

BRIDGING POLICY AND PRACTICE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN IMPLEMENTING MUSIC EDUCATION IN ZAMBIA



Chipo Namaiko¹, Bibian Kalinde²

Abstract

Music education policy in Zambia uploads the potential of music education to nurture creativity, preserve cultural heritage, and provide diverse career opportunities, yet its effective implementation often faces significant challenges. This study analyses the music education curriculum and its implementation in Zambia, with an emphasis on associated challenges, and potential future prospects. Adopting a qualitative approach underpinned by an anti-positivist, social constructionist philosophy, the study employed a multi-site case study research design that covered primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions across Zambia's Southern, Lusaka, and Copperbelt provinces. Data was collected from 106 participants who included curriculum developer (1), music teachers (24), lecturers (8), Learners primary and secondary (40) and tertiary students (33), through interviews, focus groups, and observation. Prior to that, document analysis was done to gather information on policy pronouncements on music education. Findings reveal that policies are formulated with minimal grassroots consultation, teacher monitoring is intermittent, instructional methods lack diversity and fidelity. Additionally, religious beliefs and cultural attitudes negatively impact music education participation, while opportunities include career pathways, teaching music across the curricular and cultural preservation. This research highlights the urgent need for reform in policy implementation, teaching practices, and social attitudes to enhance student learning and engagement in music.

Keywords

Cultural practices, instructional methods, Music education, policy, religious beliefs.

¹ Music lecturer, Department of Music, Chalimbana University, Lusaka, Zambia, Email: chipnama@yahoo.co.uk

² Music Lecturer, University of Zambia, Zambia, Email: bibian.kalinde@unza.zm



Introduction

Zambia, like many former British colonies, adopted a Western-influenced education system, including its music curriculum, which prioritised Western music traditions over local needs (Nota, 2010). This led to a curriculum that was often irrelevant to the country's unique post-independence challenges (Mumpuka, 2009). Since independence, numerous education reforms have sought to realign education to meet societal and individual needs. These efforts began with the First National Educational Conference (FNEC) in 1969, which addressed post-independence issues but faced delays in implementation. The Education Reforms of 1977 marked a significant step toward reshaping the curriculum, incorporating the outcomes of national and international consultations. Later, the "Focus on Learning" report (1992) and the "Educating Our Future" policy document of 1996 further redefined Zambia's education system, emphasising entrepreneurship and practical subjects like music to address modern educational demands (Kelly, 1999).

The Educating Our Future of 1996 Policy highlighted music as a critical subject that should be integrated into the curriculum without neglect. Practical subjects like music were integrated into the Creative and Technology Study (CTS) syllabus in 2003, which was part of the Basic Education Sub Sector Investment Program (BESSIP) aimed at reducing curriculum overload (Kalinde & Bwalya, 2023). However, the liberalised education system that followed the 1991 political transition resulted in a fragmented curricular, posing challenges for monitoring and coordination (Mwila, 2015). Hence subject integration of 2003 and an outcome-based approach was adopted as a way of curing this. By 2013, there were debates on the relevance of the outcome-based approach though, a revised curricular of the same year still aligned with the approach in question (CDC, 2013). As 2023 dawned, the government's intention became apparent that the competence-based approach would replace the former, and so a curriculum framework followed by a curriculum review was embarked on to roll out its full implementation by the beginning of 2025. At the time of writing this article, pilot trials of the new curriculum were in progress in selected provinces of Zambia.

For this study, music education refers to any form of instruction in music that subsumes indoor and outdoor learning embracing music theory and practicals. Policies refer to pronouncements and statements in education policy documents describing music education in Zambia. Implementation is the actual carrying out of policy pronouncements at all levels of education.

The study was delimited to selected primary schools, secondary schools, and tertiary institutions in Southern, Lusaka, and Copperbelt provinces of Zambia. Limitations encountered were the lack of generalisability of the findings due to the use of a qualitative approach.

Statement of the Problem

Music education in Zambia faces significant challenges, including, theoretical instructional practices, and lack of resources. These issues are compounded by cultural perceptions that devalue music as a subject, leading to low engagement from both teachers and students. Despite strong policy backing, music education remains underdeveloped, and challenges persist in its implementation at all educational levels (Mwila, 2015; Sianagowa, 2013; Mumpuka, 2009). The relevance of the national curriculum remains a concern, as reflected in a 2005 national survey and a 2009 symposium that led to the creation of the 2013 syllabi, introducing music as an examinable subject at the primary level for the first time (Mwila, 2015; CDC, 2013b). However, studies indicate that music education implementation still faces obstacles (Mwila, 2015; Namaiko, 2015; Musakula, 2014, Sianagowa, 2013). The lack of proper documentation and proper guidelines on monitoring and evaluation, coupled with insufficient research on policy generation and implementation at all levels of education, underscores the need for more focused studies on music curriculum implementation in Zambia (Sianagowa, 2013).

Research Objectives

The following objectives guided the study:

1. To examine policies that underpin music education in Zambia in terms of Critical Policy Analysis theory.
2. To identify the challenges in music education implementation in primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Zambia.
3. To establish prospects available for the advancement of music education in Zambia.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What policies underpin music education in Zambia when examined under critical policy analysis theory?

2. What are the challenges in music education implementation in primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Zambia?
3. What prospects are available for the advancement of music education in Zambia?

Theoretical Framework

The Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) framework, rooted in mid-20th century critical theory from scholars like Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and the Frankfurt School, has gained prominence since the 1980's as policy researchers shifted towards scrutinising the beliefs and practices underlying traditional work (Cahill, 2015). In education, CPA views policy documents (PDs) as social-cultural artefacts that shape educational practices, requiring critical analysis to uncover power relations, policy discrepancies, and cultural contexts (Diem et al., 2014; Cahill, 2015).

According to Ball (1993), CPA considers policy through three lenses: policy as text, discourse, and effects, with further categorisation into micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis (Cahill, 2015). This perspective challenges the traditional linear and rational approaches to policy analysis, emphasising that policies are shaped by subjective positions and broader cultural-political contexts (Diem et al., 2014). CPA's strength lies in its ability to accommodate diverse perspectives, challenge knowledge assumptions, and examine policy processes and their socio-political roots.

In the context of music education (ME) in Zambia, CPA was applied to critically analyse key policy documents such as Educating Our Future (1996), Education Reform (1977), and the Curriculum Frameworks (2003, 2013), focusing on revealing assumptions, power dynamics, and the alignment of these policies with implementation in all levels of education. The study employed CPA to explore the meanings and socio-cultural implications of ME policies in Zambia in terms of challenges and opportunities, providing a critical lens on the current status of music education.

Significance of the Study

The findings in this study serves to help curriculum developers enhance their curriculum review modes that would involve all stakeholders and inform policy making towards addressing challenges that impede ME implementation in institutions of learning. Findings will enlighten inspectors of schools on the weakness in the current monitoring and evaluation modes for teachers of ME and seek measures to address the problem. Additionally, findings will help

teachers of ME to hone their skills in offering effective instruction in ME theory and practicals. Finally, learners will experience an improved curriculum and better instruction that address their needs as regards 21st century challenges.

Literature Review

Music Education Policy Analysis

Music education curriculum design is a complex process influenced by factors like philosophy and policy directives. Onyiuke (2015), describes curriculum design (CD) as a process of organising activities for an intended learning. As for Kranthi (2017), CD is viewed as a deliberate process to make amendments to educational system ensuing into education reforms. Scholarship recognises philosophy as a body of knowledge and process of thinking, whose values and ideas inspire musical arts and societies (Onyiuke, 2015). This view is supported by Honderich (1995), who opines that, through epistemology philosophy determines the nature of music education, methods and content. As much as philosophy is significant for curriculum design, it cannot do so alone. There is need for a policy. In music education, Schmidt (2009), sees policy as a means of actualising educational vision through generation of rules and guiding documents. Together policy and philosophy ensure curriculum design benefits all learners, in providing specialised education and special area of interest, that espouses compulsory and elective music education (Hauptfleish, 1997).

Literature reviewed identify two models of curriculum design. The Top-bottom approach such as the Tyler model (Onyiuke, 2015), also dubbed linear approach, promotes an iterative process in its stages of objective and learning experiences identification, learning experience organisation and evaluation. While, Nicholls (2009) and Nicholls (1980) adds cyclic or bottom-up model. Elliot (1995) and Nzewi (2001) recommends use of the later for music education in general and in Africa respectively. However, Elliot's proposal appears to address curriculum development at micro or school level only. Hence, Hauptfleish (1997) criticises this as a weakness because it ignores the provincial (meso) and national (macro) levels which are cardinal to comprehensive CD. The challenge for top-bottom approach, is that it ignores voices of stakeholders at grass root level consequently sacrificing teacher creativity and innovation (Zeserson & Welch, 2017). The implication therefore, is a failed music education policy implementation. For example, integration of art subjects as a curriculum reform, seem to experience challenges when it comes to implementation world over. Taking a case of Zambia, Kalinde and Bwalya (2023) identify limited knowledge in teaching music integratively as well

as time constraints as some of the problems at college level. Lack of proper teacher training is cited as one reason for limited knowledge. Furthermore, respondents in the study claim that they were left out during the policy's formulation stage. Thus, 'whose voice matters', as argued by Schmidt (2020) is affirmed, consequently a chasm between policy and practice is created. Schmidt further argue that, due to their experience in theories, materials and learner's needs, teachers should be involved in CD. Learners should also be involved; however, their participation should be to appreciate the process and content, decisions should be a preserve of experts. Research done by Zeserson (2014), on music education curriculum reform in the United Kingdom, found that learners' educational needs were overlooked in CD and so this had adverse effects on acceptability and impact on learning outcomes. Hence, highlighting limitations of the top-down approaches.

Challenges in Music Education Curriculum Implementation

Teaching methods, quality assurance and socio-cultural influences are some of the highlighted challenges faced by music education. Globally, teaching methodologies are framed in traditional and modern models. Traditional approaches, such as the Orff Schulwerk and Kodály Method, according to Volk (2004), emphasise rudimentary music-making and literacy skills framed in structured approaches such as movement, solfege acquisition and proficiency in notation. However, by being overly structured, these methods do not offer alternative instruction outside proposed structures thereby limiting student creativity (Bugos, 2011). For instance, how would informal learning methods that prioritise student-led learning and community-based music-making fit in? Moreover, it further creates an implementation challenge for teachers not schooled in the methods, hence they would opt for other conventional or non-conventional methods (Turkmen & Goncu, 2018). As such, Richards (2023), advocates for adoption of modern approaches like Music Learning Theory (MLT), Digital game-based learning (DGBL) and Technology-Enhanced Music Education (TEME), which offer more flexibility and emphasis on student-centered learning. Research highlights the effectiveness of combining traditional and modern approaches. For instance, Sularso, Yu, and Pranolo (2024) found that integrating music technology to traditional methods, enhances cognitive development. It is worth noting that most literature reviewed, reflects music instruction methods which are Western-centric, overlooking music education practices in non-Western cultures such as Africa (Hess, 2015). This is a serious gap which potentially presents an opportunity for future research if Africa is to make strides in its music education programmes.

Quality assurance for teachers where monitoring and evaluation in music education is inconsistent, becomes a challenge in ensuring high-quality teaching and learning. Research highlights the importance of ongoing assessment and feedback to enhance teacher effectiveness (Hallam, 2011). While this should be the norm, Nambirige (2019), assert that traditional evaluation methods, such as occasional lesson observations and student performance assessments, dominate music education. Much as this is important, these methods have limitations such as neglecting essential areas like classroom management, pedagogical content knowledge and planning (Maranzano, 2002). Internal and external teacher monitoring and evaluation are formats identified by Laska (2016), where internal monitoring involves assessments conducted on teachers within the school or district by school administrators and peer teachers, to offer tailored feedback based on shared understanding of school culture, resources, and ethos offering a supportive professional environment. Muijs and Reynolds, (2011) argue that this further provides an opportunity to scaffold those with similar challenges. As for external monitoring, it involves assessment from entities outside the school or district, such as external accreditation bodies, government agencies, or independent consultants. This provides checks and balances for internal monitoring (Laska, 2016). In America for example, research show that external monitoring is done by organisations such as the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), who conduct rigorous reviews of music programmes, assessing teacher qualifications, curriculum, and student outcomes (Aguilar & Richerme, 2020). However, the research above is not clear how often NASM conducts this external monitoring hence creating a gap because successful quality assurance is affirmed by how frequent it is done. Consequently, a balanced approach that incorporates both internal and external monitoring and evaluation methods is better than one that uplifts either external or internal monitoring only. A quantitative study by Ndungu, Gathu and Bomett (2015) in Kenya on monitoring and evaluation by principals, revealed that there was inconsistency in external and internal monitoring in schools observed, as such preparation of lesson plans and schemes of work was negatively affected.

Socio-cultural influences in music education in Zambia is seen in how deeply embedded music is in the country's rich cultural heritage, shaped by diverse ethnic groups, religious practices, and societal attitudes (Musakula, 2014). However, socio-cultural influences can pose challenges to music education implementation. For instance, it is argued that, traditional Zambian music is integral to cultural identity because it conveys values, social norms and perpetuates history through song (Kubik, 2010). Hence, it becomes prudent that music

education incorporates local music traditions in its curricular. The challenge incorporating local music traditions in the curricular presents, is that some African traditional practices negatively impact music education in the sense that, some ethnic groups restrict public performance of certain instruments, dances, styles and use of certain costume to themselves (Kigozi, 2019). An example is the Luvale speaking people of Zambia. Their dances include masqueraded characters known as *makishi*. These dances can only be performed by those who have been initiated and have undergone training in their traditional schools called *mukanda*. For that reason, they may therefore not be comfortable to allow their practices to be incorporated in the curricular for learning and even performance purposes potentially creating a knowledge gap. Christian beliefs also influence music education. For example, a quantitative study by Namaiko (2015) in Zambia, found that high school pupils from Jehovah's Witness church were shunning away from singing the national anthem due to their church's teaching. Additionally, society's attitude towards music education where music is seen as a means of entertainment only, is another challenge to music education implementation. In the same study by Namaiko in 2015, it is mentioned that there is a lack of parental support for pupils to do music as they see no career prospects in it. Other challenges include limitations in teaching resources and materials, inconsistent student attendance, insufficient technology, teacher shortages, and socio-economic and cultural barriers, accessibility, and inclusivity, all of which contribute to compromised programme quality and implementation.

Opportunities in Music Education

Substantial opportunities exist for growth and improvement in music education such as music's interdisciplinary connections dubbed STEAM. For example, in language, music enhances literacy skills through song lyrics, poetry, and storytelling (Stradley, 2023). Mathematics benefits from music's rhythmic and pattern-based structures, supporting mathematical concepts (Ince, 2019). Science explores acoustic properties, sound waves, and physics through music. Social Studies reflect cultural heritage, historical context, and social justice through music. Even Physical Education benefits, as music enhances motor skills, coordination, and physical expression. This use of music across the curricular, is what Battersby and Cave (2014), calls subservient integration. This is where music helps to teach concepts of other subjects. However, using music to teach concepts in other subjects has been criticised as diminishing the value of music. It has been cited as being the very reason why music is easy to remove in the curricular, as it portrays music to be less important than the subject it aids (Farrugia, 2020). The cognitive, emotional, and social benefits of music education are equally impressive in

addition to its capacity to improve memory, spatial-temporal skills, and critical thinking which support cognitive development (Zelenkovska & Islam, 2015). Additionally, emotional intelligence is fostered through music, promoting empathy, self-awareness, and social skills (Varner, 2020). On the one hand, music encourages creativity, innovation, and risk-taking, on the other hand, cultural competence is developed through music education by promoting diversity, inclusivity, and cultural understanding (Hadley & Norris, 2016). Social-emotional learning is also supported through music, aiding emotional regulation, self-motivation, and teamwork (Varner, 2020).

Methodology

The study was embedded in an ant-positivist and social constructionist philosophical underpinning, which adopted qualitative methods. Multi-site case study design was used to understand policies and implementation in music education in primary schools, secondary schools, and tertiary levels. Multi-sites involved curriculum development centres and learning institutions that offer music in the Southern Province, Lusaka Province and Copperbelt Province of Zambia. While cases involved analysing education policy documents, gathering data were also collected from curriculum developers, music teachers and learners in the said provinces.

Sample Size

The targeted participants were 126; however, those who actually took part in the study totalled 106. The breakdown includes, a curriculum developer (1), teachers of music (24), learners in music from primary schools and secondary schools (40), lecturers of music (8) and students (33) from colleges and universities that offer music education. The study also analysed selected key policy documents on education that describe music education in Zambia.

Sampling Procedure

Primary schools, secondary schools, colleges and universities that offer music education instruction and training, were purposefully sampled. Additionally, the same technique was adopted for gathering data from music teachers and learners at secondary schools, colleges and universities. By virtue of their availability, teachers and learners at primary schools were conveniently sampled. Lastly, the curriculum developer was purposefully sampled due to the function of his office in relation to this study.

Data Collection Techniques

The study utilised semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and document analysis to gather data. Interviews with music teachers, learners, and a curriculum developer provided detailed insights, while focus group discussions encouraged interactive exploration of perspectives (Creswell, 2014). Observations, both participant and non-participant, captured real-time practices at educational institutions. Secondary data was obtained from music education policy documents through online downloads and visits to the UNZA library. A content analysis tool was used to collect data from these documents. Triangulation of these techniques ensured a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between education policy and music education practices (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Trustworthiness and Credibility

Observations of the actual teaching and planning in learning institutions, as well as focus group discussions were video recorded and used as reference points after the activity (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017). Additionally, interviews were audio recorded and were used for accurate transcription into text (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The transcripts were subjected to member check for confirmation of the interview outcomes.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data gathered were in the form of primary and secondary information. Primary data from interviews, focus group discussions and observations was subjected to thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involved transcribing audio and field notes, familiarisation of the data through an iterative process, coding (open, axial and selective), categorisation, theme generation and refining as well as writing a report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each data set was coded, assigning labels *in vivo* and ones assigned by researcher. Secondary data from policy documents was first subjected to content analysis and then thematic analysis like the rest of the data.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was accorded by Unza's research and graduate studies through the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) in May 2024 (Wiles, 2013). Permission was also sought from provincial education officers, district education officers and institution leaders who also acted as gate keepers for music teachers and learners. Further acquiescence was gotten from the curriculum developer. Terms of involvement in each

case were explained which included voluntary participation, zero remuneration and freedom to withdrawal at any point of research enquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Finally, a consent form for each participant was filled in as a binding agreement to take part in the study.

Findings and Discussion

This study was guided by the following research question 1) What policies underpin music education in Zambia when examined under critical policy analysis theory? 2) What are the challenges in music education implementation in primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Zambia? 3) What opportunities does music education provide in Zambia? The results from documents analysed, interviews, focus group discussions and observations produced three themes; namely, policy gaps in music education in Zambia, challenges in music education implementation and prospects in music education.

Policy Gaps in Music Education in Zambia

This theme addresses the first research question which sought to find out the policies that underpin music education in Zambia looked at in terms of the critical policy analysis. Results in the documents show that a top-bottom approach is prevalent. Most policy decisions are made by the top echelons of the ministry of education through the Curriculum Development Centre with little or minimal consultation of the grassroots. An extract from documents indicates that, “the curriculum is developed top-bottom with no input from communities and teachers” (Education, 1992:27). At the time of the study, there was a national general curriculum review underway, and this finding from documents was confirmed by responses from interviews and focus groups. Most teachers interviewed provided mixed answers on awareness of an ongoing review as there appeared to have been no evidence of wider participation and invitation of teachers as critical stakeholders, let alone a few. One respondent, when asked whether they had been invited for the review, had this to say, “We are not, you know, invited” (Respondents 1), while the other said, “Well, lately, we have seen, subject associations posting announcements and, calling for submissions. And we do those submissions online, but how far they go beyond that, we don't know” (Respondent 2). On the knowledge of the policy documents that underpin education, most learners at all levels of learning showed mixed responses. Concerning their involvement in curriculum review one learner said, “We have heard of the review maybe we will be invited later” (Respondent, 21), an indication that they had not been invited. Furthermore, the selection procedure for the few who were invited especially for music was also widely questioned. It is worth noting that in 2005 the national curriculum review then,

involved a wider national consultation which included participants from all walks of life (CDC, 2013b). One wonders why this was not so for the current exercise.

This finding corroborates the study outcomes of Zeserson and Welch (2017) in England who found that the needs of the learners were overlooked in the curriculum. The implication of this result on implementation is that teachers may not wholeheartedly embrace it because it seems imposed on them (Obilo & Sangoleye, 2010). Additionally, such curricular fall short of addressing the gap between students' interests and curriculum content. This further leads to contradictions between societal demands and syllabus content since it overlooks needs assessment from grass root levels. According to Schmidt (2009) teachers should be viewed as police makers rather than just implementers. The alignment of these findings to the CPA theory (Ball, 1993) shows that policy as text is well stipulated in policy documents; however, its process of formulation ignores the input of implementers in all levels of education who are part of the learning environment in which implementation takes place(context), hence the subsequent consequences are, a poorly implemented music education with a general outcry of dissatisfaction from implementers of the policy content because it appears imposed on them.

Challenges in Music Education Implementation

The second research question endeavoured to establish challenges faced in the implementation of music education in primary and secondary schools, and tertiary institutions. Limited instructional strategies, lack of community collaboration, irregular monitoring, attitudes, religious and traditional beliefs and music class allocation emerged as challenges from responses and are presented below.

Documents such as grade 5-12 syllabus, stipulate a variety of instructional strategies such as projects, field trips, enquiry, excursion, portfolios and observations. To the contrary, observations show that question and answer is the most common strategy used in most of the classes observed especially at primary and secondary schools. To support this, an extract from field notes taken reads "The most available method is question and answer with scanty demonstrations" (participant observation). Student responses from college and primary school indicate that it was hard to comprehend music concepts because they were more theoretical than practical. Hence, this challenge could be as a result of using one method and neglecting demonstrations. As a result, the use of question and answer only, poses a challenge to effective music education implementation. The findings above on teachers using only question and answer as a method neglecting other strategies suggested in the syllabus, is consistent with

study results by Nambirige (2019) in Uganda. In her qualitative study of colleges where the focus was to find out how teaching and learning was conducted, results reveal that music was not well taught because tutors were using teaching methods which are contrary to what the syllabus recommended.

Collaboration between community and schools is highly advocated in the policy documents analysed; however, as the interviews revealed, there exists a disconnection because district and provincial cultural officers – the supposed go-betweens, seem not to know the role they are supposed to play to bring about this link. One respondent said that, “The cultural officers who are employed in those offices, they never went to school and got trained in the line of music.” (Respondent, 3). This is to simply say the respondent expects an officer in that office to be one who has done music studies because then only would that officer have passion for music and be willing to champion collaborative strategies between school and community. This result is contrasted with Mpuangnan and Ntombela (2024)’s qualitative study findings in South Africa where positive community collaboration, especially in terms of curriculum issues was evident.

Policy documents analysed, expressly assert the importance of regular monitoring of schools and teachers for quality assurance. However, responses from interviews and focus groups designate mixed responses with some indicating intermittent monitoring to none at all over a long period, with no timely feedback and lacking in music content expertise by monitors. One respondent had this to say, “I don’t remember when a standards officer came to monitor, especially the teaching of music”. (Respondent, 8). When probed further to disclose the qualifications of those who have monitored them, one respondent said this, “Most standards officers in expressive arts who have observed us, have done art and not music” (Respondent, 10). This finding corroborates the study of Ndungu, Gathu and Bonnet in 2019 in Kenya, whose quest was to establish experiences of teacher monitoring from perspectives of college principals. Results reveal a general apprehension among teachers concerning intermittent monitoring, lack of content expertise by monitors and untimely feedback of observations made. This resulted into teaching music poorly as evidenced in lack of lesson planning and preparation coupled with absentism by teachers.

Interviews also reported negative attitudes towards music education among teachers, learners and parents who believed that music was not important but simply an area of entertainment. A report of what they generally say about music is exemplified in the quote, “there is no future in music”. (Respondent, 3) This finding is consistent with studies by Nota (2010) as well as

McPherson and O'Neill (2010) who found same results in Zimbabwe and in an international study done respectively. Traditional and religious beliefs were found to have an influence on how learners participate in especially out-door activities. For instance, when it comes to singing some learners will say, "according to my faith, I'm not allowed to sing" (Respondent, 5), or perhaps according to one interviewee, learner participation in cultural activities may be affected, "because of religious influence where some churches, they tell them, you can't play drums because the drum(traditional) is very evil" (Respondent, 6). This corroborates Namaiko's (2015) study which found the same results. Apart from that, results show that participation can be affected by certain beliefs concerning gender specific instruments. One respondent affirmed this that, "there are certain beliefs that, certain instruments can only be performed by girls, for example and not boys." (Respondent, 3). This finding is consistent with Green (2013). Music at primary school is compulsory while at secondary school and tertiary level it is an elective subject. Thus, the common trend at secondary school is to give music to low achieving classes. This is supported by one respondent who stated that, "Most of the time, we are given pupils that are not really doing much to learn, whereas we know that it's quite a challenging subject. It needs someone who's very sharp." (Respondent, 7). This stresses the teacher more as they are already grappling with inadequate support and resources. This finding is contrasted with Lamont and Maton (2008), whereby students in their study felt music was for the elite and hence shunned picking it as an elective. Implications of the findings above indicate that learners are receiving low-quality music education due to insufficient differentiated pedagogy and inadequate monitoring of implementation that limit corrective support. At the primary and secondary levels, monitoring is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education inspectorate, while in higher education, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) oversees quality assurance. However, HEA's focus on institutional accreditation rather than classroom practices, compromises the quality of marginalised subjects like music (Ndungu, Gathu & Bonnet, 2015). The CPA theoretical framework highlights the detrimental effects of disconnections between schools and communities, and implementers' failure to adhere to explicit policy strategies. This disconnection adversely affects music education policy implementation across all levels (Cahill, 2015; Diem et al., 2014; Ball, 1993). Participation in extracurricular music activities, such as those supported by the National School Arts Association of Zambia (NASAAZ), is declining due to the perception that academic subjects are more valuable. One respondent said, "I was once in traditional dance now uhm...I just thought that education is more important than dancing." (Respondent, 8) this reflects a broader undervaluation of music in the curriculum. This result is consistent with a study by McPherson

and O'Neill (2010). Beliefs regarding gendered instruments (Green, 2013), religious attitudes toward music (Namaiko, 2015), and the trend of assigning music as a subject for low achievers, adversely affect music education implementation. These factors diminish music's perceived importance and complexity (Nota, 2010), as one respondent noted, "People think that music is just about singing and dancing" (Respondent, 9). Having mixed-ability classrooms would combat this misconception. CPA emphasises that policy implementation is influenced by societal contexts (Ball, 1993), which in this case see religious and traditional beliefs conflicting with policy goals. This results in poorly implemented music education policies (Diem et al., 2014).

Prospects in Music Education

The third research question specifically looked at the opportunities available in music education. Responses revealed culture preservation, teaching music across the curriculum and career pathway as prospects. There was a general agreement from policy documents, observations, interviews and focus groups that music is important because it helps preserve and transmit cultural values to the current and future generations. For example, one participant said this, "It also helps our learners to understand the tradition and customs and pass them on". (Respondent, 4). A primary school pupil added her voice by stating that, "it's very important for children to know our culture and our songs and where we are from" (Respondent). This result on concerning the role of music in preserving and transmitting culture corroborates with the findings of Kubik (2010), who did an extensive study of African music from the Cameroon area to the North-western and Northern Zambia. His finding indicates that, the transmission of African culture can be traced in their music practices such as dirges sung in chant form, and instruments like the *silimba* and *mbira* whose similarities in make and playing techniques is similar starting from Cameroon way down to North-western and Northern parts of Zambia. These practices have been passed on from ancient times and live on even up to this very day.

It was also evident from the results that some teachers use music to teach concepts found in other subjects. For instance, there were songs that teach about the days of the week, this would be a topic in language lesson. Same applies when teaching the parts of the body, a song would be used to reinforce a topic in science. One of the respondents interviewed confirmed this by saying, "I use music to teach even mathematics. So, because I think I've seen how music attracts somebody's attention." (Respondent, 15). Implicitly, the respondent could have been referring to how music helps in memory retention. Another participant had this to say, "Music is one of the engines which makes lessons easier, you know, almost in all the subjects".

(Respondent 11). One student teacher also added by saying that, “Music, first of all, really does help not only in this particular subject, but also other subjects, as it is a practical subject” (Respondent,30). These responses from respondents above, points to using music across the curricular which according to Battersby and Cave (2014) is referred to as subservient integration. The danger in this is that, music will be valued less as it negates its own content by uplifting that of the other subject, a reason why music is easily cut from the curriculum (Farrugia, 2020). The result above concerning teaching music across the curricular, is contrary to the findings of Battersby and Cave (2014) who studied efficacy levels of teachers to teach music integratively. It was revealed that the teachers’ confidence levels were low and they shunned the strategy altogether.

Results from policy documents, interviews and focus groups acknowledge that music is a worthwhile career pathway which may include teaching, sound engineering, conducting, performance, film sound track writing and many more. One pupil interviewed indicated this, “Some of us could have careers in the future to, like, just sing, be a musician. So that’s the reason we study music. Yeah”. (Respondent, 13). This result aligns with the study by Miksza, Evans, and McPherson (2019), which was done in the USA and Australia on motivation to pursue a career in music by undergraduate students. The results strongly show that students recognise music as a career pathway and were willing to go through that route. The implication of findings; therefore, is that with right policies in place and willing implementers on the ground, music can benefit people’s culture, other subjects and would change the narrative leading to music being viewed as a worthwhile career supported by all stakeholders in the society. As argued by Diem et al., (2014) this minimises policy directive as mere political rhetoric hence aligning with the CPA theory.

Conclusion

Music education in Zambia faces significant challenges, necessitating urgent reforms in curriculum, teaching practices, and cultural perceptions. Policies emphasise top-down curriculum design, excluding grassroots input, which creates a chasm between intent and practice. Limited differentiated instructional methods, inadequate teacher support, and inconsistent quality monitoring further reduce the effectiveness of teaching. Cultural attitudes that undervalue music as entertainment or a “soft” subject undermine both student engagement and teacher motivation. Opportunities exist in music’s potential to preserve culture, enhance learning in other subjects, and provide career pathways for students. Zambia has policies, but

implementation is a challenge and requires collaborative curriculum design that involves teachers, stronger community-school partnerships, and advocacy for music's educational and cultural value. By bridging these gaps, Zambia can better support music education, ultimately enriching students' learning experiences and fostering a more holistic educational environment. Future studies should explore the development of culturally responsive music policies and curricula, integration of technology in music education, and home-grown assessment and teaching strategies that move away from Western-centric models.

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