooms and teaching facilities, budget limitations and the quality of education. (Nakale 2011)

The statistics reveal that 16% of learners repeat grades in primary schools, the percentage being slightly higher in secondary schools. The percentage of primary school aged children not attending school, is 14 %. (UNESCO)

The interviews disclose that the lack of qualified teachers is a problem especially in the rural areas. Elia Shiwoohamba mentioned that most graduate teachers from UNAM are not that willing to work in rural areas, but prefer to stay in towns. An article in the local newspaper writes about the same issue where the Hamutenya combined school at in Oshikoto Region, Okashana Kiitembu is suffering serious lack of teachers - the school is considered as “*too rural and far from neighboring towns.*” Travel distances for school staff are long, and proper transport is not available. The same situation is repeated at several other schools in Namibia. (Iileka 2013)

The number of government schools increased to 1700 in 2011, but school premises still suffer from overcrowding. (Hartman 2013) The average pupil-teacher ratio is statistically 30 - 1, but the reality is often very different. (UNESCO) In several schools, the number of learners rises up to 45 per class. During my field work, I visited a school in Okahandja with 61 learners in a grade, peaceably sharing the limited space.

The teacher's ability to pay attention to learners with specific needs is naturally challenged by huge class sizes. Although learner centered education is supposed to be practiced in Namibia, the number of learners in a class often makes the practice far from ideal. The teacher is identified as the unquestioned information source, with limited time for discussion. More class rooms and teachers are needed.

As a solution to high learner numbers, some schools have moved to a divided teaching timetable where teaching is offered to some in the morning and others in the afternoons.

As free primary education was only established in the beginning the current year, the topic raised a lot of discussion. The essential role of free education as part of more equal society was emphasized, and for many marginalized families, the decision was the key to their children accessing school. Thus some practical concerns emerged from the decision. According to the discussions and local newspapers, the amount of the money that the government provides for each child is not enough for the entire school year. The question of funds for basic maintenance in schools raised a lot of concern. It is recommended that schools plan new strategies for extra fund -raising. (Swartbooi 2013)

## PEDAGOGICAL EDUCATION

All teachers' pedagogical studies are conducted by the University of Namibia, since the Teachers' training college became part of the university in 2010. Campuses are located in Windhoek, Ongwediva, Rundu and Katima Mulilo. Since the fusion, students can study from a low primary teaching diploma to a bachelor's degree in education. The PhD degree can also be achieved. With the college's 3-year study diploma, a teacher is able to teach basic education, grades one to ten. Secondary school teachers are required to have a BA degree. (UNAM 2013)

Individual art education faculty does not exist; professional art teachers study a diploma or degree in art and additional studies on pedagogy. (Wechslerberger)

## HIGHER ART EDUCATION

Professional art education is available at vocational, tertiary or post graduate level. An Art diploma can also be achieved. Further education is fee-paying, as is all education in Namibia after primary school. The institutes offering higher art education are located in Windhoek.

Professional art education can be studied either at The University of Namibia (UNAM) or at The College of Arts (COTA). John Muafangejo Art Centre, JMAC works as an artistic centre. It concentrates on promoting and supporting graduate students, by offering guidance and working spaces. Education in JMAC is informal and does not lead to a specific qualification. Other cultural institutions in Windhoek are Franco Namibian Cultural Centre FNCC and The Goethe-Centre.

It is possible to apply for professional art studies without previous art experience, as the majority of learners in the primary and secondary schools still lack art education. According to the interviews, teachers find the situation challenging. Without previous art experience students are free from strong pre-considered ideas on the subject, but they come also without basic skills. Students may emerge with creative solutions, but have unrealistic expectations of the field. At UNAM, the students are interviewed and examined after the first year, and guided to continue further in the art department, or to concentrate on another field.

## THE COOPERATION PROJECT

*“The Finnish-Namibian Society (a registered association) aims at strengthening the ties of friendship between Finns and Namibians and promoting cooperation in social, economic and cultural fields. Our main objective is to maintain and increase the knowledge of Namibian issues in Finland and to participate in development cooperation. The Finnish-Namibian Society, which was established in 1974, is the largest Africa-orientated friendship society in Finland.”* (Finnish-Namibian Society 2013)

The Finnish-Namibian society has been working in an educational development project in collaboration with Namibian National Institute of Educational

Development NIED since 2006, supported by The Finnish Ministry of Foreign affairs. The aim of the project is to increase the amount of art and handicraft in basic State education, by training teachers and spreading knowledge of the benefits of an art-rich curriculum. Workshops facilitated by NIED have been offered since 2010.

The aim is to strengthen the role of art in formal education, either as an independent subject or complementing teaching methods in other subjects.

Ideas for development and technical advice will be compiled in a teachers' manual, which will be published and distributed to all primary- and secondary schools in Namibia by NIED. With the aid of the manual, knowledge could be spread more democratically, available also to the schools in rural areas.

My role in the project is to gather the contents and design the manual together with Finnish hand craft teacher Maija Malmström, in close consultation with the local art panel group from NIED. My part of the work started in the autumn 2012 and developed into a more active phase in the February 2013 while observing the practical needs and objectives in Namibia. Now the work continues in Finland and has been scheduled to finish during the year 2015. (Finnish-Namibian Society 2013)

Even though the teacher's manual is as an individual project, and not a productive part of my thesis, I hope both of the projects will benefit from each other as much as possible. Common objectives for both cooperation projects could be summed up as increasing and strengthening the appreciation of Namibian culture and creativity, nationally and internationally.



HANNA:  
THERE HAS BEEN A LOT OF  
DISCUSSION BECAUSE THE  
FREE EDUCATION, DO YOU  
FIND IT WAS A GOOD SIGN?  
PAPA SHIKONGENI:

“I DON’T FIND IT AS A SIGN, IT’S SOMETHING  
YOU HAVE TO DO FOR YOUR PEOPLE.  
TO ME IT’S NOT TO SAY THAT EDUCATION  
IS FREE, IT’S FATHERS TAKING CARE OF THE  
GENERATIONS TO COME.”

# TOOLS

## THE FORM OF THE WORK

The research focuses on mapping the current role of art as part of Namibian primary and secondary schooling. The main standpoint for the work is the development of education, and to increase the appreciation of art and creativity. The content of the curriculum and the proper, materialized practice of art education do not play a large part in the survey. The study concentrates on the challenges and the resources of disadvantaged, marginalized schools, where art education is often neglected.

## MAIN OBJECTIVES

1. The aim is to identify the practical difficulties and attitudes that create the marginalization of art education, in order to contribute locally relevant improvement proposals for the Finnish-Namibian Society's collaboration project and other stakeholders.
2. To compile written information in a form that can easily be shared with everyone interested. The gathered information will be given to the stakeholders in Namibia and published on the Internet.
3. To compile information for use in discussion and further research.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- What are the main challenges that State art education is facing in Namibia?
- How available are teaching materials and how equal is access to them?
- How is art education justified? What are the main benefits?
- How could the situation be improved in the Namibian context?

The case study was conducted as qualitative research, as field work with the chosen local Namibian professionals from the culture field; Teachers, art education developers, artists or craft workers.

As a research method, a semi-structured in-depth interview was used, supported by literature and short participant observations in the field. I considered the in-depth interview as a good method in order to gather information, while the research problem was not strictly defined when starting the study. Researching a foreign environment demands time for questions to become more accurate. The semi-structured bilateral discussion allowed respondents to bring out their feelings related to a wider theme, leaving more room for reflection and exploration.

I studied general socio-economic factors about Namibia, to place the results in context. As a main information source for research methods, I used the book *"Tutki ja kirjoita"* by Hirsjärvi et al. (2002), and read previous researches, especially conducted using ethnographic methods. (Huhtamaa 2010; Kantonen 2005; mentioned theses related to Namibia)

## THE FIELD WORK

The main research material was gathered in Namibia during January-February 2013 when I conducted the interviews and observed the study environment.

I made school visits, monitored art teaching and had several informal meetings with people working close to the education sector. As the field work took place at the beginning of a new school year, with the introduction of a free primary education, the topic was widely discussed in the local media.

Within the Finnish-Namibian Society's collaboration project, I participated in a primary school teachers' workshop in Otjiwarongo. My role was to observe, interview and gather material for the collaboration project. During the workshop, the teachers could anonymously answer a set of questions about the difficulties they are facing while teaching art.

Some situations and discussions often emerged even without planning because people in the current surroundings had a relationship to the topic. For example, during one school visit the teacher suddenly asked me to facilitate the next art lesson for the grade four learners, as he had not prepared activities for the lesson. The explanation for the lack of planning was ambiguity caused by the start of the semester. Teaching art to 42 youngsters without preparation or knowledge of what they have done before, with crayons and white copy paper to use, was challenging, but brought me closer to the Namibian reality. Most of the rural school teachers have less experience of

teaching arts than me, and I have not studied pedagogy.

I also understood more about uneven wealth distribution, when a learner from a wealthy secondary school asked me whether I could recommend my Canon systems camera for her father to buy for her, for a hobby. The majority of Namibian learners have never used a camera. These observations widened my perspective, giving me personal knowledge to reflect the in-depth interviews.

## QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW

The majority of the interviews were conducted during January, while February 2013 I worked within the Finnish-Namibian Society's collaboration project. Interviews were in-depth discussions, with the help of the prepared semi-structured question base. The topics were divided under the given themes, being expanded according to the respondent's knowledge.

Face to face discussion lasted on average 45 minutes, ranging from 25 minutes to an hour and 15 minutes. Altogether nine interviews were held.

The same questionnaire base was used for all of the respondents, except with NIED's representative Hennie Coetzer, for whom questions concentrated only on education and its history. (The used questionnaire is placed on a following page.) For the respondents, who worked closely with higher art education, I added questions about the significance of students' art education background. In addition, Art teacher from Windhoek's Delta Secondary School Hester Van Schouwenburg gave me information about the meaning of art and opened the detailed structure of the art syllabus, but no in-depth interview was held with her.

Interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim, which made me really familiar with the material. After being present in the discussion, lis-



NAME/ PROFESSION/ EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

#### Tradition

Can you name an artifact that would reflect your cultural background?

Do you use Namibian made items? Which kind? Do you know who made them and how? Where could you find them?

Do you own Namibian art? What kind of? Who's? Where have you got the item/piece of art from?

Is knowledge of traditional techniques collected? Would you have access to the information if needed?

#### Material and recycling

Can you identify traditional, local materials?

How do you feel using recycled materials?

#### Creativity

Can you name a person from Namibia, which you would consider creative? Who? Why?

Do you find creativity being respected in Namibia?

Can you name a creative item/product from Namibia, which you would find financially profitable?

#### School curriculum

Did you have art or handcraft lessons at primary school while you were studying?

Where? If not, did you miss it?

What does art education mean in Namibia?

Can you study art pedagogical studies in Namibia?

#### Integration

Do you remember studying scientific subjects through art methods?

#### Cooperation

Have you offered or given your services and professional knowledge to be used at schools?

Would you like to cooperate with schools?

Are local communities working together with schools?

Are parents involved in school issues and the decision making process?

How public is the educational decision making process?

#### Database

If school staff would like to order some professionals to promote/show their work,

Is there a database where to find the makers?

#### Future

How do you see art/handcraft as a school subject changing in the future?

How do you see your working environment changing in the future in your own field?

#### Evidence

How could you proof that art matters, if it does?

How could the impacts of arts be determined and collect?

Does art has impact on society's economy?

tening to it again from the recorder and writing down word by word, I got very close to the interviewing situation even later on in Finland. The material was analyzed by reflecting the answers to other respondents' viewpoints, my observations and literature. Similar topics emerged from several interviews, increasing the reliability. In the last chapter of the thesis, I return to think about the challenges of the research.

## CHOSEN RESPONDENTS

The chosen respondents represent a wide group of local Namibian professionals from culture and educational fields, with diverse ethnic backgrounds and age groups. The interviewees have experience of developing art, or contributing to the art education scene across Namibia, even though they all work currently in Windhoek. Many of the interviewees work as artists or designers, while doing part time work as teachers. All of the respondents except Cathy McRoberts are Namibian born. McRoberts was born in the United Kingdom and moved to Namibia soon after its independence in 1990.

Some of the chosen respondents were familiar to me from my previous visits in Namibia while some were new acquaintances. The new connections were chosen with a help of the old Namibian collaboration partners. Through my previous experiences and personal connections I was lucky to have the chance to interview all the people I found relevant when starting the study. Most of the respondents were invited to the interview digitally and a few by a phone call while I was already in Namibia. The interview releasing contract was signed with everyone.

The interviews were held in the capital, Windhoek, except with Hennie Coetzer, who was interviewed at NIED's office in Okahandja. The interview environment was chosen together with the respondents; often their own work environment was used.

CATHY MCROBERTS

The Head of Visual and Performing Arts of University of Namibia, UNAM, textile artist

MARIA CALEY

Textile and fashion designer, part time lecturer at UNAM, Amakeya design-label

CHAKIRRA CLAASEN

Textile and fashion designer, part time lecturer at UNAM, Kishwa designs-label

ELIA SHIWOOHAMBA

Visual artist, linocut workshop facilitator

HERCULES VILJOEN

Director of National Art Gallery Namibia NAGN, visual artist

HENNIE COETZER

Educational officer, responsible for the Art curriculum, National Institute of Education Development NIED

KIRSTEN WECHSLBERGER

Artist, Director of John Muafangejo Art Centre JMAC

ALPHEUS MVULA

Visual artist, art teacher, Found member of the Art in the House- association

PAPA SHIKONGENI

Visual artist, musician, art teacher, former director of JMAC

(Short discussion) Hester Van Schouwenburg, Art teacher from Windhoek's Delta Secondary School, member of the NIED's Art panel.

While referring to the respondents in the thesis, the name of the person is mentioned. Detailed information about the time and location of the interview is added at the end of the thesis.

## PRESENTATION

The thesis is illustrated with photographs taken during the field work, to complement the text. The images are related to a school uniform theme. All portraits were given to the models as a physical copy. Through the visual documentation and exhibitions I try to widen the audience interested and make the writing part more reader and - viewer-friendly. Photography is a natural part of documenting for me, allowing me to use my visual skills while gathering the research material from the field work. Photo-shooting sessions created several memorable, joyful moments among the participants.

The thesis will be presented in Finland, as a part of MOA 13 group exhibition in Helsinki, and later on as a single exhibition in the central library of Kouvola and in the gallery Fokus in Raasepori. I hope to also exhibit the documenting part of the project in Namibia, but final decisions have not yet been made. The work could be presented alongside the Finnish-Namibian society's cooperation project.

## SHARING THE INFORMATION

I find it really important to share the gathered information with the people concerned with the topic. As I discussed with Cathy McRoberts it is still unfortunately common that people who undertake research abroad never deliver the finished work and conclusions in the target country. Nowadays sharing information through the Internet is only a question of will, either by email or a website. Even though all the people concerned would not have a personal email,

access to the Internet is possible through collaboration with schools and other organizations who are connected.

The Finnish-Namibian Society supports printing physical copies of the thesis for the cooperation partners in Namibia. I will send the digital version of the thesis to all of the respondents via email, as promised in the interview release form. Getting the finished material was an option accepted by all the respondents.

I find it useful to gather all the information on an open web site to be available for cooperation partners, and also for people with a general interest in Namibia. Sharing the knowledge and on-going projects with similar topics can prevent overlapping work, create a community of interest, and make work more effective. Gathering work experiences on one site could also work as a personal reference if one is interested in applying to similar projects in the future. Free blog based Internet sites work as a good tool for this.

All the written material will be published on <http://ondokumende.blogspot.fi/>



# THE ROLE OF ART

*“The importance and appreciation of arts, crafts and design in Namibia- as a source of income generation, heritage, intellectual capital and individual development- is not recognized or understood, and therefore not a priority in Namibia”* States a scoping study from 2011. (Davel 2011)

According to this survey, research into the general domain of art and craft in Namibia is important, but as Cathy McRoberts among others remarks, respecting culture and creativity has to be learned, starting from an early age. What is the current situation in basic education in Namibia when it comes to arts?

In the Namibian national curriculum for basic education, art is introduced as:

*“The Arts learning area contributes to the foundation of a knowledge-based society particularly through its emphasis on developing creativity, communication skills and the ability to be innovative. The Arts are also essential to a knowledge-based society where visual communication, aesthetic design, and the use of media incorporating visual, musical and dramatic forms are*

*increasingly important. The Arts are central to the development of personal and social identity and culture.”* (NIED 2010)

Art subjects are part of the curriculum for Namibian primary and secondary schools, but the majority of marginalized schools neglect art education. Only a few State schools offer Art with a qualified teacher. A lack of Art education is common, especially in the rural areas. Most of the schools concentrate only on developing skills in reading, writing and scientific subjects, and the benefits of learning through the Arts are not recognized. School managers rarely offer adequate practical or theoretical support for Art subjects. In practice, Art is not a promotional subject in primary schools; lessons are easily used for teaching other areas which are subject to Examination. According to Hennie Coetzer, plans to introduce examinations in Arts subjects have been submitted, but cannot be put in place before teachers are able to evaluate the subject professionally.

## ATTITUDE

The reasons for neglecting the Arts dates back to time in Namibian history, when colonialism and in particular the apartheid system divided the country. Cathy McRoberts mentions how the word *craft* has still repercussions from the time of apartheid as *craft* was usually offered for native Namibians and higher concept, *art* for white pupils. Coetzer confirms that visual art was more likely to be offered in the administrative white schools, while craft, music and dance based teaching was offered for the black population.

Opinions about to what extent even crafts were materialized during Bantu education, differ. According to the old teaching timetable a subject called: *Arts, crafts, gardening*, was offered for two and a half hours per week, (Murphy 1978,10) ) but as the compiling of those three themes suggests; the subject emphasized vocational, functional, simple work done by hand. Cathy McRoberts mentions practical leather and wood work as technical craft examples offered to non-white schools.

Toppari explores the lack of appreciation of art during the colonial period in her thesis, undertaken in Kenya. (2003, 34) While white people were working in management, black people were given more physical work, done by hand.

The set-up left a strong prejudice that art and craft are for less academic people, for the ones who could not read. Attitude formed a gap between the concepts of *traditional craft* and *higher art*. As Cathy McRoberts suspects this division explains the anti-craft sentiment that prevailed in Namibia after independence. The Ministry of Environment and Tourism together with several NGOs started to promote crafts as a source of income, once the military activities in the northern Namibia were over. Peace enabled black Namibians to bring their products to urban areas to

be sold due to the freedom of movement. Increasing tourism supported the craft market and Namibian culture and pride were renewed. (Pokela 2008, 18; Le Roux 2006, 7)

Lilienthal wrote in 1997 that the distinction between nonfunctional art (visual art, sculptures) and functional art (basketry, pottery) *“was disappearing rapidly.”* She mentioned how *“both genres are exhibited together. Woven, carved and embroidered Namibian objects d’art are gaining increasing recognition as original works of art.”* (1997, 58) Cathy McRoberts also mentioned how traditional crafts were renamed after independence to raise appreciation for them; for example *basketry* was defined as *rural art*. This provokes the question, how is art appreciated now?

Several respondents mentioned that understanding about *art* is on a really weak base, especially in the rural areas in the Northern Namibia, where people do not get exposed to *the arts*. Elia Shiwoohamba noted that *“if they find you making a drawing they always say you are just playing”*.

He noted that children, who grow up in towns, are more able to become familiar with *art* through the possibilities to be exposed to it. Especially in Windhoek one is able to find museums, galleries, art schools and have possibilities to attend additional workshops. Working as a visual artist in the rural area was found difficult. (Shiwoohamba) Even though making a living as an artist is much of a lottery in Namibia - as it is worldwide, in Windhoek people working in the culture field can unite more easily. The Artist association Visual Artist Namibia, VA-N, was established in 2006 to promote and support local artists. VA-N actively presents art related events in Namibia also through the social media. It also issues an annual catalogue. Alpheus Mvula supports local sculptors through his *“Art in the house”* association, which was launched in 2004. The Tulipamwe Arts

Trust has organized several workshops for local and international artists since 1994. (Tulipamwe, VA-N, Art in the House)

Kirsten Wechsberger mentioned that Namibian art can often be defined as fine art, as the contemporary art scene is not yet familiar in the country.

The discussion about the gap between the so called folk art and modern art is global, evaluating the role of art as a demotic everyday part of life, or as elitist high culture. How do the traditional craft producers define their works, if drawing is seen as only a play?

The making of a handicraft can be rationalized with the functionality, small scale serial production and with the greater possibility to earn income through selling. Cathy McRoberts notes how technical skills are valued nationwide, but creative, artistic skills generally neglected. The designing of handicrafts is often done elsewhere and the production carried out as an assignment. Thus craftsmanship, as a high valued artistic profession producing unique items is not well recognized. Several formally educated designers work with small series, but craft workers in rural Namibia have the tradition to produce works for the community. Items are made for practice either in functional or spiritual uses, without emphasizing the makers' own name on a product. This can be observed in many rural craft shops, as no items have a name of the producer. Many organizations working with craft makers have added a name tag to the product, to increase its value in the eyes of the maker and the buyer.

Though the traditional handicraft know-how still exists, especially within the older generation, several respondents were worried about heritage preservation. Urbanization changes the practical continuation of the know-how, as daily living in town is not related to the extended family. Imported cheaper industrialized products change the use of traditional items, as Alpheus Mvula mentioned the issue of using plastic

containers instead of locally made baskets.

According to the survey, the majority of the traditional knowledge is oral information, which has not been documented well. Technical manuals for traditional craft production are hard to find, though Chakirra Claasen emphasizes the need to learn straight from the masters; going through the whole process step to step by using the exact local materials. The curriculum for basic education informs to take into consideration the traditional knowledge; *"The concept of knowledge thus embraces indigenous knowledge and local and national cultures as well as international and global culture."* (2010, 7) To what extent can traditions be seen in teaching? What kind of role do the schools have in maintaining traditions?

Craft is not independently included in the curriculum, though in some contexts it can be seen to be part of the art subject. However, the art subject is included, even though the majority of the teachers do not have the know-how to teach it.

The rich cultural background challenges the government schools' ability to sustain tradition, as the diversity is so wide. Contemporary art in Namibia is also globally influenced, as is art worldwide. One could ask, on whose tradition should the school focus? The possibility to concentrate on certain ethnic groups' indigenous knowledge can be seen to be difficult, especially in the urban area as is demonstrated by the diversity of learners' mother tongues. Art education is challenged to find locally relevant art practices, which would increase the appreciation of the rich Namibian culture as a whole. What other challenges is basic art education facing in Namibia?

## CHALLENGES OF ART EDUCATION IN NAMIBIA

What are the main practical problems preventing or discouraging art from being offered in the primary and secondary schools? Common problems were raised in the in-depth interviews, observations and written answers from 40 primary school teachers during NIED's workshop.

### CHALLENGES IN THE ART EDUCATION STRUCTURE

Due to the neglectful attitudes described before, primary art education in Namibia suffers from a serious structural problem. If art is part of the curriculum provided by NIED, an institute under the ministry of education, then pedagogical studies should also be emphasized. Without qualified teachers is not reasonable to demand that schools offer Art subjects. A visual artist and teacher from the College of Art, Nicky Marais summarized the problem as *"The system is broken"*. (Marais 2013)

Coetzer confirms that Teacher Training does not include art as compulsory subject since the changes made in 2011. As a result, only a minority of the teachers study arts as part of their pedagogical studies.

The majority of teachers have art as a second teaching subject. Schools do not usually recruit on the basis of the teacher having a first specialism in Art. As Cathy McRoberts points out, students in Teacher Training need to be aware of this at an early stage and seriously focus on a second major subject in order to find work after graduating.

The teachers mentioned also that their teaching subjects may change after a year or two in a school, according to the principal's decisions. A change in one's responsibilities does not allow for embedding confidence and experience in teaching arts, especially if the skills are not well supported anyway.

### RESOURCES AVAILABLE – LITERATURE

A comprehensive knowledge database to support the Arts curriculum does not exist in Namibia. Schools do not have a common practical art teaching manual. Cathy McRoberts notes the same problem at University level mentioning that some information is available but is neither easily or equally accessible. The majority of books on the subject are out of print, out of date, or access is difficult for other reasons. Latva-Ranta (2006) and Miettinen (2001) highlighted the same issue while doing their research in Namibia.

Hennie Coetzer point out that one Namibian-made technical resource book was given to all primary schools at the end of 2010, but teachers rejected the manual. Though the book is technically comprehensive and inspiring, it was considered too complicated and too material-demanding for inexperienced art teachers. (Book by Rika Nel and Elna Venter 2008)

Teachers find it difficult to relate the art syllabus to practice in the classroom. Information in the syllabus and in a randomly selected, if any, manual is not correlated.

### SCHOOL PREMISES

The teachers are challenged by space limitations, for both work and storage. Working with the hands requires a work-station for everyone. In practice due to big class sizes, many learners share desks or even chairs. Choices about how the space and other resources are divided and used can affect art teaching. For example, If classrooms don't have running water or the amount of usable water is limited, using water colors cannot be justified.

Lack of finance often limits improvements to premises, but also the rotating use of learning spaces. Only a minority of schools have specific class rooms for individual subjects, which could be permanently decorated to support learning in those subjects.



#### WORKING MATERIALS AND TOOLS

The introduction of free primary education included free stationary for pupils in grades one to seven. In practice this means one stationary item for each learner; such as one pen, one pencil and one exercise book. Most of the special supplies that art lessons require are not part of the basic stationary provided. Creating inspirational tasks for learners with limited resources demands creative solutions from teachers. According to my observations, white copy paper and crayons were often the only extra art materials available. Cathy McRoberts confirms how the special equipment needed for Art teaching make the subject more expensive than the Sciences.

Some of the learners were unmotivated to collect found or recycled materials by themselves, but according to the interviews, inspiration also depends on the degree of the teacher's passion. If the teacher was able to justify the reasons and benefits for collecting recycled material, learners were more motivated to do so. Demands for teachers to be responsible for gathering all the materials were considered unreasonable.

Practical matters also have to be taken into consideration when evaluating the individual learner's ability to contribute materials. The learners may stay in school accommodation without the ability to contribute resources from their home village during school time.

Disadvantaged, poor families cannot afford to support schools with extra materials. According to a public discussion, after the government's promise to provide the needed stationary, parents may easily think that their contribution is not needed anymore.

#### TIME STRUCTURE

The time dedicated to art (2 teaching units per week) is considered insufficient. Teachers found it difficult to accommodate teaching content into such a short

period without proper experience. The syllabus does not advise teachers on Art-specific time issues.

#### COLLABORATION WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The idea of communal, collaborative projects as part of teaching divided opinions. Some of the teachers mentioned that they were doing a lot of cooperative work with the learners and the local community, outside official school time. The school was considered the centre of the living environment and learners were happy to work together outside of lesson time.

Other teachers noted that the realization of additional projects depended on their being included in the curriculum. Extra time for collaboration outside official school hours is hard to arrange, when the school is not a closely linked part of the community. Long distances between schools and communities also affect the ability to collaborate outside of normal school hours.

#### EXCURSIONS AND EXPOSURES

Depending of the location of the school and transport possibilities, only a few State schools have a chance to use public, even free-entrance cultural offers in the cities. Hercules Viljoen from the National Art Gallery of Namibia mentions that they have educational tours organized at the NAGN, but only particular schools are able to attend.

Organized teaching excursions beyond school premises are not common due to lack of transport. The majority of the schools do not have their own buses and proper public transport is not available. Big class sizes also challenge the practicalities of offering excursions. With a few exceptions, all art galleries, museums and art centers are located in Windhoek. Viljoen points out how students at UNAM have relatively weak visual literature skills due to the lack of exposure to art in their childhood.

Should ART be offered at primary schools?  
Why?  
Totally so needed!!!  
All children need to learn to express themselves! Every child need to learn to know themselves and tell their story!...

Windhoek  
January 2013

All children need to learn so that they can made better future. ~~see~~ Music or drawing and so on.

1. Because it help you n children to see better better hear, as well seeing beyond. by thinking and solve problem art is a healing with colour, hear the sound will help them to develop.

Ma-thu  
to Dr

# BENEFITS OF ART IN EDUCATION

The role of art in wellbeing has been discussed widely in Finland. New concepts have been established, for example a therapeutically aligned teaching method, Empowering Photography. Finnish photographer, art and social educator Miina Savolainen photographed marginalized young girls, while she was working with them in a children's home. Collaboratively created personal photographs showed the girls' hidden individual beauty, in a way that no one had seen them before. The aim of the method is to empower by emphasizing the uniqueness and specialness of each person.

*It allows the girls to regard themselves as strong and undamaged people. These photographs are deeply authentic, revealing the universal desire to be seen as good and valuable. (Savolainen 2013)*

How could the benefits of art in basic education be summarized? When Salerto considers the justification of art and art works, she points out that the answer depends on whether one is thinking about the making process or the end result. (2011, 90) With basic education, the process is really important for the development of students, even though finished art or handicraft pieces can also have a huge effect on learners' self-confidence; *I made this!*

From many different viewpoints according to the research interviews, NIED's art syllabus, other literature and personal observations, following topics raised:

## ENJOY THE SCHOOL

Art plays an essential role in providing alternative learning methods. A practical approach together with theoretical knowledge provides an effective combination for learning, also taking into consideration those learners who find it hard to concentrate as passive receivers of information.

Like Maria Caley pointed out, art teaching makes use of learner-centred education, where the teacher is more focused on what the individual learner is doing. Art cannot be practiced without strong participation.

As McRoberts confirms *"when you're performing in the arts you are totally exposed. You can't hide ( ) there is no way you can kind of do it quietly; you have to have the confidence to produce whatever it is that you're going to produce."*

Artistic approaches can be especially helpful to marginalized children in finding their own way to learn, preventing interruption to, or even termina-

tion of, schooling. Alpheus Mvula emphasizes the problem of big drop-out rates after grades five and ten. Art could offer one option for continuing with learning.

Art brings out hidden skills. If school is not providing opportunities to widely explore, make mistakes and try, the students true potential does not emerge. As Maria Caley pointed out *"they might have the skill, but they don't know they have it."*

Art lessons can be also therapeutic; releasing learners from constant academic pressure. As art teacher from Windhoek's Delta Secondary School, Hester Van Schouwenburg notes, learners find it very relaxing to have a short break from scientific subjects, where the demands can seem oppressive. Schouwenburg emphasizes art classes being a place where mistakes are allowed.

Like Elia Shiwoohamba said *"if you have something like stress you can start drawing, you can be free and cancel the stress."*

## SOLVE PROBLEMS

*"Art shows a new viewpoint from the world, some spot that we haven't been realized before"* notes Helena Sederholm, a Finnish professor and active commentator on contemporary art. She mentions how art is a way of knowing even though different from science. (Sederholm, 2013) Art relies more on empiricism, but like Efland writes in his book "Art and cognition" viewpoints are formed by understanding causal interdisciplinary relations between different themes. Empirical knowledge and art works are representations from the world and should be considered as a valuable source of knowledge. (2002, 76-77)

Through art, learners can practice real-life problem solving while using themes from their own surroundings. Hester Van Schouwenburg notes the importance of problem-solving skills in everyday life

after schooling. In art, learners have to decide how to approach the given theme, how to produce the work, which materials to use and how to read the formed message.

Practical approaches allow using your whole body for learning, increasing physical well-being. Coarse or fine motor skills are practiced through art, and fine motor ability is particularly affected by working with the hands. Artistic and functional approaches help to concentrate.

Schouwenburg reminds us of the need to use the creative side of the brain in everyday life after schooling, noticing how the brain's left side development is often very dominant in schools.

## COMMUNICATE. TAKE PART. MAKE FRIENDS

Cathy McRoberts notes how art works are big statements about a learner's world, realizing how their ideas are as valuable as others. Art is a way of communicating and expressing oneself when verbalizing is difficult. Art works like messages; visual notes, tangible items, music pieces or physical plays to participate or follow as a spectator. Through art the ability to understand and express oneself increases.

Art stimulates memory and helps to remember what has been learned. Through visualization, topics are easy to recall. Within the field work, several respondents realized how they still remembered the topics from their school history related to art and handcraft; *"Oh I still remember!"*

In art, learning does not focus only on the near future and examination.

Art increases the ability to communicate, read and critically understand visual symbols and new media. Art methods can be used to promote equality, relationships and cooperation skills. As an art educator,



Janelle Turk writes about developing social skills through art projects, she mentions observing totally different approaches between students while working together towards the same goals. The roles that students had in a regular class room were completely changed, as every student stood on an equal level. (2012, 52) Hester Van Schouwenburg emphasizes the need to work together as a group, and share the space even when learners are working on individual themes. Group dynamics can inspire, help criticism and facilitate teaching one another. Art has an essential role in children's social and emotional development. Art nurtures emotional intelligence.

### **BUILD YOUR COMMUNITY. SUSTAIN YOUR CULTURAL HERITAGE.**

In the NIED's art syllabus one aim of art education is summarized: *"Develop the learner's social responsibility towards other individuals, family life, the community and the nation as a whole; enable the learners to contribute to the development of culture in Namibia; and promote wider inter-cultural understanding."* (2007)

Art projects are a practical way of connecting the learner to the school, and school to the community. When learners work together for the sake of improving school and community, their relationship with their living environment deepens. Collaboration increases the sense of belonging, the sense of ability to influence and to be heard.

Art is a way of maintaining tradition. No matter what the technical decision; paintings, drawings, songs, photographs, poems, plays and videos save memories, often in a form which is easy to share further down the line.

Through the making process the learner understands the contributions that lie behind our material world. Several respondents pointed out how the lack of art education contributes to the lack of general understanding about the production chain. As Maria Caley mentioned, appreciation is gained through realizing how much effort it takes to produce an item.

### **SAVE AND MAKE MONEY**

Art has a significant financial role in society, through contributing to people's wellbeing and employment. "Through art, you can sustain yourself" notes Chakirra Claasen.

All respondents teaching at UNAM confirmed that even though the annual number of graduates from UNAM's Visual and Performing Art department is not high, the majority of them make their mark in the Namibian design or art industries. New small creative enterprises are emerging in Windhoek.

Even though the examples given by Maria Caley come from the design field, creativity is an essential part of everyday life. As Chakirra Claasen says, *"if you teach people to work with their hands then nobody needs to be hungry."* The same is said in an old Chinese proverb:

*"Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day.  
Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime"*.

HANNA:

DO YOU REMEMBER THAT  
YOU WOULD HAVE USED  
ARTS IN OTHER SUBJECTS  
IN SCHOOL?

PAPA SHIKONGENI:

“YEAH,  
ART IS MATHEMATICS  
ART IS DESIGN  
ART IS THE RHYTHM  
ART IS YOUR FASHION  
DESIGN  
IT'S ONLY HOW IT IS  
APPROACHED  
AND BROUGHT  
TO THE PEOPLE.”



# FINDINGS

The study widened my understanding about the value of creative thinking and how closely it is related to learning. How essential creativity is both in learning and in teaching, but more important, how essential is the ability to learn to be creative, to grow into it. Those who have had the opportunity to grow by playing, drawing and painting, can easily take these possibilities for granted. I grew up on a farm, where recycling - building new from old by yourself - was, and still is, a natural part of everyday life. It saves money for the family, but I would say that the main reason lies beyond simple will. A pride in finding creative solutions, to build economically and recycle old materials has always been part of the way my parents think. I don't need to justify my wish to use rather old than new. I care about the environment and am conscious of my consumption, but more important; I grew up into it. Since childhood, I have been learning, first in the countryside and later on in cities in Finland and abroad. I was supported to find my way, strengthening the skills which I found important. I was privileged.

Several respondents mentioned the events that led them to an artistic career. All these stories emphasize the influence of being exposed to the arts; seeing important works, meeting artists and getting mental

support to continue. For many from the northern part of Namibia, a visit to Windhoek played an important role. Being introduced to art schools, museums or established makers gave new directions. As Papa Shikongeni pointed it out: *"I had the privilege to meet Joseph Madisia, who gave me the key."* (Joseph Madisia is well-known Namibian visual artist.)

Planning a career as an artist in Namibia is not easy and psychological support from the family is often hard to gain. As Alpheus Mvula mentioned, more understanding comes only after you are able to support yourself. Even though Namibia suffers from high unemployment, practising art is easily seen as a useless pastime leading nowhere, unless you are able to earn money. Being an artist demands a strong attitude, but also a lot of work and practice.

Through schooling you learn to appreciate your own culture, as can be concluded from the interviews. All respondents consciously supported local products, as long they were affordable and available. Alpheus Mvula mentioned especially collecting old traditional items, *"because there is value, part of history"*, whereas Papa Shikongeni told having several Himba, Herero and Nama dolls.

All respondents confirmed the significance of promoting arts as an essential part of basic education.

A general understanding about the relation between artistic approaches, creativity and success in life has to be highlighted.

Even though, as Cathy McRoberts mentioned, there is only a small number of people being educated in art, design and the art education field in Namibia, I feel lucky to have met so many with such specific passion. All respondents have done a lot to improve the Namibian art, craft and design scene and were eager to work on their fields, sharing knowledge and widening understanding. Elia Shiwoohamba mentioned how his son will become an artist, if he retains his early interest.

When I asked about the plans for the future, Maria Caley wished to work more with guiding upcoming designers, summarizing: *I would like to concentrate on shaping the mind!*

The study pointed out the challenges for basic art education in Namibia. Summing up the main problem, I would emphasize the importance of Teacher Education. Understanding and appreciation of art can be increased by qualified, motivated teachers raising children to be aware. Basic art education should be an obligatory part of pedagogical studies, as artistic methods are usable for cross-curricular teaching. The value of art as part of primary schooling should be strongly emphasized and its part in teaching practice should be monitored nationwide. Art's essential role in the curriculum should be understood, even without the need to make the subject an examined one.

As Alpheus Mvula noted, more research should be done to identify relevant improvements, and more important, practical ways to realize them. Supporting texts and analysis should be geared to the reader; to the people working on the field in practice, or to the policy-maker or funders. Arguments should be formulated in the way which best serves the objectives, in a language to which the reader can easily relate. Several respondents pointed out how research mate-

rial can be found worldwide; the topic needs to be strongly related to the Namibian context.

## CONVINCE

As the benefits of art cannot be measured with statistical models, how can their impact be determined and collected? Who should be the first one to convince?

An individual's own experience plays the biggest role in forming attitudes, and it is hard to discover the value of art for yourself if there is not any personal connection to the topic. As Namibian history shows, the older generation has been educated without art, as well those currently in power - how should they see the value in art education, if they have achieved a high position in society without it?

Toppari writes about the same issue in a Kenyan context. Parents, who have either negative or no experiences of art in their own schooling history, have difficulties allowing their own children to practice art. (2003, 32-33) Elia Shiwoohamba and Hennie Coetzer both emphasized the importance of raising the awareness of the parents, to encourage the next generation. Getting the community involved, to discuss issues and share knowledge, is important.

Coetzer and Hercules Viljoen raise the role of Media in the promotion of art; newspapers, TV, radio, internet. The local media can be utilized for advertising, communicating, reporting and developing knowledge. Coetzer pointed out the challenge to produce educational programs which will gain people's attention. He pondered the benefits of essential and/or sensational coverage, acknowledging the publicity value of getting well-known people on board promoting art. The global challenge of getting people's attention was pointed out; how to produce interesting educational programs when entertainment is demanded more and more? How do we make education entertaining?

I observed several radio conversations about art at the beginning of the school year, but what got my attention was the listeners' definition of *artist*; all musicians. Maria Caley pointed out the same thing. Music is an essential form of art, giving a lot of meaning to people's life, and after achieving recognition, it reaches the listeners without huge efforts. How do we reach, mobilize visual arts?

The NAGN takes events out from the museums to increase accessibility. Hercules Viljoen mentions collaboration with other institutes to enable different activities to be available for a wider group of people. A project called 'Mobile' was also established, where NAGN took art exhibitions to rural areas. (Mvula)

Primary school plays an important role in changing individual attitudes towards art and possibilities to get exposed to it. Professional art teachers are able to motivate the learners when they can justify and rationalize the meaning of the subject. Motivation plays enormous a role with learning and it is gained through understanding the relation between the subject and a real life. Learners should be aware how they benefit from the knowledge outside the school.

In order to increase teachers' ability to teach arts, schools should not circle teachers positions and main teaching subjects throughout the career unless that's required with worthy reasons. Only through years of teaching experience can a teacher develop art teaching methods, find creative new solutions, materials and tools and feel self-confident with the subject. A strong know-how base enables learner-centred education, where lessons can be modified according to the group. In an art lesson without a qualified teacher, time is easily used for technical, one-sided and un-planned practices without a theme "*to draw just anything*" as Maria Caley points out. Cathy McRoberts confirms the lack of thematic relation to the practice.

Cathy McRoberts advises teachers to be active in their working environments, by introducing art

classes and determinedly promoting the subject. She gives an example of a teacher who got into the school as general class teacher, but after gaining a reputation with his art teaching, ended up teaching only art. Elia Shiwoohamba points out the same, you need to work hard and do a lot of visible work before understanding is gained. Hennie Coetzer also emphasizes the role of life skill teachers, to be more aware of art's relation to society. A life skill teacher should improve learners' understanding of how art is essential part of all different careers, not only the artistic ones.

## SOURCES OF KNOW-HOW

Teachers at the NIED workshop confirmed the need for an art teaching manual, closely linked to the given art syllabus. Practical advice is needed; guiding teaching step by step, taking in consideration the time and different levels required. The manual should include solutions to which both the teacher and the learner can relate. Knowledge should be democratized; available nationwide.

Training with well compiled, clearly written information improves the possibility of work being effective in the long term. Several respondents mentioned the problem of training being neglected and forgotten soon after a given workshop. Problems occur if the workshop is facilitated with tools and materials which are not available at participants' own surroundings. The participants cannot relate the given advice to their own environment.

Maria Caley, Elia Shiwoohamba and Alpheus Mvula all mentioned the Living Museum in the Northern-Namibia, which is open to the public. People were reminded of the possibility of attending on-going workshops. These present a practical way of learning, but are not always accessible. Information needs to be more widely available, in order to preserve heritage. A good example for gathering traditional

know-how is a basketry making DVD done by Papa Shikongeni, but it is sold out by now. He pointed out that the missionaries collected information, but he did the documentation "*on a perspective how I understand it as part of my culture and tradition.*" This material should be re-published to a wider audience.

## COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

The greatest source of knowledge related to the local environment is the people living there. Pokela mentions in her Namibian field work observations, how the culture of changing know-how was visibly open. People were willing to share their knowledge, not only with family, but further afield; from village to village. (2008, 19) People truly understood the benefits of 'open source' long before Western definitions. Collaboration does not celebrate individualism, rather realizing how as a community everyone gains more.

When the first curriculum for an independent Namibia was planned at the beginning of 1990-s, schools were recommended to use local communities as an information resource. (McRoberts) Since then, different projects have been introduced, but the practice does not cover schools comprehensively. Hennie Coetzer mentions an out-reach program called *Nama's*, where adults with specific handicraft skill are invited to schools to share their knowledge. According to Coetzer, *The Nama's* project is implemented in four of the 13 regions. Several respondents had work experience from a project aiming to implement art into schools, but the situation has not improved a lot.

By involving community in the life of the school, new social networks and supporting structures are formed. If excursion possibilities are limited due to lack of transportation, local surroundings are easy to reach.

Miettinen advises concentrating on the opportunities people offer, rather than the problems. "*To con-*

*sider human beings neither as consumers nor as passive users, but as active subjects, endowed with resources and, if conditions are right, ready to put them into play.*" (2009, 54) What kind of cooperation could be formed between schools and the local communities?

Collaboration gains a lot of support in theory, but the practice differs a lot within schools. Several teachers pointed out how rigorous teaching schedule leaves no time for extra activities. The need to include communal collaboration in the curriculum was raised, for schools to be able to devote time for the additional projects.

During the field work, I visited Five Rand Primary School in Okahandja, where collaboration with the local community was active. A small plantation formed the base for shared activities. The school was growing vegetables to generate income, but also to integrate agricultural work into education. Local people participated in taking care of the garden, and agricultural products were sold in Okahandja.

Another teacher in the NIED workshop mentioned how his school participates in several village events, taking an active role in helping. For example the school contributed to organizing funerals for a head man of the village.

Even though several respondents in my study mentioned art-related community collaboration, teachers in the workshop did not mention having experienced it. How could art take place in the village for the benefit of the school?

Maria Caley emphasizes the value of collaboration to increase understanding and appreciation. If an established artist, designer or craft maker presents their work to the school and the community, art as a career option is more likely to be taken into consideration. Several respondents pointed out the concern that being an artist is not considered as a proper *honest* career. A study conducted by JMAC, suggests that students could work in the regions as part of the

Namibian exchange-programs. (Davel 2011, 22) . The same way local artist or craft workers, without formal education, could pass on their traditional know-how to a school, increasing the sense of pride and self-confidence.

If the diversity of ethnic backgrounds challenge schools' art teaching ability to focus on certain traditions, in communal collaboration diverse indigenous knowledge could find its place. Even though the community would not share the same ethnic background, common objectives would come through improving the common living environment. As an example sharing a traditional know-how of using natural materials sustainably benefits both the community and the school. Through communal cooperation learners are often able to learn also in their mother tongue.

School and the community could collaborate by organizing workshops, work presentations and lectures. If art subject does not have its own separated teaching place in school, public places in the community could be used for an exhibition venue. Exhibiting works in the community would challenge the western tradition of presenting art in a specific gallery space, (Kantonen 2005, 141) reducing the gap between concepts of folk and high art.

Hennie Coetzer highlighted the significance of presenting art works in public, to increase the value in the eyes of learners, parents and community members. Only through seeing interesting, valuable results the older generation is able to change the neglecting attitude. Like Salerto wrote: *"Without audience the message remains incomplete."* (2011, 60) Pictures widen audiences' understanding about the life of the learners.

Active collaboration within school and community would involve parents. According to the study, the relation and collaboration between teachers and parents differ a lot. Parents' own educational background affects how confident they feel about partici-

parting in school's issues and activities. If a parent is for example illiterate, joining and supporting children's schooling may turn out difficult. Active and creative community could offer alternative ways to participate. Being considered as a valuable member of the society empowers a person, strengthening the hopes for the future. Active community would support children to take part in the politics and decision making processes later on.

## FUND RAISING THROUGH ART

Through an art or craft project school could organize fundraising. Entrepreneurship experiences would increase the understanding, what kind of skills are needed for starting a business after graduation. Entrepreneurship education could be presented in a form of a play for primary school pupils, or take into action through small school fundraising events. Choices within art and craft field are wide; for example school could sell small craft or art items, or prepare or decorate simple furnitures in order to earn income.

Hercules Viljoen mentions how rural craft projects are empowering people. Through artistic project marginalized people can find a source of income, maybe in a small scale, but gain also a lot of hope. In a country where a remarkable amount of people are living below the poverty line, additional income can make a big difference.

The study disclosed that entrepreneurship skills should be promoted, and bring the employ stakeholders to a closer relation with schools. Bridget Dundee pointed out the concern of high youth unemployment in The Namibian newspaper, highlighting the need for schools and employers to discuss, correlating the education to meet the need of a labor.

*"Youth employment and empowerment are vital for building the human capital that allows young people to*

*avoid poverty and lead better, and possibly have more fulfilling lives. The human capital formed in youth is an important determinant of long term growth that a nation can invest on. The youth bring with them boundless energy, imagination, creativity, ideals, and a limitless vision for their future and the societies in which they live. Youth can be key agents for social change, economic development and technological innovation. If not used, they are a wasted resource."* (Dundee 2013)

Dundee brings out in the article, how less statistical survey schools have done about investigating the students' employment success after graduating. She discloses the relevant question; what kind of skills the society needs and how could students be more connected to the job market? Cathy McRoberts pointed out the same issue, questioning the old beliefs that art would not be an essential part of finding a job. Even though art education is not aiming for everyone to become an artist; it's beneficial to realize the creative possibilities emerging through art.

## MATERIAL RESOURCES

I acknowledge that attitudes towards recycling differ a lot in a western world, where unsustainable consumption shapes society. The majority of people do not recycle because their primary needs would force them to do so. A growing concern for the environment affects peoples' will to recycle, but as recycling has been made relatively easy, it also keeps the wheels turning. As you get rid of your unneeded products only with a little effort, you are more able to keep on consuming.

I am aware of the totally different attitude when recycling is done to fulfil a primary need; either when people still live traditionally close to the nature, or when they are in poverty. People do not think about global over-consumption problems or environmental

concerns; they think about staying alive. Creative improvements are shaped by practicality.

The concept of recycling, as conscious re-use arising from free will, is not familiar for most Namibians. Naturally, functional re-used materials are used for subsistence; for example second-hand markets for clothing, technical equipment or building materials exist. Some small groups of people doing art, design or craft acknowledge the ideals behind re-using, though often practical reasons influence the decision. Pokela notes in her thesis (2008, 17) how high prices and limited accessibility to commercial material and tools control the production of art; local, often natural materials are used and worked on with self-made tools.

As Chakirra Claasen notes; the Namibian identity itself is very close to nature, as the majority of traditional crafts are done using natural materials. The most used natural materials in Namibia are palm leaves, grass and roots, wood and stones of different kinds, natural clay, Karakul wool and leather. Basketry, pottery, leather works, carving and sculpture are the best known traditional craft techniques in Namibia. Maria Caley emphasizes how important it is to take into consideration the traditional knowledge of gathering materials in a sustainable way, in order to keep the plant producing. Fees and seasonal regulations for harvesting exist. Though need for additional income and ignorance of regulations may threaten environmental sustainability, having a direct effect on livelihoods. (Pokela 2008, 75)

Hennie Coetzer noted teachers being eager to learn about using recycled, alternative materials, but also recognized prejudices against old and used. Cathy MaRoberts mentioned the same challenge to overcome. How to motivate schools to use their local surrounding for gathering the material?

A recipe for making homemade glue is included in the art syllabus, as well as information about how to make alternative clay. More information about self-made, low cost tools and materials has to be compiled for those schools with fewer resources. Teachers are uneducated about innovative recycling solutions from common materials; examples should be presented.

I was happy to see learners' work made from re-used everyday waste in The Namib High School in Swakobmund. The school is one of the best state schools in Namibia, having art education with a passionate, qualified art teacher. The school does not lack funds, but they are still using recycled materials in art. The value of trash is acknowledged, and the waste material becomes a new resource. The attitude of seeing recycling as value in its own, should be emphasized in the rural schools as well, highlighting how works made from waste can be something beautiful, functional, creative and evaluated equally next to works from brand new material. A qualified teacher is able to motivate the learners with materials available. Like Hennie Coetzer said *"Think out of the box!"*

To get myself closer to the reality of lack of resources, I conducted an experiment with self-made tools during my time in Okahandja. Having advised the teachers to gather recycled materials from their surroundings and to produce tools themselves, I made a collection of paint brush prototypes from found materials. The end result was a series of 11 brush substitutes, which were made from palm leaves, grass, wooden pieces, broken tires and left over rope collected nearby. The usability of the brushes was not as good as commercial factory made tools, but they worked. I observed learners at the Namib High School painting just with a piece of cardboard; no complaints were heard. By producing the brushes, I used my creativity, handicraft skills and cleaned the environment, free of charge.

## CROSS-CURRICULAR APPROACH

According to the interviews, respondents had some experience of using artistic approaches with other school subjects. Drawing maps in geography or observing different parts of plants in natural sciences, was familiar to many. While thinking the possibilities to integrate art widely into the curriculum, what kind of possibilities art-related activities could offer?

Cognitive view of learning supports the idea of defining first the problem and then choosing the right methods to solve it, using art as one, equal source of knowledge on a side of scientific fields. Räsänen (2008) gives examples how art could be integrated with other subjects, while pictures are used as a tool to make notes or new observations. Integration brings out the specific nature of different subjects; teaching should emphasize the strengths of each field. (Räsänen 2008, 113-125)

To place the integration in Namibian context, one has to take into consideration the general lack of art education. How could artistic approaches be used, if teachers or learners do not have experience in the basic skills? If cross-curricular integration is seen as a possibility to offer art, if the individual art subject is neglected, challenge lies in the ability to use artistic methods effectively. The strict learning schedule demands additional methods to clearly support the theme.

One example for integration in community collaboration could be storytelling task; combining history, language, art, social studies, geography and even natural science. While sustaining cultural heritage, learners could learn about history; relating the stories directly to the local, and further on, to the global environment. Learners could focus on the social or historical context of the oral storytelling practice,



and open up the emerging themes further on under different topics; How was the environment related to the stories? What kind of plants was presented? What kind of know-how was associated to them? Is new scientific knowledge supporting the old, traditional know-how today?

Learners could focus on for example drawing comics out of the stories, observing closer a chosen point of view. Well-known Namibian artist's, late John Muafangejo's linocut works had many historical stories inside, learners could start by observing those images. Understanding the causal relations between different themes supports learners in problem solving; finding creative, independent and relevant solutions.

## NETWORK

Digital networking is increasing in Namibia, as worldwide. Even though internet access is still limited especially in the rural areas, coverage is growing. Though the high price still keeps access to the internet unequal, more schools are using the Web as one of their tools. Wealthy schools use internal networks for example for communicating with parents.

A shared database could promote communication for the creative industry as well. Having a common network linking artists, designers or craft makers interested in educational cooperation would help schools to widen their learning methods. Several respondents had experience of working together with local communities, and several showed interest in starting collaboration. Maria Caley emphasizes the importance for makers to stand out: *"prove our existence and justify to the public that we exist."*

Information about local art and artists has been gathered by NAGN and Arts Association Heritage Trust, based on their own collections. Information about crafts can be found by Omba Art Trust. (Viljoen)

According to my own observations, at the moment the most comprehensive, open database for Namibian visual artists can be found by visiting The Visual Artist of Namibia, VA-N's site <http://www.visualartistsnamibia.org/> but separate page for communal, educational collaboration would be beneficial. According to Kirsten Wechsberger, JMAC is gathering a database for people working in the culture field in order to find facilitators for their courses. Could this page cover the need of primary schools' communal collaboration as well, for to become shared, comprehensive database preventing overlapped work?

I noticed that although Internet use is getting more common, especially in the urban areas, the possibilities that it offers are not acknowledged. A common misconception is the high cost of a personal web site as people are not familiar with free blog based sites. Opening a blog page with the simplest templates is no more complicated than using an email, though basic instructions have to be learned.

A database for gathering people willing to collaborate with schools, could be built with low cost and low labor contribution if interested people add their personal information to the page by themselves using an open platform. Participants could present their education, working experience and special skills to highlight what they could contribute for the school.

The Finnish-Namibian Society's cooperation project is planning to gather educational information on an open web platform and publish the teacher's manual digitally. An open site receives feedback faster, as anyone can contribute on developing ideas. An on-line manual can be updated regularly according to need. Though regional limitations with internet access must be taken into consideration; the web has a massive effect on democratizing knowledge. Open learning sources are established, for example

at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology: <http://ocw.mit.edu/index.htm>,  
<http://www.openculture.com/>  
<https://www.khanacademy.org/about>

## PERSONAL PROFILE

As noted in the chapter on basic education challenges, schools are recommended to find new funding resources for basic maintenance. Specificity improves the establishment of collaboration (eg through personal school profiles) either nationwide or internationally. Hercules Viljoen emphasized the importance of enthusiastic partnerships in the NAGN context, committed to common goals. Schools would benefit from cultural exchange cooperation, even without financial commitments between the partners. If financial support is included, challenge lies in forming an equal partnership as schools should maintain their independence and decision making power. Even though the need for financial support would exist at the moment, in the long run the state should be able to maintain all primary and secondary schools, eliminating the educational inequality.

Several schools in Namibia have a special image or area of focus, coming after a long established history. Schools are able to pay attention to their image, as the basic education is working and the school is well funded. How can marginalized schools build an individual image by emphasizing themes where they excel?

Common objectives would increase the feeling of ownership and self-value of the employers and the learners. If I return to think about Five Rand Primary School and their successful gardening project, I believe that through that they could gain even more collaboration. By presenting the school's special features, new partnership programs could be materi-

alized, on the basis of common interest. During my visit, I clearly noticed how proud the teacher who presented the school to me, was about their garden. Afterward I shared a picture of the teacher in the school's maize field, full of positive attitude, on a social media site (Facebook) after asking permission to do so. The picture gained a lot of positive feedback, but most important was the message from the teacher two months after the visit: *"The meeting was something I regard best in my entire teaching career, as you published the good work out of my hard work."* (Received 11.4.2013 in Facebook) I think the teacher; Bernhard Ngunda, was perhaps over-effusive, but the meaning of recognizing valuable work should not be underestimated. The published picture showed a great example of using a functional practical approach to teach natural sciences and agriculture, in any location. How can schools find their potential and how can it be presented?

Communal collaboration can bring out themes to highlight. A community's specific geographical location, history, or local professionals working in some unique field could be examples of what to emphasize. With the internet becoming more widely accessible, even deprived schools can take advantage of its possibilities.

Oshondo Village in Northern-Namibia published an Internet site about their village in 2007, mentioning on their web page being *"the first traditional village in Namibia to have a web site."*

The page includes photographs from the local environment and from the traditional lifestyle, a discussion platform, and presents people originating from the village. There are no commercial advertisements related to the village; the place is introduced in English and in the local language, Oshiwambo: *"Like other communal areas in African villages, we cultivate*

*Mahangu in order to feed ourselves. Nغانhi naanaa omikunda vi li muAfrika, nase ohatu limi omahangu opo tu lye.*” (Oshondo 2013)

As can be seen from any visual image, individual characters can be used to strongly support the desired objectives, to influence how one sees the given target. These non-commercial, informal pages show pictures which the locals find important, worth showing; widening inter-cultural understanding, giving another source of information which is not colored by western interpretation. The majority of ethnographic photographs from developing countries has been taken by outsiders( Hartmann et al. 1998, 188) but recently photographing has become more common also in rural areas due to digital cameras, often included in mobile phones. Guest book feedback in Oshondo’s site is all positive. Could rural schools build a web site, to publish their achievements, staff members’ greetings and learners’ work to increase the sense of belonging and pride?

A study shows that general IT-know-how is relatively weak among the teachers, especially in rural areas. Objectives to increase IT-skills are noted in education development reports. (International conference on education) If teacher’s or other school staff members do not have the IT-skills, work could be done as collaboration. Vocational or tertiary students studying media/graphic designing in Windhoek could produce a web site for their former primary schools as a real life working experience, as part of the studies.

In practice, primary schools would not need any technical equipment, as the work could be done outside. Students would get working experience and a reference to show after graduation. Working for the community one originates from is often more motivating, as part of the family may benefit directly from the contributions if still inhabiting the village.

As a volunteer from a communal library pointed out “*working for the community, working for yourself.*” (Greenwell Matongo 2013)

Together with the school’s management, the former student could design art activities to be undertaken. A collaborative mural painting could be one platform where the objectives of the school could be visualized. Students would gain knowledge how design can build society and create change.











# LESSONS LEARNED

## PERSONAL RESEARCH CHALLENGES

Due to the collaboration in Namibia, the timetable was given outside. The field work was initially planned to begin at the end of 2012, but due to the local summer holiday season it was postponed starting in the middle of January 2013. Changes in the timetable allowed me more time for background research and the literature survey, but the actual transcription was time-pressured due to the proximity of the graduation date in Finland.

Taking into consideration the field work having to be postponed, I managed to stay strictly on my timetable. General communication and planning with the cooperation partners went well, though it was helped by previous experiences of the different working environments in Namibia.

## LANGUAGE

Field work and plans to share gathered information with the cooperation partners, made writing in English relevant. While working with a foreign language was challenging, it widened my understanding about the difficulties faced by many while studying in Namibia – Even though English is the official language, it's not the mother tongue of the majority. How much is that affecting people's everyday life, education and self-expression in Namibia? Cathy McRoberts pointed out the problem of student's ability to write coherent English at university level, when the majority of students had an unqualified English teacher in primary and secondary levels.

The level of spoken English varied a lot between my interviewees, having an effect on the material gathered. Some challenges with vocabulary occurred. Miettinen (2001, 11) notes the same problem, the



existing room for interpretation. Interviewing guidelines state that one fundamental principle for qualitative interview is to offer a setting where respondents can express themselves in their own terms. (Genzuk 2003, 6) While working in a tongue which is not mine or respondents' first language, this principle cannot be implemented, and the possibility of misunderstanding increases.

Difficulties with communication occurred a few times, but situations were opened up with further explanations. I concentrated on not leading the interviewee by the framing of the question, by using short and clear questions. While transcribing the interviews later on, I noticed that further explanations, while diminishing misunderstandings, often brought up a new, modified question leading the discussion in a slightly different direction. Long questions with multiple clauses were confusing and often not fully answered; this highlighted the need to keep questions short and simple.

## FULFILLING OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the work were achieved relatively well. Finnish-Namibian Society's cooperation project will benefit as the information about the school environment has been compiled into one form. The knowledge is easy to share with other partners, and work further with clear, relevant and common objectives.

I feel more confident to contribute to collaboration as the general picture of the study environment brightened. My knowledge about Namibian culture and history increased a lot and raised interest in further research.

Research increases my own ability to work with social design projects; in the near future with aforementioned teachers' manual and later on with new plans. I believe that even though the research was

done in the Namibian context, I am able to refer and use the gathered information wider in other environments.

Reflecting on the schedule, a longer field work period would have allowed more brainstorming with the respondents, within the topics which arose from the material. The field work was on a very strict timetable, with the interviews during January and with the Finnish-Namibian society's collaboration project in February. The majority of the transcribing was done only after returning to Finland.

A comprehensive picture of the topic only forms after you get familiar with the research material. Further issues, which may have deserved more attention in the field work, appear. I feel that the content of teacher's pedagogical education should have been more deeply embedded in the research as it has a direct impact on basic art education. Questions about pedagogical education were at the questionnaire, but specific respondent from the teachers' education field was not chosen.

Connection to topic and target country will not diminish after returning to Finland, but it changes the form. Communicating with cooperation partners is handled through Internet; the use of social media platforms making it easier than before. Like Kantonen writes, the concept of field work is changing while the field grows wider. (2005, 140) I realized how my understanding about society's causal relations and globalization increased through doing this work. The field work continued in my own surroundings.

## WAY FURTHER

Information gathered through the research could be developed with deeper ethnographic research, as teaching improvement proposals should be closely related to the real working conditions. For understanding the school environment and the

challenges, for example what a big class size or lack of commercial materials are causing, time spend in actual research environment is really important. In the case of Finnish-Namibian society's collaboration project, active consultation to the local professionals should be emphasized and increased. Practical advice for relating the diverse traditional know-how to the teaching should be research and materialized; to sustain the rich Namibian heritage and to increase the understanding between the fellow residents.

The school plays essential role of shaping the minds of the next generation, to appreciate art, creativity and learners' own heritage. Acknowledging the cultural background forms a strong base where to reflect new information, no matter how traditionally a person would live his or hers life further on. By knowing the tradition, one is able to build cultural bridges, like Maria Caley when using traditional beading decoration from her roots, from Kavango, to be used in her modern fashion designing for Amakeya label. *"To make them look little bit unique, but also to try to link them to my own cultural background."*

Art opens up new perspectives to understand your roots, strengthens to grow stronger. It widens your way of seeing, preventing from a danger of a single story.



Not a word without the others.  
**THANK YOU/ KIITOS / TANGI !**

Markku

My extended Family in Valkeala  
My extended Family in Helsinki

For conversation and help, especially  
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Satu Miettinen  
Päivi Eskola  
Hannele Sipilä

## TIME SCHEDULE

### AUTUMN 2012

Preliminary plans about the field work with Finnish-Namibian Society  
Collecting and reading background literature and information  
Gathering and informing cooperation partners, supervisors  
Funding applications  
Design and evaluation of the interview questionnaires: qualitative  
Opening a blog page

### JANUARY 2013

Arrival in Namibia 13th January  
Field work in Windhoek, Namibia  
Interviews  
Visual documentation / Photographing

### FEBRUARY

Field work in Okahandja, Namibia  
Visual documentation / Photography

### MARCH

Returning to Finland 2nd March  
Transcribing interviews

Transcription of the research

### APRIL

Transcription of the research  
Layout design  
Finishing the visual documentation  
Passing the finished written part 25th April

### MAY

Presenting the thesis 23th May  
MOA 13 exhibition 8-26.5.2013  
Exhibition in the main Library of Kouvola 20-31.5.2013

Later on in August 2013

Exhibition in Gallery Fokus, Raasepori 29.7-20.8.2013

## DISSEMINATION AND PUBLISHING

Aalto University

School of Art, Design and Architecture

Web site: <http://ondokumende.blogspot.fi/>

Articles:

Finnish-Namibian society's publication 1/2013 and later on in the autumn 2013

The local newspaper of Kouvola, Kouvola Sanomat 8.12.2012 and later in May related to the exhibition

## EXHIBITIONS

MOA 13 Master of Arts Helsinki group exhibition 8-26.5.2013

## SINGLE EXHIBITIONS

The central library of Kouvola 20-31.5.2013

Gallery Fokus, Raasepori 29.7-20.8.2013

## COLLABORATION

Finnish-Namibian Society

National Institute of Educational Development (NIED)

## FINANCING

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Aalto University's foundation gave me a grant for thesis visualization.

The Finnish-Namibian society will support extra prints of the thesis to be given to cooperation partners in Namibia.

## LIST OF PHOTOS

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School bag from The Five Rand Primary School, Okahandja

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Jolanda Kapuka, is not schooling yet

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Rebekka Shiwoohamba's shoes from a school uniform

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Wilhelmina Shiwoohamba's old school uniform skirt

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My notebook

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Wilhelmina Shiwoohamba's old school uniform shirt

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Rebekka Shiwoohamba

Rebekka is in the fourth grade at Bet-El Primary School in Katutura, Windhoek. She goes to school in the afternoon shift.

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Prototypes of the substitute brushes

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Wilhelmina Shiwoohamba's old school uniform

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Rebekka Shiwoohamba's school uniform, photo-shooting sessions at Shiwoohamba's home in Katutura, Windhoek

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UNAM / University of Namibia

COTA / College of Arts

NAGN / National Art Gallery of Namibia

JMAC / John Muafangejo Art Centre

VA-N / Visual Artists - Namibia

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#### **Claasen, Chakirra**

/ Design Junction's office, Windhoek / The 31st of January 2013

#### **Coetzer, Hennie**

/ NIED's campus, Okahandja / The 29th of February 2013

#### **McRoberts, Cathy**

/ University of Namibia, UNAM Department of visual and performing arts, Windhoek / The 5th of February 2013

#### **Mvula, Alpheus**

/ Studio 77, Windhoek / The 25th of January 2013

#### **Shikongeni, Papa**

/ National Art Gallery Namibia NAGN's cafeteria, Windhoek / The 30th of January 2013

#### **Shiwoohamba, Elia**

/ Franco-Namibian Cultural Centre FNCC Windhoek / The 21st of January 2013

#### **Van Schouwenburg, Hester**

/ Delta Secondary School, Windhoek / The 24th of January 2013 / Short recorded discussion was held during the NIED's textile Workshop.

#### **Viljoen, Hercules**

/ National Art Gallery Namibia NAGN, Windhoek / The 30th of January 2013

#### **Wechsberger, Kirsten**

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