

Speech: Building Social Cohesion through Arts Education

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For: Opening of InSEA Conference

I STAND ON THE PROTOCOL ESTABLISHED BY THE DIRECTOR OF CEREMONIES.

The hosting of the International Society for Education Through Art (InSEA) regional conference in Namibia is a welcomed addition to the efforts that the Namibian government and its agencies have been making to ensure that the Art Industry, Artists and Art Educators are improving the impact of art on our society. The vision of InSea is that education through art is a natural means of learning at all periods of the development of the individual, fostering values and disciplines for the full intellectual, emotional and social development of human beings in a community. The NGO's purpose is to encourage and advanced creative education through art, design, and crafts in all countries and promote international understanding. The mission is advocacy, networking and the advancement of research and praxis in art education. With this in mind, its important to recognise the significance of Namibia, hosting this conference and the need for such a partnership.

At the same time, it blows my mind to know that we agree that art is fundamental in human development, but when we look at our schools art is left on the fringes, on the periphery of the core subjects that must be taught at school. No wonder so many of our children are not fully emotionally, intellectually and socially developed because art education is not prioritized. Therefore, we have so many social ills. Our society is riddled with high incidence of violence, especially Gender Based Violence because people have not been exposed to the power of art enough to be transformed into mature human beings. Given the trauma in our society, art education must be mainstreamed in formal and informal spaces. It's strange to know something and not to apply it, it's strange to know that art is essential for human development but not to apply that knowledge in our schools and our teacher training programs in the education system both in and out of schools.

Developing partnerships is key for ensuring a strong response to finding systemic solutions for art education that ensure human development. 2018 InSEA membership included 1000 professional and organisational members in 74 countries from fields of interest varying from: art education; research in art education; arts; education; inclusive education, cultural education; culture; peace education; environmental education; interdisciplinary; cultural

diversity; advocacy, cultural mediation; teacher training; museum education; peace education, environmental education, curriculum development. This is important for a country like Namibia because it demonstrates the wealth of knowledge that we are being exposed to, and that we can tap into beyond this conference to ensure that our curriculum is influenced by the latest developments in art education which are key to human development.

I am going to take the opportunity now to speak a little bit about the National Art Council. The Vision of the National Art Council of Namibia is to unlock the creative potential of the nation and enhance a rich Namibian identity through creative and active people running a sustainable arts industry.

The mission is to build an enabling environment for the identification, support, development of the creative talents of Namibians for the betterment of the self, community and nation through the support for and development of a sustainable industry.

The strategy is multifaceted but it must be based on the following principles:

1. In compliance with National Art Fund Act of 2005
2. Evidence based decision-making
3. Provide grants and bursaries
4. Formalize partnerships
5. Organise projects and programs

However, we are facing challenges to ensure that art is instrumental in our society. The following challenges must be addressed in order to ensure a strengthened systemic response to the possibilities that Art has to offer us.

Human Frailty: The fact that most actors are not resilient but are frail means that we cannot communicate and act in ways that are in the interest of Arts becoming mainstreamed into our society. We have to develop ways in which art can be used as a tool to develop resilience and ensure that human development takes place in our communities. As a result of a lack of art education in our schools, the prevalence of other social ills like violence, especially against children and women is perpetuated and experienced at unprecedented levels in our country. So frailty is caused by a lack of engagement with arts because artists are naturally concerned about the human condition, and teaching people art builds resilience, which makes them less frail.

Institutional failures: Institutional arrangements come with a lot of bureaucracy, which ends up excluding a lot of people because the institutions are not set up in a way to 1. Prioritize the arts in the curriculum 2. Provide the necessary enabling environment for arts to thrive in our communities. Institutions, especially in the public space have failed to provide the necessary resources for the arts industry to thrive to have the necessary economic, social and cultural impact.

The obsession with false theories: There are multiple theories that explain the best way to develop humans. Many times we hear about theories that speak about human development that make the arguments that our world can do well without the Arts. This is obviously not true because the current state of the world, with an increase in right wing movements, as well as the rapid increase in people seeking safety in other countries as migrants, the enslavement of the Africans, the deconstruction of the planet, the existing racial wealth gap, talks about how unequal and divided our world is as a result of a lack of human development because if we were conscious of how we develop people that will act in the interest of humanity, we would not be finding ourselves in such a situation.

Cultural origins: As an increase in globalisation, our local cultures are at risk of being diminished. The thing is we do not have to choose one culture over the other, one language over the other, one ritual over the other. We can have multiple identities, but it's important to prioritize our local cultures with the same significance and give it the same value that we give other cultures. It's important to decolonize our minds and hearts, and recognize the significance of indigenous knowledge systems that ensure the develop of the spirit, which is key in developing resilience. It's important to nurture children within indigenous knowledge systems as it ensures the continuation of ancient knowledge that can be applicable in contemporary society.

Failure of Policies: Countries like Namibia are hugely celebrated for having legitimate legal and policy frameworks. The development of policies pertaining to the arts industry only focuses on art and culture as an intangible cultural heritage. This is a great achievement that needs to be celebrated as our Arts, Culture and Heritage policy was recently adopted by the Cabinet Committee. For this reason, it's important that we extend the precedence to other policies, especially to trade and industrialisation policies. Hence, the recently concluded Art Summit of Southern Africa (ASSA) made a resolution that we as member states of SADC need to ensure the inclusion of the creative economy as a 5

pillar of the SADC Trade and Industrialisation strategies. This will ensure that new opportunities can be provided to the many young africans that seek to uplift themselves from the strains of poverty and violence. The creative economy is able to save 3 birds with one stone, its able to strengthen our cultural identity, impact on society, and ensure economic emancipations-factors that lead to the human development, unlike many other industries that only prioritize profits.

The inclusion of arts education as a key intervention for human development will ensure a positive impact on people, prosperity and the planet. For too long, our consciousness has been colonised. We know something, but we do the opposite, and in the process we end up contributing to the underdevelopment of so many children. We have to take the application of our knowledge seriously, and we have to strengthen our systemic response to ensure the inclusion and prioritization of art education in formal spaces like our schools, and in informal spaces like our communities as a tool that is used to develop people.

As I reiterate many times, its important to apply what we know about art education because it guarantees the full emotional, intellectual and social aspects of a human being. Our society is at a crossroad, evil can take over good because of a lack of human development, many of the ills we witness is because of underdevelopment which happens as a result of a lack of involvement in the arts. Therefore, we are responsible for changing the current status because we are the converted, we are the educators, we know the power of art, and we know how to use the power of art in our communities. I acknowledge that we have to strengthen the environment in which the arts industrys, artists and art educators function within, and I would like to take more of a responsibility in that regard. Therefore, I say if we want things that we have never had, we have to do things that we have done. I am thank you for taking the time to listen.