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DECOLONIZING MUSICAL ARTS EDUCATION IN AFRICA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PRE-COLONIAL FOUNDATIONS, COLONIAL DISRUPTIONS, AND POST-COLONIAL RECONFIGURATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The role of music as a cultural, educational and social institution has always been important in Africa, and it is also the way music can be used to pass on knowledge, values, identity and collective memory to the next generation. Colonialism, however, has had a significant impact on the course of musical arts education in Africa as it has been implemented through Western educational systems, and indigenous musical knowledge has been rendered marginalized. Even though countries are politically independent, today's music education systems still hold onto the legacy of colonialism in their music curricula, pedagogy, and the structures of assessments. The present study reviews the development of musical arts education in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Africa and argues the implications of decolonization for the present day educational development. This study employs a conceptual and historical-comparative analysis to examine shifts in educational philosophies, curricula, pedagogies and cultural orientations in the literature of music education, African studies and decolonial scholarship. The results show that pre-colonial musical arts education was holistic, community oriented and indigenous knowledge systems based. Western musical knowledge and institutionalized forms of learning were privileged by colonial education and these traditions were disrupted. While post-colonial reforms have encouraged incorporation of indigenous traditions, a large number of educational systems are still limited by the ongoing colonial structures. The study introduces a decolonial agenda through indigenous knowledge integration, cultural authenticity, epistemic plurality and community participation as means of transformation of musical arts education in Africa.

Keywords: *Musical Arts Education, Africa, Decolonization, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Colonial Education, Post-colonial Education, African Music Pedagogy.*

INTRODUCTION

In Africa, the musical arts education has always played a very important role in society. It is a means of expression and also a very important institution of cultural transmission, socialization, moral formation and historical preservation. Music has long been a central part of African life, playing a key role in the transmission of indigenous knowledge, cultural values, collective memory, and cultural identity from one generation to the next across a variety of African communities (Okunbor & Alordiah, 2025a). In contrast to the compartmentalised and discipline-based approach of western education, pre-colonial African musical arts education was integrated with social, religious, political and economic activities and it was learnt via

participation, observation, apprenticeship and community engagement. In these indigenous pedagogical practices, music, dance, storytelling, ritual performance and oral history were all interwoven as aspects of cultural education (Nzewi, 2003; McConnachie, 2024).

But the course of musical arts education in Africa was drastically altered by the introduction of European colonialism. Formal education systems were implemented by colonial governments and Christian missionary institutions which advanced European epistemologies, cultural values and musical traditions and simultaneously undermined indigenous African knowledge systems. Music education was used as a vehicle for cultural assimilation, when the western staff notation, hymnody, choral singing, and European art music traditions were felt to be promoted. As a result, many of the traditional pedagogical systems and community-based learning practices were disparaged as primitive, pagan and unable to coexist with modern education and so their traditional systems were eroded and their traditional learning practices were displaced (Adeogun, 2018; Kallio, 2020). Such processes illustrate what Decolonial scholars call the longstanding phenomenon of the colonality of knowledge, which is a privileged positioning of Western knowledge systems in educational institutions, even after formal colonialism has ended (Kallio, 2020; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015).

While much of Africa achieved political independence in the 20th Century, contemporary music education systems are still very much imbued with significant colonial influences. In many institutions of education in Africa, the curriculum structure, assessment models, pedagogical approaches, and the standards of musical competence still largely follow the Western educational frameworks (Okunbor&Alordiah, 2025b). Indigenous musical knowledge and local artistic traditions are marginalized by the continued influence of western notation systems, European music theory and examination based curricula. In addition, the ongoing globalization of world cultural products and their circulation has led to growing anxieties about the processes of cultural homogenization and the declining visibility of indigenous African music in formal education (Izu, 2025; McConnachie, 2024). The issues have stimulated rethinking of decolonizing music education and reimagining indigenous knowledge systems as a legitimate starting point for reconfiguring education (Kallio, 2020; Sánchez-Gatt & Bradley, 2025).

Therefore, the current study investigates the historical development of the musical arts educational landscape in Africa, comparatively analysing the before and after the colonial era and the current reconfiguration of the landscape to better understand the state of musical arts education in Africa. In particular, the study aims to describe the nature of musical arts education among Africans prior to colonialism, look at the nature and effects of colonial education, and analyse post-colonial attempts to regaining and incorporating African musical epistemologies in the current education system. The general question that guides the study is how has the musical arts education evolved in Africa over these historical periods and what are the possible pathways for its decolonisation? This article sheds light on current discussions about curriculum transformation, culturally responsive pedagogy, and epistemic justice in African music education by pushing for a historically informed and decolonial approach.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Three concepts underpin this work: the concept of musical arts education, the concept of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) and the concept of decolonization, all of which form a lens with which to view the historical trajectory of musical arts education in Africa. It is recognized that musical arts education is a multidimensional process that includes formal, informal and non-formal modes of learning. Formal musical education takes place in an institution with a structured curriculum, standardized evaluation and credentialing systems (schools, colleges, and universities). Informal musical education, on the other hand, occurs when people learn music through their everyday social relationships, observation, involvement, and enculturation in their families and communities. Non-formal musical education sits in the middle-ground, which encompasses organized learning from a variety of community arts offerings, such as community arts programs, apprenticeships, cultural festivals, and traditional performance groups (Creech et al., 2020). While these three ways of learning music have coexisted in African society, the formalized ways of learning that have been inspired by colonial and postcolonial education are increasingly valued over indigenous learning traditions.

The notions of indigenous knowledge systems are closely associated to musical arts education. Indigenous knowledge is a type of knowledge reached through the ongoing interplay of indigenous communities with their sociocultural contexts. They are usually community-based, experiential, orally transmitted and intergenerational. In African music traditions, learning is frequently gained by engaging in group activities, watching the master musicians, apprenticeship, storytelling, ritual performances and group art-making. These pedagogical practices focus on relational learning, cultural continuity, and social responsibility instead of learning about individual achievement alone (Mbah et al., 2021). Indigenous musical knowledge thus is not only an expression of artistic ability, but also a storehouse of cultural memory, identity and philosophy.

This study is located within a wider interpretive framework of the concept of decolonization. Decolonization is not just about political independence, but about changing education systems, institutional structures, and knowledge and cultural frameworks that perpetuate colonial power dynamics. There is a distinction between the political decolonization (national sovereignty), epistemic decolonization (challenge to Eurocentric knowledge systems), and curriculum decolonization (reconfiguration of the educational content, pedagogies and assessment systems) (Jansen, 2019; Stein et al., 2020). Decolonisation in the field of the teaching and learning of African musical arts means that indigenous musical knowledge should be seen as legitimate and valuable sources of educational knowledge in this context.

The theoretical underpinning for this study is based on decolonial theory which views the works of Aníbal Quijano, Walter D. Mignolo, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni as informing the theory. Decolonial theory claims that colonialism is not over with political independence but is perpetuated by coloniality of knowledge which is characterized by the dominance of western knowledge and epistemologies in educational institutions which are considered as the legitimate knowledge (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021). This dominance is often exercised as epistemic violence, as the marginalization or erasure of indigenous ways of knowing, and as the formation of hierarchical differences between western

and non-western knowledge systems. Epistemic justice is a form of justice promoted by decolonial scholars aimed at establishing a space where multiple knowledge traditions can coexist and play an equal role in developing education.

The study is an examination of the development of music arts education in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods using a comparative analytical framework based on these theoretical assumptions. Six dimensions are examined: educational philosophy, orientation of the curriculum, teaching and learning approaches, assessment practices, ways of knowledge transmission and cultural orientation. Under this approach, the study examines the shift from local and indigenous education to eurocentric and colonial education and, in the end, present-day forms of hybrid education, which involve continuous negotiations between indigenous cultural identities and global influences on education.

Foundations of Music Education for the Arts Prior To Colonization In Africa

Musical arts education in Africa was part of a longstanding socio-cultural institution that played a significant role in the transfer of knowledge, values, identities and collective memory from one generation to the next, prior to the advent of colonial rule. In contrast to the modern system of education that often treats music as an isolated entity from social life, in pre-colonial Africa music was a fundamental part of the social sphere and can't be distinguished from the social organization, spirituality, governance, and economy. Musical arts education in the pre-colonial era had its philosophical basis on communalism and Ubuntu, cultural continuity and the functional role of music in society. As the emphasis of communalism was on collective participation and shared responsibility, music was not regarded as an individual endeavor but rather a social one. Ubuntu philosophy, which can be summarised by saying that a person is only a full human being when they are in relation with others, also strengthened the cooperative learning and collective artistic expression (Metz, 2018). Knowledge of music was thus viewed not as the individual property of each musician, but as a shared resource that helped to bond the community together and create a sense of belonging. Moreover, music served as a means to maintain cultural continuity, passing on history, norms, values, and native philosophies. It had a functional meaning beyond entertainment, including education, conflict resolution, religious observance, legitimization of leadership, and community development (Schippers & Grant, 2016).

The pedagogical practices in music arts education were also unique in the pre-colonial period. Learning took place largely by observing, mimicking, engaging and apprenticeship and not necessarily through formal teaching or via written curricula. The children learned musical skills from watching skilled musicians in ceremonies, festivals, agricultural tasks and community events. By repetition and mimicry, learners internalized the performative practices, rhythmic patterns, and conceptualizations of culture found in music. Learning was participatory with individuals expected to be active in performances and not passive. Apprenticeship systems transmit more specialized knowledge of music; novices were mentored for extended periods by expert musicians, who imparted their technical, aesthetic, and cultural duties to them (Akuno,

2023). This was part of a general indigenous approach to education, which emphasized learning through experience, doing and socializing.

When it comes to the content of the curriculum for musical arts education pre-colonial was holistic and interdisciplinary. Music was not taught as an independent subject, but was connected with dance, story-telling, rituals, oral history, agriculture and governance. Communities recorded historical events, celebrated accomplishments, preserved genealogies and passed on cultural knowledge through songs, chants and performances. Music was used during agricultural work, to strengthen group-labour and to celebrate the seasons. Musical modes were used for religious rituals and rites of passage, for healing and for veneration of the ancestors; and the political leaders used music to assert authority, mobilise communities and to establish a sense of social order (Nzewi, 2015). By combining music with so many facets of life, there was no doubt that learning was culturally relevant and socially meaningful.

There were marked differences between assessment in pre-colonial musical arts education and today's examination-based system. Competence was assessed based on level of engagement in community life, of performance competence and in relation to social expectations, instead of standardized testing. Successful learners were individuals who were able to play well in culturally suitable settings, to make a good contribution to communal activities, and to demonstrate the moral values inherent in musical traditions. Assessment was thus ongoing, situated and contextual (Schippers & Grant, 2016).

The strong elements of pre-colonial musical arts education were its holistic approach, contextualism, cultural sustainability and engagement. Indigenous education also provided for social, cultural, and moral development, thus creating a well-rounded human being who can contribute meaningfully to his or her community. Furthermore, the curriculum was well adapted to the local context which facilitated the continuity and resilience of the culture from one generation to the next. These properties are significant in the analysis of the present challenges in decolonising music education and bringing back indigenous African epistemologies in the modern context of music education.

Music Arts Education Disruptions in the Colonies

The colonial period was a watershed in the development of musical arts education in Africa as it brought new educational institutions and epistemologies that had a deep impact on Africa's traditional methods of knowledge transmission. Missionary schools, colonial administration, and religious institutions were the main actors in implementing colonial educational policies, which had significant impact on African cultural and educational change. The missionary schools were the main agents of cultural change and used music as a missionary outreach and as a moral pedagogy. Church-Based education indoctrinalized learners with European hymnody, sacred

choral music and Christian liturgy, sometimes at the cost of indigenous music. Colonial governments bolstered these actions through institutionalising educational policies that were based on the values and knowledge systems of Western culture in the formal education system (Kallio, 2020; McConnachie, 2024). Music education then was therefore integrated into wider colonial efforts of cultural assimilation and social control.

One of the main elements of colonial intervention was the westernization of musical knowledge. The Indigenous pedagogical traditions of oral transmission, communal participation, and experiential learning were gradually eclipsed by the theory of Western music, staff notation, choral singing, and European instrumental practices. Staff notation introduced new views on musical competence and favoured written literacy to the detriment of oral skills. Likewise, European music theory was established as the system of understanding and evaluating music performance, which led to the exclusion of the other indigenous systems of music organization. This was stated to have been a result of choral traditions being more in keeping with the goals of the missionary and Christian worship, and instruments like piano, organ, violin, and brass instruments were seen as a sign of education and cultural refinement (Bradley, 2021). These transformations created Eurocentric norms to be applied to musical knowledge and artistic excellence.

Even while Western musical traditions were carried out to everyone, indigenous music began to be systematically marginalized. Many traditional African modes of music were often depicted as "uncivilized" and incompatible with Christianity and European colonial ideals. A variety of indigenous practices involving ancestor worship or ritual celebrations and communal events were often derogated by religious institutions as being pagan or primitive. These types of descriptions were part of the cultural suppression efforts to dissuade people from engaging in traditional musical practices and also restricted the passing on of the music to younger generations. The exclusion of indigenous music in the curriculum also contributed to marginalization, as formal educational programmes mostly overlooked indigenous music and focused on European music and pedagogic techniques (Sánchez-Gatt & Bradley, 2025). This meant that indigenous musical knowledge was gradually becoming 'out of school'.

In a decolonial perspective, these developments can be seen as a type of epistemic violence that is related to coloniality of knowledge. According to Decolonial theorists, colonial education has resulted in the demarcation of a hierarchy between western and indigenous knowledge systems, with the former being seen as universal, scientific and civilized and the latter as inferior or underdeveloped (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). In the realm of music education, this hierarchy was expressed in the creation of binary oppositions between "civilized" music of Europe and "primitive" music of Africa. These descriptions denied indigenous epistemologies, and led to the marginalization of indigenous peoples from educational institutions. Colonial schooling thus served as a means of reinforcing unequal relationships of power and maintaining epistemological domination.

The impact of these upheavals was tremendous and it is still influencing present-day music education in Africa. As learners became more alienated from indigenous music traditions and cultural identity, cultural alienation became a dominant theme. There was a huge loss of knowledge, especially in the area of oral transmission systems, indigenous instruments and community-based learning practices, due to the erosion of traditional pedagogies. Colonial educational structures also led to the creation of curriculum dependency where music education in the post-independence world remained with European models that were inherited and continued. In addition, contact between native cultures and colonial education systems sometimes resulted in identity conflicts for the students, leading to long-term problems in the learners' cultural self-definition and their education's relevance. These implications further illustrate the effects of colonialism on the education of musical arts in Africa, and the need for continued decolonisation work.

This political independence, achieved by most African countries in the middle of the 20th century, inspired renewed attempts to restructure educational systems geared to colonial interests. In the context of these wider reform debates, the musical arts became a significant arena of nation-building, cultural revival and Africanization. Education was seen as a process of building up and rebuilding new national identities in newly independent states, as well as a means of recovering cultural heritage that had been marginalized under colonial rule. Therefore, there was a need for policy and education makers to seek new ways of integrating indigenous knowledge systems in formal education and to create curricula that are related to African historical experiences, values and arts and culture (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021; McConnachie, 2024). In post-colonial societies, music education was more and more seen as a means of building cultural awareness, social cohesion and national pride.

Indigenising music arts-based education has been done in various ways throughout the continent. In Nigeria, researchers and teachers have proposed that the traditional music system and indigenous instruments ought to be included in the formal educational system (Adeogun, 2018). Likewise, the music education reforms in Ghana have focused on the preservation and promotion of indigenous cultural heritage, which involves the use of traditional drumming, dancing and oral performance traditions in the schools' curricula. At a broader level, Kenya's education policies have started to acknowledge the significance of local music traditions in cultural education and identity-building, while South Africa's post-apartheid education reforms aim to rectify the imbalances of the past by enhancing the visibility of African music cultures in the education system (Akuno, 2023). They are part of a larger continental agenda to contest and decolonize concepts of knowledge and to reclaim the educational authority of indigenous knowledges in musical forms.

Reconfiguration processes have been a focus of curriculum changes. In several African nations educational powers have introduced content which includes indigenous instruments, African music history and local performance traditions. Such reforms aim to reconcile formal education and community-based cultural practices, and accept indigenous music as a source of

knowledge and artistic expression. The use of traditional instruments like drums, xylophones, mbiras, koras and other instruments of significance in the community is also a significant break from the colonial curricula where European musics were given preference. Similarly, the lessons in African music history and the teaching of indigenous performance practices help to preserve cultural memory and promote a more inclusive view of musical heritage (McConnachie, 2024; Kallio, 2020). These developments are in the context of educational practices and approaches for epistemic justice in general, as part of the decolonisation process.

However, there are still many colonial traces in the current musical arts education. Systematic examination systems that have been adapted from colonial rule prevail, and tend to focus on exam-oriented learning and measurable outcomes, rather than experiential learning and community learning. In many institutions, music teacher education and curriculum design are still dominated by the conservatory models based on European traditions. Moreover, the Eurocentric criteria are often used to evaluate musical quality, competence, and professionalism and, as such, reinforce hierarchical differences between Western and indigenous music (Kallio, 2020). Language barriers are also a challenge because colonial languages are often still the main language of instruction, and the integration of indigenous language and culture knowledge is not promoted in educational contexts.

Globalization and technological change also influence the current situation of musical arts education. With the growth of digital media, global music industries, and transnational cultural exchanges, there are new opportunities for musical learning, creativity, and dissemination. Concurrently, popular culture has had an increasing impact to enable hybrid musical forms to develop that combine indigenous and global elements. Although this may help to innovate and give the music a cultural vitality, it can also speed up its commercialization and the demise of local music practices. Thus, the situation of musical arts education in Africa is still one of ongoing negotiations between cultural preservation, global engagement and the continued negotiations in the vestiges of colonial structures of education. These processes highlight the ongoing significance of decolonization as a theory and as a program of action for education.

Comparisons across Time Periods

The comparison of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial musical arts education in Africa shows that there are significant changes in the philosophy of education, curriculum orientation, pedagogical practices, assessment practices and cultural relevance. Each of these historical eras points to different, and at the same time interrelated, educational paradigms in the context of shifting sociopolitical, cultural and epistemological contexts. Prior to colonization, musical arts education was rooted in indigenous philosophies that prioritized social responsibility, cultural continuity, experiential learning, and communalism. Music was a comprehensive educational institution beyond the mere medium of an art form, it was part and parcel of daily life and had several other functions such as socializing, moralizing, preserving history and community development. Colonial education, on the other hand, brought Eurocentric philosophies emphasising formal education, individual success, literacy and cultural assimilation. Post-

colonial educational systems attempted to reconstruct and redefine the musical arts education programs in different degrees of indigenization, while at the same time immersing themselves in the global educational landscape (Akuno, 2023; McConnachie, 2024).

The most noticeable changes between the three periods are related to curriculum orientation. Pre-colonial curricula were based in the community and linked music with dance, stories, rituals, government and economy. Learning was observed to flow from the engagement in communal practices, and was an expression of local cultures. Indigenous genres, however, were ignored, disparaged, or marginalized in colonial curriculum, which focused on western musical traditions, with emphasis on staff notation, European music theory, choral singing and Christian hymnody. Since the post-colonial era, measures have been taken to establish a more equitable curricular space and to include indigenous instruments, African music histories, and local performance traditions in addition to aspects of Western music education. Many of today's curricula, however, are still hybrid, where indigenous and western traditions co-exist, not always equally (Kallio, 2020).

Pedagogical approaches experienced significant changes during these historical eras as well. Indigenous educational systems were based on observation, participation, imitation, and apprenticeship, and were experiential and collaborative learning processes. Many of these were superseded by teacher-centred teaching, formal classroom structure and standardized teaching methods based on European education in colonial education. The music education field is a hybrid in which traditional and formal pedagogical models are vying with calls to return to community-based and culturally responsive pedagogical models. The same can be noted with regard to assessment practices. While pre-colonial learning systems assessed learning in terms of performance, participation of the community and social responsibility, colonial systems introduced examination-oriented assessment systems that focussed on technical proficiency and measurable outcomes. Whilst emerging awareness of the value of other forms of assessment that align with indigenous educational value is gaining momentum, many formal post-colonial educational systems still heavily rely on formal exams as the primary measure of assessment.

The wider history of African musical arts education may thus be understood as a process of integration, fragmentation and reconstruction of indigenous musical arts in a colonial context. Musical knowledge was embedded in larger networks of social, cultural and spiritual knowledge in pre-colonial societies. The fragmentation of these relationships occurred through the separation of music from its indigenous contexts, and the re-location of music in formal educational systems under the control of foreign epistemologies during colonial intervention.

The post-colonial reforms have aimed to reshape these broken lines by transforming curricula, revitalising indigenous cultures and integrating indigenous ways of knowing. Nevertheless, the process of reconstruction is still not finished because of the continued effects of colonial education systems and global cultural influences (McConnachie, 2024; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021).

Going with all these changes, important changes and continuities can be noted. The participation of the community and the role of music in relation to cultural identity is present throughout history, albeit with different forms and institutional contexts. Music remains a potent means of articulating group identities and culture. Instead, there are noticeable moves of discontinuity in the way knowledge is transmitted, in the organization of curriculum, and in the aims of education. The oral, participatory and community based learning systems were superseded by written, institutionalized and examination-oriented educational systems. In the same way, educational aims changed from cultural continuity and communal well-being to credentialing, professionalization and conforming to global educational standards.

These developments offer good evidence for coloniality in today's music education. The persistence of coloniality long after colonialism, through the domination of Eurocentric knowledge systems, is argued by decolonial scholars (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021). This coloniality is manifested in the curriculum frameworks, pedagogical models, assessment systems, and criteria of musical excellence that are still prioritizing Western epistemologies in African music education. These patterns can be seen as instances of epistemic dominance – that is, of knowledge being normalised in one form, and Indigenous knowledge being marginalised or selectively integrated. It is therefore important to shift the symbolic integration of the arts of African peoples to more radical changes that can not only question the hierarchies of knowledge that prevail in the education system but also foster epistemic justice in educational processes.

A Decolonized Framework for Musical Arts Education In Africa.

Historical analysis of musical arts education in Africa shows that colonialism had an impact on the indigenous system of education and created epistemological hierarchies which still influence current education. In this way, meaningful transformation cannot happen unless there is a decolonised framework that moves beyond the incorporation of indigeneity into the existing curricula to a framework that is able to confront entrenched colonial structures, affirm African knowledge systems as legitimate bases for teaching, learning, and knowledge production. It should be based on the principles of epistemic plurality, cultural authenticity, community participation, contextual relevance, and integration of indigenous knowledge. Together these principles can serve as a blueprint to rethink musical arts education in a culturally responsive, educationally relevant, and socially transformative manner.

Epistemic plurality is the first step towards decolonizing music education, recognizing that there are multiple knowledge systems and that the musical traditions of Western cultures cannot be taken as the blueprints of what is musically good. In order to transform education, space must be made for indigenous and western ways of knowing to interact on more equitable terms (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021; Stein et al., 2020). Closely linked to this, is the idea of cultural authenticity, where educational material is rooted in local histories, languages, arts and culture.

Community involvement is also crucial as indigenous African educational systems have traditionally depended on intergenerational transmission of knowledge, and community engagement. Likewise, educational practices need to account for learners' lived experiences and their sociocultural contexts instead of following the models imposed by others. Thus, the integration of indigenous knowledge is vital for the restoration of the legitimacy of musical epistemologies that have long been decentered in formal education in Africa (Akuno, 2023; McConnachie, 2024).

Drawing on these concepts, a decolonial curriculum model is proposed here that is organized into four interrelated aspects: indigenous knowledge core, African musical heritage, contemporary African creativity and global musical literacy. The curriculum should be grounded in indigenous knowledge, with an emphasis on the importance of connecting learners to local musical traditions and practice, indigenous pedagogies and hearings, and community-based knowledge systems. African musical heritage should be used to give historical and cultural context to the world of music in Africa, so that learners can appreciate how African art forms have developed and the role they play in various societies. The new forms, innovations and creative industries that are developing in African music should be the focus of contemporary African creativity, because African music is a living process. Lastly, global musical literacy should enable students to relate to international musical traditions in critical ways, and to their own local cultural identity in meaningful ways. This framework does not aim to denounce the knowledge of the globe, but to create a more balanced relationship between local and global musical perspectives (Kallio, 2020).

A transformative curriculum needs pedagogical transformation to be successfully implemented as a decolonization. Learning through apprenticeship should be rejuvenated so that the knowledge and skills can be passed on from generation to generation. Community engagement should be used in educational programmes, by collaborating with local artists/cultural practitioners and traditional institutions. The learning methods to be adopted should be participatory, performance oriented, observation and collaborative creativity in addition to classroom teaching-learning. Further, education should be multilingual in order to help the transfer of indigenous knowledge in African languages and cultural expressions. These pedagogies are aligned to indigenous educational philosophies that emphasize relational learning, cultural continuity and active participation (Akuno, 2023).

Policy interventions are also important to keep the decolonization process going. It is recommended that the governments make a total change of the curriculum that is aligned with indigenous knowledge systems and African cultural realities. More funding is needed for indigenous arts education, to develop curriculum, to produce resources, and to provide community-based cultural education programs. Teacher education programs need to focus on preparing culturally responsive teachers to incorporate indigenous pedagogies into formal education. Moreover, there is a need to further develop collaboration between local cultural institutions, museums, heritage organizations, and art communities to safeguard and pass on

indigenous musical knowledge. In these concerted actions, musical arts education can go beyond symbolic inclusion to become a reality of epistemic transformation and participate in a wider process of cultural renewal, educational equity and decolonial reconstruction in Africa.

Implications for Research, Policy and Practice

The results of the study are profound implications for research, educational practice and cultural development in Africa. The case study of pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial musical arts education shows that the current educational systems are still under the influence of historical contexts, reflected in the content of the curriculum, pedagogical practices, and understandings of legitimate knowledge. Therefore, the process of decolonization of the musical arts education cannot only be completed in the sphere of theoretical criticism, but it is necessary to carry out sustained scholarly research, educational change, and cultural revitalisation. To overcome these challenges, there's a need for collective efforts among researchers, educators, policymakers, cultural practitioners, and local communities to develop educational initiatives that are more inclusive and culturally responsive.

There is a need for more comparative African studies in the field of musical arts education that address the musical arts education in different cultural, linguistic and geographical contexts. Much of the current scholarship is specific to individual countries or localised educational experiences, and thus has restricted applicability to the understanding of the ways in which various historical and contemporary forces impact on music education across the continent. Comparative studies have the potential to provide insights into commonalities and specific differences in educational development, which can help enrich theoretical and policy debates (Akuno, 2023). This is especially significant considering the wide variety of musical traditions found in Africa and the varying colonial histories that have affected education in different areas. In addition, there is a need for future scholarship to investigate the relations between indigenous knowledge systems, globalization, digital technologies and current cultural production to gain insight into the present educational realities.

Also significant is the growth of research on indigenous music pedagogies. Although there is increased interest in decolonization, many indigenous teaching and learning approaches are not well documented in academic literature. Alternative pedagogies like apprenticeship, observation, participation, oral transmission, and community-based learning provide insights into culturally based pedagogies that are distinct from the dominant western pedagogies (McConnachie, 2024). The systematic documentation, analysis and theorization of these pedagogies can help create alternative educational frameworks that will enable for culturally relevant, contextually responsive learning. Furthermore, the curriculum should examine the degree to which the present reforms in education really alter the structure of knowledge or merely introduce indigenous material through basically unchanged colonial structures. This type of questioning is

crucial in assessing the successes of decolonisation efforts and how to move towards further and deeper education change (Kallio, 2020).

The study also has implications for education. Huge changes are needed in teacher education to produce teachers who can effectively interact with indigenous knowledge systems and culturally diverse learning contexts. In many teacher preparation programs, Eurocentric pedagogical traditions still play a central role, and opportunities for future teachers to acquire skills in the indigenous practices and community-based methods of learning are limited. Therefore, teacher education reform should include the incorporation of African musical epistemologies, culturally responsive pedagogies, and decolonial approaches into teacher preparation programs (Akuno, 2023). In the same way curriculum is required to be redesigned so that it can provide educational experiences through which the local cultural aspects are expressed and at the same time linked to the general knowledge system of the world. It is important that such re-designing should not simply involve a tokenistic incorporation of indigenous material but also resonate with making African musical practices integral to the application of the education.

In addition to education, the study shows important cultural implications regarding the preservation of the cultural heritage and reconstruction of identity. Indigenous Music is an integral part of Indigenous Knowledge and it is a repository of history, collective memory and culture values. But the internationalization, urbanization and the power of colonial educational systems are still dangerous to many traditional practices. Schools have a vital role to play in protecting cultural heritage, particularly through documentation, preservation and revitalisation of indigenous music traditions (Schippers & Grant, 2016). Meanwhile, decolonized arts education can also help in the reconstruction of identity through the ability for the learner to critically confront his/her cultural history and establish a stronger relationship with his/her community. In this way, music education can be seen as a means to cultural empowerment, social cohesion, and the validation of African identities in a more globalized society, while also providing a space for artistic learning.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was a comparison of the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial settings of music arts education in Africa. The results showed that the pre-colonial musical arts education was well connected to indigenous educational philosophies, which were salient in communal involvement, experiential learning, cultural continuity, and made music an integral part of all aspects of social life. Music served as a vehicle for the intergenerational transfer of knowledge, values, identity and collective memory.

The study also revealed that colonial education undermined such indigenous systems by imposing western education system, education pedagogies and music traditions which marginalized local knowledge and practices. Indigenous music traditions were not included in

mainstream schooling as part of missionary activities and colonial policies resulting in cultural alienation, loss of knowledge and introduction of Eurocentric educational systems.

While post-colonial reforms aimed to bring back and incorporate indigenous musical traditions into formal education, many colonial legacies still affect the current music education. Consequently, the struggle for decolonization in musical arts education is needed and continuing.

The article advances scholarship by suggesting a decolonized framework that seeks to foster the integration of indigenous knowledge, cultural authenticity, community engagement and epistemic diversity. Finally, the future of musical arts education in Africa requires strong inclusive education settings that will allow indigenous African musical knowledge and global musical traditions to live side by side, engage with each other and equally support the development of education and cultural sustainability.

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