Transmitting Cultural Values Through Music Education

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Abstract: Music education in Zimbabwe plays a significant role in conveying cultural values and norms. This study focuses mainly on the role of music education in preserving and promoting Zimbabwean cultural heritage. The methodology involves a case study of five music teachers from diverse cultural backgrounds to survey various cultural events and uses purposive sampling techniques to gather information from knowledgeable individuals. The findings and discussions cover different aspects such as the incorporation of cultural education in the music curriculum, the impact of globalization on Zimbabwean culture, teaching methods including field research, storytelling, performance of traditional dances, instrument making, traditional songs, and motivating students through cultural activities, as well as preservation approaches. The study explores how music education serves as a conduit through which traditional practices, beliefs, values, and norms are preserved and handed down from one generation to another. Through assessing the experiences and insights of the selected participants, this research showed how music education contributes to the sustainability of Zimbabwean cultural identity and heritage.

Keywords: Music education, Cultural transmission

Introduction

“It is argued that any education philosophy that fails to recognize locally developed repositories of knowledge is malnourished and runs the risk of being irrelevant. Hence, if education systems in Zimbabwe are to justify their existence, they need to be sensitive to the cultural uniqueness of the local population (Ndlovu & Masuku 2004:281-282)”.

The above-preceding claim emphasizes the teaching of cultural values to make education relevant to society. Music education is an important platform for the transmission of tangible and intangible cultural heritage from one generation to the next. Culture and music are inextricably linked; therefore, music education serves to transmit culture. Music education, if administered correctly, can be an effective tool for transmitting culture. Music shapes the culture of a society, as the style of music defines each society.

According to Elliott (1995), music education is about promoting, respecting, and understanding the importance of music history that goes hand in hand with the cultural identity formed through music. According to Nzewi (1999), the transmission of cultural norms, values, and beliefs through music begins at birth, when parents introduce the child to the family. At this time, the community sings in honor of the new baby, expressing their joy. This is the first step in the transmission of cultural values. A child goes through several stages of informal education before being introduced to formal school. In schools, children learn music through formal writing, reading, and regulated performance. This has been described by Emberly and Davison (2011) as shifting performance from traditional methods to a modern educational context to preserve traditional music and values.
Definition of terms
Jorgensen (2008) defines “music education” as the process of teaching and learning music in any setting, be it formal (for example in schools) or informal (for example in community spaces or homes). Music education serves as a significant platform for imparting both tangible and intangible cultural heritage from one generation to another. Cultural transmission refers to the way a group’s culture is passed on from one generation to the next and is a vital concept in anthropology and sociology. It involves both concrete, visible phenomena such as customs, traditions, and rites, and less tangible aspects — values, beliefs, and so on (Endogenous Cultural Change, 2006). Cultural transmission is the acquisition of the various competencies and pieces of information that society acquaints us with (Morin, 2018).

Objectives of the study
The research aims to describe how music transfers cultural values from one generation to another.

Research questions
What cultural aspects are being taught at school by music teachers?
Which teaching methods are used to teach music that helps to transmit culture?
What cultural values are gained by students that help to restore the cultural values of a society?

Literature review
Henslin (2015) defines culture as a group’s language, ideas, values, conventions, actions, and even material things. All of the categories mentioned above identify a specific set of people’s behaviors and actions. These activities distinguish one group from the others and help in identifying a society. According to Mathew and Arulsamy (2020), culture is passed down from generation to generation because children acquire behaviors through education, which causes lasting changes in human personality and social development. Culture is thus learned either formally or informally, primarily through music education. Music has been used in traditional societies to communicate vital cultural values, customs, and information, and its educational usefulness has been widely recognized around the world. Music education exists not only to produce musicians but also to enrich people’s lives by offering an expressive outlet that connects them to their cultural identities (Akuno, 2019). Furthermore, the significance of music education goes beyond the basic transmission of musical techniques or knowledge. According to (Elliott, 1995), it is also about fostering, appreciating, and comprehending the significance of the musical history that comes with the cultural identity formed by music. This makes music education an indispensable tool for cultural transmission, conserving cultures while allowing them to evolve artistically. With the increasing diversification of the global socio-cultural landscape, the importance of music education for cultural mediation is also growing. By teaching and learning music from different cultures, students acquire a deeper appreciation and respect for cultural diversity, fostering social harmony and tolerance (Campbell, 2004).

Theoretical Framework
Structural functionalism theory was used as the sociological framework for the study. Structural functionalism theory examines the role and function of school in transmitting beliefs, values, attitudes, and norms from generation to generation because the structures within the society facilitate the transmission of beliefs and values (Dreeben, 1968; Durkheim, 1961; Parson, 1959) cited in Merriam, (2009). Functionalists argue that current cultural values cannot be changed but can be passed on through education. Music education serves as the primary means of cultural transmission in the school environment. In teaching music education, the study adopted Orff’s teaching methodology (Wei, 2018). According to Wei (2018), Orff emphasized that music education allows students to engage in music activities and share their experiences. The teacher’s teaching approaches make it easier for students to understand cultural notions. Students in music education are expected to participate rather than simply observing or listening. Students are expected to participate in dancing and playing musical instruments such as the mbira, ngoma, and hosho. These instruments are highly respected in the Shona culture.

Methodology
In this case study, five music teachers were picked at random from various provinces to survey various cultural events. These provinces have a diverse cultural heritage. Matabeleland Province is home to Ndebele speakers with diverse backgrounds. Masvingo and the Midlands are home to Karanga who speak the same language but have different cultural backgrounds. The language is the same, but their musical making is different from each other. Mashonaland has the Zezuru people, who have their cultural activities. Table 1 below shows the demographical information for participants.
Table 1 Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Experience at work</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Profession</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>BED Honors</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>BED Honors</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>BED Honors</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>MED</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>19 years</td>
<td>MED</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In selecting the participants, the researcher used a purposive sampling technique. This method helps to gather information from people who have enough knowledge of the topic under study, (Creswell, 2014). Of all the interviewees, two participants are holders of Master’s Degrees in Music Education and the three have Bachelor of Education Honors Degree in Music Education. These participants know music culture and they know how to interpret the music syllabus. Since the participants are from different cultural backgrounds, each of them represents the culture of a particular society. The interview was employed as an instrument of data collection. Based on the research questions, an interview guide was created to ask participants pertinent questions to solve the problem under investigation. The interview questions were simple, clear, and understandable for the interviewees.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher initially sought permission from the subjects for their participation, which they all granted. The interview was scheduled and conducted online via WhatsApp call. The informants agreed to be recorded during the interviews. The researcher used two different smartphones to capture the interview. The researcher encountered some network issues and ended up modifying the schedule of the interviews. In other circumstances, communication broke and then resumed after reconnection. Some interviewees were having bundle issues, thus the researcher ended up giving the bundle for a smooth interview. However, the interview was carried out satisfactorily.

The captured data was transcribed from audio to textual format for easier analysis and coding. The researcher used the data obtained from the five respondents to create codes. After closely reviewing the data, the researcher created sub-themes based on the codes. Themes were created and used to address the topic under study. Six elements were developed: curriculum material, teaching methods that foster cultural habits in students, performance, preservation, student motivation, and knowledge obtained.

Findings and discussions

Curriculum

The interview revealed that the competency-based curriculum includes the teaching of music education (Zimbabwe Curriculum Framework 2015-2022). The five respondents confirmed that the music education curriculum includes cultural education and is examinable. According to the school syllabus, music and culture coursework accounts for 30% of the final examination in grade seven examinations. The new curriculum rehabilitates and preserves Zimbabwe’s degraded cultural heritage. Music education aims to transform Zimbabweans by restoring cultural practices to children at a young age since music instruction begins in early childhood education. From the participants’ point of argument, they view music education as a channel that promotes the teaching of cultural values, norms, and beliefs.

Globalization

Globalization erodes Zimbabwean culture. In the interviews, the respondents stated that technology has benefited society but the cultural aspect is suffering. The interview revealed that Western music has damaged African music culture. Classical music, including reggae, rock, and hip-hop, captivates the majority of people (Kurebwa, 2020). *Mbira* music is currently unfamiliar to most students because most of their parents regard it as pagan and therefore avoid cultural activities such as teaching children to play mbira and other activities. Children today are growing up in a Westernized culture where parents do not teach them cultural values; instead, they prefer their children to watch Western music on television discourages them from watching traditional music (Chari, 2013). With the internet, children are exposed to different cultures of the world, which is beneficial in some ways, but also erodes culture to the point that they overlook the instructive music of their culture (Mondo, 2020). In other words, children will disregard the educative music from their culture resulting in them being deviants in society. The interview revealed that musical artifacts are no longer present and non-functional in society. Providing the children with artifacts and other musical instruments is a mockery because they cannot use them. These artifacts are particularly important in music performances such as *bina* ceremonies and other Shona traditional gatherings because they depict the social life of the Shona people (Kurebwa, 2020). The introduction of traditional artifacts into schools promotes cultural restoration and preservation.
Methods of teaching

Field research
The participants discussed several instructional approaches for helping learners understand cultural beliefs. Field research was one of the methods mentioned by the participants. The participants mentioned that teachers and parents generate funds for pupils to visit various cultural places and conduct studies on the traditional aspects of a specific group. In cultural centers, various groups gather to perform for tourists, inform, and teach tourists about their way of life. After visiting such places, students prepare a report for presentation. One of the respondents stated that students are assigned tasks in groups to research various forms of traditional dances. Following the study, students will be asked to prepare a report and present the dance as part of a school examination. Students also visit museums where cultural artifacts are preserved and these students who visit them learn a lot about musical artifacts. Participants stated that there are mbira pieces at Great Zimbabwe monuments that our ancestors utilized a long time ago. This content enables students to delve deeper into the history of mbira and its role in Shona society. Students learn a lot about the mhande dance, which is performed at Great Zimbabwe Monuments. A group of mhande dancers is constantly there to explain the history and perform it to the tourists as entertainment. Field research helps students recognize their history, and purpose, as well as how to do it. Students will obtain firsthand information from knowledgeable individuals rather than reading books (Bartolome, 2017).

Story Telling
Folk telling through music is another teaching approach mentioned by participants as an excellent way of transmitting culture to students (Wolfenbutt, 2020). Teachers employ folk stories generated long ago by ancestors to instruct their children in the absence of formal education. The stories contain teachings that reflect many cultural conventions, values, and beliefs. Students analyze the meaning of the stories as well as the songs included in the stories. The stories had certain teachings that assisted students in acquiring cultural norms and values that will prepare them to fit into the community in which they live (Muwati et al, 2016).

Performance
Cultural Activities
Different cultural activities are done in music education to preserve the culture of a society. Traditional dances are taught in schools including mhande, in Masvingo/ Midlands, nbende in Mashonaland, and sisishikatsha in Matabeleland. According to the report, all these dances instill the importance of appeasing ancestral spirits. The participants argued that mhande is a spiritual dance that connects the living with the dead through the spirit mediums (Gwerevende, 2019). These spirit mediums are the ones that communicate with the ancestors in trances (Matiure, 2011). This shows the importance of music in the Shona people and the cultural aspect should be transmitted to children through music education. With that in mind, children will value their cultural activities. For this cultural aspect to be maintained in society, music education takes an important role in teaching these aspects through performing the dances even though they do not get into trance. The concept of accepting society’s beliefs is very important to students because they will be able to transfer that knowledge to their children. Through music education, students will be performing traditional dances during competitions organized by the National Association of Primary Heads (NAPH). These activities help to preserve the cultural dances and music of the country as well as teach other Zimbabwean cultures. This was highlighted by almost all respondents when they talked about competing in traditional dances from the cluster level to the National level. The respondents stated that all primary schools in Zimbabwe take part in traditional dances and they compete from the school level to the national level. Therefore, music education is very important in transmitting the cultural values of a society.

Instruments and Instruments Making
All cultural functions are made successful by instruments such as mbira, ngoma, and hosho which are pure African instruments. During sacred ceremonies, people get into trances mostly because of the power of music and instruments (Gwerevende, 2019). The teaching of instruments to students is very important because they will be able to respect and gain knowledge about the importance and function of instruments in their culture. One interviewee testified that teaching musical instruments results in respecting the instrument and the cultural dances. Mbira, ngoma, hosho, and ngagada are the most important instruments in the Shona culture (Matiure, 2011). The researcher found that schools preserve musical instruments through construction. In schools, students are asked to construct traditional instruments that they use as media in the teaching and learning process. Construction is a skill that can be transferred from one person to another, that is, everyone who acquires the skill of making an instrument may pass it to somebody. This means the instrument will remain in the culture, saving the same purpose as it was before. In this process, the respondents argued that, in most cases, they use resource persons to teach students how to construct instruments like
mbira and other instruments may be difficult for them. Musical instruments are very important in the culture because they make music for society. For every function to be a success in traditional gatherings, musical instruments are very important in the Shona society.

**Traditional songs**

Work songs and hunting songs were very common long ago in the Shona culture. During *nhimbe* (cooperative work), people used to sing different songs as a way of motivating workers to work hard (Mahohoma and Muzambi, 2021). These activities were done to create unity within a society because they believed in oneness. To instill the same spirit in children, the teachers use work and game songs where students will participate in groups showing group work and unity among members (Mahohoma and Muzambi, 2021). Unite is a special value to be instilled in students. The respondents said some of the songs used encourage hard working for example the song *Ndiani akotonoka mai vake muny i* (Translation anyone who stands whilst others are working, his or her mother is a witch). During such performances, students will enjoy the song at the same time they are gaining skills (Nyota & Mapara, 2008). Work songs were used during spring festivals where people were celebrating their harvest. To transmit the cultural beliefs and traditions, teachers give students work songs and they perform in groups. During these practices, hunting, farming, and family roles will be imparted to students thereby acquiring cultural values to make every individual fit into society.

**Motivating students**

Since the cultural aspects of the societies are eroded because of globalization, students do not see the sense of culture so teachers should use different teaching techniques to motivate them. Teachers created cultural groups that perform different functions. In most cases, these students are given incentives, so the students now participate in numbers to receive incentives. In addition, schools are taking part in competitions organized by the NAPH, these competitions act as motivational strategies for students. During these competitions, students will be socializing and competing with others, and as a result, they scramble to take part in cultural activities. This led to the creation of cultural groups such as Inkululeko Yabatsha School of Arts (IYASA), a group of dancers showing the Ndebele cultural activities. Such cultural groups are formed as a result of music education in schools. The researcher found that most of the students trained by these participants created groups that performed cultural activities to earn a living. This shows that music education is crucial in preserving and transmitting culture.

**Preservations**

To perpetuate cultural activities, teachers use a variety of instructional methods. Notating and transcribing traditional music preserves folk songs for future use (Wolffenbuttel, 2020). Transcribed folk songs will be used in their form, meaning, and purpose. One of the participants suggested recording the songs so that the teacher might utilize them in the future while teaching new classes. Recorded videos and audio contribute greatly to the preservation of cultural activities because the records will maintain the folk songs in their form. Teachers record their activities for future reference.

**Cultural values gained**

Most pupils unwittingly absorb a society’s cultural norms and values. Teachers employ various teaching approaches, such as field research, to provide pupils with a basic understanding of their culture. This includes understanding the function, purpose, method, how, and why it was performed. Students will collaborate to discover the meaning of the song by transcribing it. As students analyze the song, they will unconsciously acquire cultural values such as respect, love, and collaboration. The majority of folk songs were composed with the intention of teaching, directing, and rebuking undesirable behavior among community members. The song “Sabhuku mugariro wako nevamwe” translates as “Village head’s relations with other village members.” When pupils perform such songs, they become aware of the behaviors required by society. Students gain construction skills in making musical instruments. Constructing musical instruments is a skill that can help students to earn a living at the same time preserving the culture of a society. Through music education, students will adopt and make it a valuable aspect of society.

**Conclusion**

In Zimbabwe, music education is an important tool for transmitting belief systems and values from one generation to the next. This is evident in the wide range of traditional music genres that are still performed and taught across the country. Zimbabwean music is rooted in the country’s history and culture and has been used as a means of expression for centuries. It is through this musical tradition that Zimbabweans have been able to communicate their values and beliefs to the community. One of the most important aspects of Zimbabwean music is its ability to convey messages of hope and resilience in the face of adversity. This is best exemplified in the music of the Shangan Society, a group of traditional musicians who perform songs about the struggles of daily life in Zimbabwe. Despite the hardships that
Zimbabweans face, their music remains a source of hope and strength. Through music education, future generations will be able to learn about the country’s rich culture and history, as well as the values and beliefs that make it so special. According to the study, the curriculum in Zimbabwe adopted music education as a way to teach the cultural values of the society. This can be witnessed by the competitions that were organized by the NAPH to instill cultural values in children. The teaching methods used to teach music are designed to equip students with knowledge about their culture so that they will impact the other generation. Through music education, students are taking musical instruments and activities as new things because of the environment where they have adopted the Western culture and ignored theirs.

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References


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