



CULTURE, ART AND SPORTS TEACHERS' CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN MBARALI DISTRICT: A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Michael Joel Kalenge¹

Abstract

The government of Tanzania through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology did a scrupulous revision of the curriculum in 2023 stressing on competency-based teaching and learning, vocational training, digitalization and inclusivity. New and improved subjects were designed including Culture, Art and Sports (CAS). This subject is taught and learnt from pre-primary to tertiary education. This paper argues that for Culture, Art and Sports to be successfully taught and learnt, there is a need for the teachers of this subject to possess high level of cultural intelligence about the communities they are deployed to serve. This is based on the fact that for a meaningful delivery of lessons to take place, the teaching and learning process must be based on the "known-unknown maxim" which assumes that teaching should shape up from what learners know to what they do not know. It is obvious, learners are exposed to the knowledge and experiences found in their very immediate environment including, but not limited to: songs, dance, music, painting, circus, sculpture, craft, greeting, eating and dressing styles and related customs and traditions. This being the case, all the pedagogical activities ought to begin and revolve around what the learners are cognizant about. This makes the possession of high level of Cultural Intelligence for CAS teachers imperative and inevitable. This fact was established through one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions with CAS teachers and parents in the study area. The results show clearly that teachers in the study area are not culturally knowledgeable about the culture of the Sangu people.

Keywords: Culture, Art and Sports (CAS), Cultural Intelligence (CQ), Sangu Customs and Traditions.

¹ Lecturer Dr., Department of Languages and Literature, College of Education, Mkwawa University, Tanzania. likomeza@gmail.com; michael.kalenge@muce.ac.tz ORCID: 0009-0000-9572-3356

Introduction

Culture, Art and Sports is a subject in the current revised curriculum for primary education in Tanzania. It is designed to enable pupils to develop competency in culture, arts and sports through its three indispensable components; Culture, Arts and Sports (CAS). Culture as a component part of CAS is developed in order to make pupils appreciate their own culture and the culture of other people. Culture is as well included in the curriculum to develop in the learner, religious tolerance and the commitment to adhere to accepted standards of socio-cultural norms of their respective societies and the nation at large. Art on the other hand, is included in order to cultivate in the learner the ability to produce artistic expressions like drawing, pottery, painting, architecture, dance, music, stories among others. The last component encompasses sports and games which include the physical and mental related activities meant to develop learner's gymnastic and intellectual skills through training, exercises and competition (TIE, 2023; Komba & Shukia, 2023).

Culture, Art and Sports embraces all the three Benjamin Bloom's domains of learning. According to Wa-Mbaleka, Chen, Petre and deNoyelles (2025), the Bloom' domains of learning are cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. These three domains feature in the CAS subject because the teaching and learning of the subject involves rigorous sharing and transmission of cultural values, customs and traditions and knowledge; intellectual, creative and problem-solving skills. It includes the development of positive feelings, emotions and attitudes towards learning and it cultivates precision, naturalization, manipulation, imitation and articulation through fundamental movement skills including, but not limited to: running, leaping, jumping, hopping, throwing, telling stories, knitting, dancing, running with a stick, ball-searching, catching, kicking and galloping. When a learner participates fully in CAS-related activities or generally referred to as aesthetics by Nyirenda (2008), he/she definitely becomes mentally, emotionally and physically healthy as well as culturally well-rounded. That being the case, the teaching and learning of CAS has a direct influence in the teaching and learning of all other subjects (Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Geography, Kiswahili, English, History, Civics, Religion, ICT, Science).

In order for the teaching and learning of CAS to successfully bring about the desired results as outlined above, the subject teachers must possess high level of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) of the respective children's communities. Cultural Intelligence entails the ability to espouse and embrace new cultural contexts of the host society in order to achieve a set of goals (Petrovic, 2011; Peter, 2011; Thomas & Inkson, 2017; Solomon & Steyn, 2017). Teachers as professionals who most often do not work in their home environment because after graduation, they are placed in new cultural contexts to facilitate learning in formal educational settings, require high level of metacognitive cultural intelligence (which means they need to be knowledgeable enough about the cultural backgrounds of the children they teach), cognitive (be aware of the cultural norms and practices existing in diverse cultural contexts), motivational (be intrinsically motivated to learn the differences and similarities across cultures) and behavioural cultural intelligence (demonstrate relevant verbal and non-verbal actions when interacting with people in varying cultural contexts like facial expressions, words and gestures) in order to attain the set pedagogical goals. This type of learning is referred by Ladson-Billings (1995) as "culturally responsive", "culturally compatible", and "culturally relevant" as it takes at the centre of learning the learner's pertinent socio-cultural contexts. F. Tilya and F. Mafumiko (2010), call this learning methodology "learner-centred" whereby the teacher facilitates individual learner's academic endeavour in the first place, by understanding the learner's cultural contexts from which he/she is rooted.

Petrovic, D. (2011), states clearly that teachers must be well informed about the culture of the people they are deployed to serve. This knowledge helps them to develop and maintain sound relationship with members of the host communities they interact with as a result, teachers and the community join hands in facilitating the learner attain the set goals. Erstad (2018), explains:

The interrelationships, transitions, and trajectories between school, home, and community... have been influential in the way they open up ways of studying learners across contexts and through different trajectories... (205)

Teachers who demonstrate a high level of cultural intelligence are able to bring about social change (change of behaviour, social structure, social institutions and social relations) in their host communities than those with

little or without the relevant cultural intelligence. Additionally, teachers with high level of cultural intelligence can easily incorporate traditional pedagogical elements in formal education making learners perform better academically. When certain traditional elements/items like traditional oral stories, songs, proverbs, riddles, sports, games, pottery are included in the teaching and learning process of the subject, the learners and their communities esteem their cultures. This nurtured esteem and pride can in turn influence the promotion and preservation of indigenous knowledge systems and culture in general (Onwuatuegwu & Paul-Mgbeafulike, 2023).

Main Purpose of the Research

As a baseline study, this research was mainly undertaken to assess the level of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) of Culture, Art and Sports (CAS) teachers in Mbarali district with Utengule Usangu ward being a specific case. It investigated how well Culture, Art and Sports (CAS) teachers are culturally informed about the Sangu people in order to establish their levels of cultural intelligence.

Theoretical Framework

The analysis and presentation of both primary and secondary data in this paper is guided by Cultural Intelligence (CQ) theory which states that individual persons can live and work in diverse cultural contexts if they learn and acquire specific cultural knowledge of the people of the host communities (Ang & Dune, 2008; Peterson, 2011; Thomas & Inkson, 2017; Solomon & Steyn, 2017). When an individual person interacts with new “worlds”, he/she gets exposed to new cultural practices and experiences. That person may come across new greeting styles, new dressing styles, new table manners, new religious or ritualistic practices, new dance, new crafts and other multifaceted modes of living. In order for such a person to function effectively in such a new and unusual intercultural encounter, he/she needs to have an awareness, ability and readiness to adapt to the new intriguing realities. The acquisition of knowledge and experiences of these new realities and the ability to subscribe and work effectively in an existing dominant and host culture is called cultural intelligence (CQ). Referring to Plato’s *The Republic*, Ishumi insists:

The primacy of the social-processes-based education was for Plato a means of discovering as well as confronting the

challenges in everyday living in the areas and positions in which each one would best be trained for the service of the many in society and for the good of society as a whole. Its importance was also seen in the fact that understanding one's social and cultural context in a given society is crucial in enabling the individual to appreciate the ever-continuing processes and to adopt oneself accordingly (Ishumi, 2008: 62).

Precisely, in this study, Cultural Intelligence theory acted as a guideline in the assessment of the level of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) of Culture, Art and Sports (CAS) teachers in the study area. As stated before, pedagogically, the level of Cultural Intelligence of a teacher has an implication in his/her teaching of Culture, Art and Sports. When the teacher is deficient of cultural knowledge of the learners, he/she serves, it compromises with the quality of education being offered (Ramsey & Lorenz, 2016).

Study Area

This study was conducted in Mbarali district, at Utengule Usangu ward. Mbarali district popularly known as Usangu is found in Mbeya region, south-western Tanzania covering 16,000 km². Out of these 16,000 km², 3,215 km² are used for agriculture; 1,540 for livestock keeping; 1,245 for settlement; 400 km² for forest reserve and 9,600 km² for National Park, wild management and game reserve (Kaajan, 2012; MDC, 2017; Kalenge; 2022).

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2022), Mbarali district has twenty (20) administrative wards (Madibira, Mawindi, Mapogoro, Ubaruku, Imalilo Songwe, Igava, Ipwani, Miyombweni, Rujewa, Mahongole, Igurusi, Kongolo, Mwatenga, Lugelele, Luhanga, Ihahi, Chimala, Utengule Usangu, Ruiwa and Itamboleo) with a total population of 446,336 people. The 446,336 people are from different ethnic groups mainly, the Sangu who are the original inhabitants of the district constituting about 37% of all the people in the area. The Bena, Hehe, Vwanji, Safwa, Sukuma, Pangwa, Kinga, Kisi, Manda, Maasai, Gogo and other minority groups form the remaining 63%. Kaajan, M. (2012), substantiates that because of conducive climatic conditions, soil fertility, availability of water and natural vegetation cover, portions of people from almost every part of the country have migrated into the Usangu plain for crop cultivation and animal keeping. Kaajan insists:

Although the whole Mbarali district is Sangu area, many non-Sangu people are living there as well. The area used to be almost exclusively inhabited by Sangu, but many other people groups have moved into it, so now, there are no villages anymore where the Sangu live completely separate from other groups... (11)

Besides the fact that almost all villages in Mbarali are inhabited by a mixture of ethnic groups, Utengule Usangu is the ward with the highest concentration of Sangu people. More importantly, the Sangu Chief's palace is built at this place and all the heirs of the chieftain must reside here (Kaajan, 2012; Gabriel, 2024). This is the reason as to why Utengule Usangu was sampled to represent all other places in Mbarali district in assessing the Culture, Art and Sports (CAS) teachers' cultural competency of the Sangu people and how such knowledge is used to enhance the teaching and learning of the respective subject.

According to Mbarali District Council (MDC, 2017), Utengule Usangu ward is located west of Mbarali district, 98 kilometres away from the District Headquarters. The Ward has six villages, namely, Simike, Mahango Mswiswi, Muungano, Magurula, Utengule Usangu and Mpolo. Each village has one primary school in operation. Based on the 2022 Population and Housing Census: Administrative Units Population Distribution Report by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Utengule Usangu Ward has a population of 19,268 people (9,236 males and 10,032 females). The major economic activities of these people are crop cultivation and livestock keeping.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach to assess cultural intelligence of CAS teachers in the study area. To specifically achieve such goal, the study used exploratory research designs which are one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions (Yin, 2010; Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2016; Silverman & Patterson, 2022). These designs were employed to gather data from parents and teachers in the six villages and schools respectively. The sampling method employed was purposive whereby, six teachers teaching CAS (one from each school) and six parents whose children are enrolled in

the six schools (one from each village) were involved in the study. The questions asked during one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions revolved around each CAS teacher's basic particulars like name, date of birth, employment-related details, level of education attained (certificate, diploma, degree), work experience (roles, responsibilities, in-service training) and cultural knowledge of the Sangu people (Sangu traditions, customs, art, sports and games). On the other hand, parents were basically asked to share information regarding the CAS teachers' attendance and participation in socio-cultural activities of the Sangu people and such teachers' ability to use Shisango in their day-to-day interactions with the Sangu community.

Discussion

During one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions with CAS teachers several specific questions intending to determine the level of CQ were asked including those related to the following items:

- i. Years each of the CAS teachers had stayed at Utengule Usangu;
- ii. Teacher's ability to use Shisango for communication in different social settings
- iii. Teacher's ability to re-tell Sangu oral stories
- iv. Teacher's knowledge of Sangu songs, dance, proverbs, taboos and related social etiquette, rituals, ceremonies etc.
- v. the CAS teachers' attendance and participation in cultural activities like Sangu weddings, funerals, dance and singing activities and storytelling sessions

Based on the interviews and focus group discussions conducted; it was discovered that the teachers are explicitly not conversant with the culture of the Sangu people. There is minimal engagement of the teachers in the socio-cultural activities of the Sangu like community gatherings, storytelling, singing and dance recitals, ritual and related religious matters. These activities work as orientations to familiarize someone with a new surrounding culture he/she is supposed to subscribe. Failure to involve oneself in these important cultural matters, makes it impossible for that person to become culturally competent of the host community (Harrison and Voelker, 2008). According to Gabriel E. Idang (2015), culture is not taught, it is received into the mind and retained in the heart through

participation, observation and mimics. “This shows that every human ... is likely to become infused with the culture of that society, whether knowingly or unknowingly during the process of social interaction” (99).

The table below, was used as a tool for assessing CAS teachers’ level of Cultural Intelligence (CQ).

Table No. 1: Assessment of the Level of CQ of CAS Teachers at Utengule Usangu

| Teacher's Identity Codes | Years lived & Worked at the Station | Ability to Use Shisango in Diverse Settings | Ability to Re-tell Sangu Oral Stories | Knowledge of Sangu Customs & Traditions | Attendance & Participation in Sangu Cultural Activities |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| CAS-1 | 5 | E | NIL | NIL | NIL |
| CAS-2 | 7 | E | NIL | NIL | NIL |
| CAS-3 | 6 | E | NIL | NIL | NIL |
| CAS-4 | 8 | D | NIL | E | NIL |
| CAS-5 | 10 | D | NIL | E | NIL |
| CAS-6 | 12 | D | E | D | NIL |

Keys of Assessment: A= Excellent; B= Very Good; C= Good; D= Poor; E= Very Poor; F= NIL

The data presented in the table above depict that the enculturation process which is a continuous series of adoption of behavior attributes and ways of life of the surrounding culture is not taking place in the study area. When besides staying at one speech community for between 5 and 12 years, none of the teachers can manage to communicate appropriately by using the language of the host community; when none of the teachers can re-tell any of the traditional stories of the host people; when the teachers are not well informed about the specific preferences, taboos and general culture of the respective people and do not attend and participate fully in socio-cultural activities of the people, it is obvious that no transmission of culture is taking place.

Respondents attribute their lack of cultural competence to the host communities, themselves. One of the CAS teachers reveals:

Now, how can we be conversant in Shisango while the Sangu people themselves do not know their language? Many parents, citizens in general,

especially those in our age group do not know Shisango... These people do not know even their customs well... They despise their Sangu language...

This respondent is aged 38 and based on his argument, the Sangu language is endangered as it is no longer the language of communication of a large portion of the people in Usangu. Comparing what is happening in the study area with what is happening in Kyela district in Mbeya region with regard to indigenous language use, another respondent expounds:

When I was just employed by the government, I got posted to teach a primary school in Kyela, in just a year, I was able to speak in Nyakyusa and was knowledgeable about many Nyakyusa customs and traditions... Even my accent reveals that, I speak like a Nyakyusa... Here at Usangu, the Sangu people do not care about their language, they like to speak in Swahili... Customs and traditions are lost... at least here at Utengule the situation is not bad compared to Mswiswi, Igurusi, Rujewa and Ubaruku where Swahili is dominant... The Nyakyusa people found in Usangu speak their language, they have not stopped using it...

Another respondent (a CAS teacher and Sangu native) attributing CAS teachers' lack of CQ to the dominance of Kiswahili, comments:

Swahili language has obliterated our customs and traditions. Sangu people have become Swahilis nowadays... They speak in Swahili; they have no interest in Shisango. They have no interest in customs... They have no interest in the songs, even the stories of their ethnic groups... They don't have interest in traditional thumb piano...

According to Gabriel, H (2024), Swahili, which is the national language of Tanzania and a lingua franca has become a dominant language of communication in all important domains of Sangu people's lives. Kiswahili is dominant in schools. It is a dominant medium in homes. It is prevalent in market places. Kiswahili prevails in almost all religious activities except, in traditional functions where mixed languages are used. This is the reason

why teachers in the study area cannot be culturally competent because they lack a repository of Sangu vocabularies, stories, dance, songs, proverbs and many other traditions of the sort.

This prevailing strength of Kiswahili and Swahili culture leading to the downplay of Shisango is literally called cultural genocide. Based on the history of Tanzania, immediately after independence in 1961, the reorganization and coordination of villages called villagisation and the abolition of chieftainship in the country took place and it is attributed for what is happening in Mbarali today by Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Robert Phillipson (2023) as:

...the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group. States that engage in cultural genocide set out to destroy the political and social institutions of the targeted group. Land is seized, populations are forcibly transferred and their movement is restricted. Languages are banned. Spiritual leaders are persecuted, spiritual practices are forbidden, and objects of spiritual value are confiscated and destroyed. And, most significantly to the issue at hand, families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next. (14)

Kapinga, O and Gores, V. (2020), add on politics as a factor for the ongoing cultural genocide in Tanzania:

... As a measure of consolidating independence and nationhood, the Local Government Ordinance was amended in 1962 to, inter alia, repeal the Native Authority Ordinance and with it, native authorities and chiefs. In 1963, the African Chiefs Ordinance (Repeal) Act abolished the institution of the chieftaincy, and later in the same year, the Chiefs (Abolition of Office: Consequential Provisions) Act made it illegal for former chiefs to seek judicial redress for loss of office. All the associations identified by ethnicity were banned and debates regarding ethnic interests were prohibited in the parliament. The Native Authority system was abolished and the local government authority was absorbed into the new government... (261)

Not only has Kiswahili and its culture and political factors elaborated above have obliterated Shisango, but also the prominence of other surrounding and migrant languages and their cultures in Mbarali like Hehe, Bena, Sukuma and Maasai. In "Sangu Songs: A Changing Tradition" (2012), Michael Kalenge quotes a Sangu respondent complaining about the downplay of Shisango and the continued praise and use of other languages and cultures:

Sangu children here at Imalilo Songwe know Sukuma vernacular... I heard that at Utengule Sangu children speak in Nyakyusa... At Manienga they can understand Maasai Vernacular... many of them know Bena and Hehe vernaculars... The songs our children sing most of the time are those from the radio... They don't know Chisangu... They don't know because we the grownups don't speak in the language... Even the songs we sing are of other people...

One may ask a significant question as to why Sangu language and the culture in general is being dominated by other languages and cultures including Swahili. In the first place, previous researches (Kaajan, 2012; Kalenge, 2012; Gabriel, 2025) show that Sangu people's population is smaller than the population of a combination of other ethnic groups. The Sangu people's population is approximately 37% of all people in Mbarali. Paralleled with their small number, the Sangu people's tendency to do their cultural practices enshrouded was another fact. This attitude became an advantage for the immigrant groups to practice their cultures amidst the Sangu population as explained by Michael Kalenge (2012):

... Sangu are a few people and because they are proud and therefore do not often do their things openly, these immigrant ethnic groups continued living their traditional life uninfluenced by the Sangu. They did the drumming and singing of their traditional songs openly. This had a gradual effect on the Sangu. The Sangu began having an interest in the emigrant ethnic group's traditions... (54)

According to Helena Gabriel (2024), the Sangu's tendency to enshroud their culture is evident even in the use and transmission of Shisango. According

to the researcher, Sangu parents' use of Shisango is very rare. These people do not speak or even teach Shisango and related traditions and customs to their children. This fact is supported by the views of the parents during interview and focus group discussion sessions. One of them elaborates the experience:

There is no any other ethnic group that doesn't like to demonstrate its culture like the Sangu. It is very rare to find a Sangu mother or father sitting with the children narrating our stories... It is very rare to find the Sangu dance being performed... Let us not put our blame on teachers because Sangu traditional events are very rare... if done, the events are done enshrouded... The Sangu people are not like the Sukuma or Maasai; these people do their traditions openly...

One other respondent elaborated that nowadays, most Sangu traditional songs and dance are done for political reasons. When a political figure like District Commissioner (DC), the President and related figures make a visit to some places in Usangu, one will find the Sangu traditional groups performing their songs and dances. The respondent adds:

Do you know why when politicians come, the Sangu dances are performed? They are performed because of money... When the Member of Parliament comes, *Museya* elders will be seen. What do they long for? They long for money. They are given money after a brief performance... Not only money, but also free of charge alcohol... They don't perform without money and alcohol... This has weakened our dance...

From the substantiation presented above, the Sangu cultural environment is not supportive for the developing sufficient cultural intelligence to new people coming in the area. When the cultural practices of a community are not conducted or are conducted rarely, that culture is incapable of influencing the adjustment of people from other cultures.

Conclusion

This study as stated earlier, was a baseline intending to assess the state of cultural intelligence of the teachers teaching Culture, Art and Sports (CAS) subject in Mbarali district in Tanzania. The results show that, the referred teachers are not culturally competent about the Sangu people. That being the case, another study to intervene the situation is important. This intervention phase will have to take serious measures to educate the Sangu community members on the need to revitalise and uphold their culture. The phase will also have to collect data on all Sangu-related cultural activities and document them. In the end, the intervention will have to sensitise teachers on the need to acquire Sangu culture and subscribe to it before using it in the teaching and learning of CAS and other subjects.

The views above are supported by scholars in the field. Idang, G (2014) for instance, insists that for cultural intelligence to be achieved the revitalization of such a culture ought to be conducted by providing cultural education to the people in the community in question. Hmala, M. (2023) expounds that all people including teachers and other stakeholders (caregivers, foreign organisations, government and private sector employees) found in a specific host community have to be edified about the traditions, customs, knowledge, skills, perceptions, wisdom and the general way of life of the respective host community.

According to Igodo, E. (2023), African culture is basically communicated and transferred from generation to generation orally. This makes it prone to stagnation in terms of growth leading to loss and deprivation. Henceforth, documenting a particular culture as part of revitalization is paramount. This study argues further that integrating local culture into formal education curriculum enhances the documentation of such culture. This is due to the fact that formal education is based on a mixture of written and audio-visual representations. The oral stories of the Sangu people for example, we will have to be put in writing and in other related cutting-edge media of communication and education delivery.

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