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# Ideologies and approaches in music education in Zambia: A review of curriculum and practice

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**Abstract**
In Zambia, a significant gap exists between the ideology and approaches of music education (ME) and the policies and practices that govern it. While ME faces numerous challenges, existing studies have not sufficiently examined its ideological foundations and pedagogical approaches as key areas requiring attention. This study explores ME curriculum and practice through the lens of ideology and pedagogical approaches, aiming to bridge the gap between policy and implementation. The findings of this study will contribute to informing the future development of the ME curriculum in Zambia. The study used qualitative research methods embedded in multi-site case study design which included Southern, Lusaka and Copperbelt provinces of Zambia. Data sources included curriculum documents on ME, interviews and focus groups from 106 respondents comprising curriculum developers (1), teachers (24), lecturers (8) and learners (73) in primary and secondary schools and tertiary institutions, as well as observations of actual teaching. Both purposeful and convenience sampling techniques were used to include participants and institutions. Findings indicate that humanism, democracy and aestheticism influenced policy generation and implementation in ME. Additionally, music is approached through various avenues, including music as practical or vocational training, cultural preservation, promotion of positive leisure activities, holistic learning and integrated arts. Curriculum gaps show lack of specialised music rooms, unclear inclusion guidelines, low use of technology and inconsistent teaching of ME despite policy mandates. The prospects in ME point to increased use of technology, introduction of specialised training in music at primary, generating a ME policy and a practically oriented curriculum.

**Keywords:** Ideology, technology, music education curriculum, humanism, democracy and aestheticism.

## Introduction

Music education (ME) in Zambia, as in other contexts, is grounded in a complex framework of ideology and approaches that shape both curriculum and practice. These influence the perception, teaching, and learning of music, ultimately affecting the overall quality and relevance of ME in the country (Education, 1996). The ontological world view of ME in Zambia, is traced and premised on the pre-colonial African belief of communal music undertaking propagated by '*Ubuntu*' driven by unwritten curriculum, where memory served as song books and storage systems (Kumar & Lakshminarayana, 2024 [40]; Ofosu-Asare, 2024 [52]; Ngoepe & Bhebhe, 2023) [51]. '*Ubuntu*', a *Bantu* and South African maxim, espouses interdependence where individual efforts should aim at benefiting others. As such, truth, values, norms, skills and knowledge as epistemological aspects are passed on through music which take the form of imitations and through familial inheritance (Kakoma, 2017 [36]; Eckeskog, 2010) [25]. Zambia is a multicultural society, hence upholding of axiological values such as ethics, is seen in how ethnic groups employ the aspect of social control on the use of things like music instruments, costume and music. In this way vocal and instrumental music helped to perpetuate cultural heritage in precolonial era hence forming a basis for an ideological foundation for modern day ME (Kubik, 2010) [39]. With the coming of the colonial masters and post-independence, the ME curriculum and general curricular changed to embrace a structured music education system as we see it today (Adeogun, 2018) [2]. This pointed to an urgent call to review the ideological foundations then and adopt those that would align to the needs of the country. Hence ideologies like humanism, democracy and aestheticism were adopted. These will be discussed in detail later in the article. In addition to ideologies, approaches towards achieving effective ME were adopted. Some of these include music as a practical subject, music as cultural education (Education, 1977:43), ME for Leisure (Education, 1996:36, 56), ME for national development (Educational Reforms, 1977:50), ME for holistic learning (Education, 1996:4, 29) and ME for emotional development (Educating, 1996:39). Furthermore, ME is taught as an integrated subject from primary through tertiary level (Kalinde & Bwalya, 2023). As such, music at lower primary school is integrated under the theme Creative and Technology Studies, while at upper primary and secondary school it falls under expressive arts (CDC, 2003; CDC, 2013a; CDC, 2013e). As noted in research, structured music education has come with its own challenges not only in Zambia but Africa as a whole (Murphy & Fuatley, 2015) [47], in terms of creating ME curricular that can withstand the test of time and how they can be effectively implemented at all levels of education. As such, this study contributes to the ongoing global discourse on the chasm between ideology and pedagogical approaches on one hand and curriculum and practice on the other in Zambian institutions of learning.

## Statement of the Problem

ME in Zambia faces a critical disconnect between its ideological foundations, approaches to attaining effective ME, and the curriculum and practices. While ME has long been recognised as an essential component of cultural and artistic expression, its implementation within the Zambian education system has been inconsistent and fragmented.

Locally, available research on ME has primarily focused on identifying challenges related to status, pedagogy, participation, and resource constraints (Mulenga, Yan, &

Dixian, 2021 [45]; Mwila, 2015 [48]; Namaiko, 2015 [49]; Mumpuka, 2009) [46]. However, these studies often overlook the deeper ideological foundations that shape ME curricular and practice. This oversight has led to a lack of coherence in ME curriculum design and implementation, limiting its effectiveness in fostering musical literacy, cultural preservation, and educational equity.

This study, therefore, examined the current status of ME in Zambia through the lens of its ideology and pedagogical approaches, tracing how these have historically influenced curriculum and practice. By bridging the gap between policy intent and practical implementation, this research aims to contribute to the development of a more cohesive, contextually relevant ME framework that aligns with Zambia's educational objectives.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions helped to realise the objectives of the study:

1. What are the ideological underpinnings of the current music education curriculum in Zambia?
2. What pedagogical approaches are used for ME provision in Zambia?
3. How are the ideological principles in curriculum and practice of music education in Zambian schools aligned?
4. What is the future outlook of music education curriculum in Zambia?

**Theoretical Framework**

This study is guided by the Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) theory. CPA emphasises the importance of context, group values, and the contestable nature of problem definition in policy analysis (Diem *et al*., 2014) [21]. In 1993, Ball refined the theory by incorporating context, text, and consequences as key components of policy analysis. According to Cardno (2018) [8] and Chase *et al*. (2013) [12], context refers to the forces and values that brought a policy into being which points to ideological foundations. The text is the content of the policy which is the subject of analysis. Text provides the key elements and basis for ascertaining clear evidence of guidance for policy practice. The consequence, entail the general impact of policy seen in the way it is implemented. Unlike traditional policy analysis models, CPA acknowledges that policies are socio-cultural products and hence are subjective in nature (Diem *et al*., 2014) [21]. Therefore, a qualitative paradigm is accepted as means of data gathering and analysis.

In the context of ideological underpinnings of music education in Zambia, the theory was helpful in understanding the forces and values that brought into being ME curriculum and how they are implemented in learning institutions in Zambia. The research involved analysis of curriculum on ME and examination of its implementation in institutions of learning in Zambia through interviews, focus group and observations.

**Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study have the potential to benefit key stakeholders, particularly curriculum developers, by highlighting possible weaknesses within the ME curriculum and identifying areas that may require immediate attention and improvement. This insight could inform future curriculum revisions, ensuring that they effectively address existing gaps. Furthermore, teachers may gain a deeper understanding of the ideological foundations shaping the ME curriculum, allowing them to refine their instructional approaches with a more informed focus on aligning their teaching with national ideological goals. For pupils, the study's insights could contribute to an enriched learning experience, as educators may implement improved instructional strategies. Ultimately, this could lead to a curriculum that is more responsive to their musical education needs and attuned to the evolving demands of 21st-century education.

**Literature Review**

This section presents literature that give insights in the complex interplay of ideological foundations, pedagogical approaches, curriculum and practice in music education.

**Music education ideological underpinnings.**

Music education globally is founded on ideology which according to Reimer (2009), consists of a statement of beliefs and values that drive its educational focus. For example Kodaly's philosophy emphasise inclusivity as an approach and the idea that music is a universal language (Regelski, 2021) [56]. As such, authentic folk songs which ideologically form part of culture due to their simplicity, beauty, and deep connection to cultural heritage, serve as teaching tools in the approach to teaching music education (Houlahan & Tacka, 2015) [35]. In the same way ME founded on aesthetic ideological underpinnings recognises that music should be appreciated for its own sake, devoid of considering its social or practical value hence espousing intrinsic values (Elliot, 2012) [26]. As highlighted by research, the challenge in aesthetic ME's approach, lies in its classification of certain forms of music as unsuitable for academic study, resulting in an emphasis on Western classical music while relegating other genres to the realm of just being popular or for mere entertainment (Regelski, 2021) [56]. Hence, putting it at variance with Kodaly's inclusive stance and approach. However, it can be argued that the same elements found in classical music, such as chord progressions, can also be found in popular music (Tan, 2020). In agreement with Kodaly's philosophy, ME founded on praxialism acknowledges that music should be accessible to all students and not just a few elite, and so the process of habit formation in music making or musicking is emphasised (Elliot, 2012) [26]. The challenge in praxialism however, lies broadly on the emphasis it places on performance as a goal. This emphasis leads to a tendency of overlooking other significant areas of the curriculum such as music therapy and theory. Regelski (2021) [56] and Elliot (2012) [26] both agree that ME founded on pragmatist philosophy should assert musical knowledge and skills that can be practical in real life for them to be termed meaningful. These skills and knowledge should not only be theories, but also impactful on life. Hence, as argued by Leonido, Cardoso and Morgado, (2024) [42], pragmatism should encourage the integration of music with other subjects as an approach to emphasise interdisciplinarity.

**Music Education curriculum emphasis**

Globally, various nations aspire to see their curricular to move in a certain direction or to espouse certain values in ME. A study on Chinese curricular by Sinclair (2014) [59], portrays a ME curricular emphasis that espouses Chinese

culture, nationalism and character development education. As for Finland, Heikkinen and Lehtonen, (2020) [33], document a ME curriculum emphasis that focus on inclusion of all learners regardless of state and inadequacies. The study though, recognises gaps especially on the lack of comprehensive guidelines on how inclusion of all learners can effectively be achieved. In Germany, the ME curricular emphasis is embedded in training learners in classical music and instrumental proficiency (Garrepy, 2020) [29]. Just like Finland, Germany has made strides in making ME accessible to all especially the disabled. In that vein, a policy on inclusion inspired by the United Nations declaration on the rights for people with disabilities exist. However, there is still a gap in this curricular emphasis in terms of how individual schools implement it due to autonomy in curricular implementation for each state as noted by Garrepy (2020) [29]. A broader perspective of African ME curricular emphasis has seen a paradigm shift from Western oriented ME to an emphasis on indigenous ME knowledge (Murphy & Fuatley, 2015) [47]. However, the full realisation of this aspiration is still farfetched in most countries partly due to unwilling teachers to teach cultural music (Kakoma, 2017) [36] and challenges in harmonising multicultural practices in the curricular (Buthelezi, 2016) [6].

**Curriculum and practice disjoint**

The connection between ideological underpinnings, curriculum and how policy is implemented is undebatable. However, as Schmidt (2009) observes, the lack of specificity in policy goals often hinders effective implementation because it challenges music educators and administrators due to lack of a clear policy direction and guidelines on how implementation should be carried out. Ho & Law (2004) [34] argue that the manner, means, and extent of implementing ME policies signify the value a government assigns to these policies. For instance, Finland's highly regarded ME system is often cited as a model for its focus on equity and inclusion (Heikkinen & Lehtonen, 2020) [33]. In contrast, Sinclair's (2014) [59] comparative study of America and Chinese music revealed that, unlike China, in America the policy lacks explicit recognition of the intrinsic value of music. In a recent study in England, Savage (2021) [57] notes that, policies tend to prioritise exam-oriented subjects to the detriment of music education due to lack of a unified voice among stakeholders. The ramifications of a polarised voice are dire, where research has indicated a push of ME provision to the periphery despite policy mandate for its inclusion in the curriculum (Bath *et al*, 2020) [4], hence creating a gap between policy pronouncements and practice. Germany's value laden ME curriculum provides for inclusion of people with disability. The challenge however, is on implementation because the Convention on the rights of people with disabilities (CRPD) is not mandatory in Germany (Garrepy, 2020) [29]. Hence, teachers appear not to be obliged to include people with disability in ME which has adverse effect on policy implementation. In Africa there has been renewed energy in policy generation that espouses local music cultures in ME curricular, partly due to rebelling against inherited colonial curricular (Murphy & Fuatley, 2015) [47]. For example, research by Buthelezi (2016) [6] indicate that South Africa has made headways in integrating indigenous music as a way of preserving diverse cultural heritage. The challenge however, is negative attitudes exhibited by teachers in implementation. In Ghana despite the availability of ME policy, inclusion of technology in ME has not been backed by policy and clear guidelines on execution, hence challenging implementation when it comes to practice in institutions of learning (Adjepong & Obeng, 2018) [3]. In agreement with Buthelezi (2016) [6] in South Africa, Kakoma (2017) [36] also found that teachers have a negative attitude towards teaching indigenous music in Zambian schools. Furthermore, as at 2013 policy recognised music as a practical subject examinable at primary school for the first time since independence (Mwila, 2015) [48]. As an approach, it was to be taught integratively at primary school through tertiary institutions (Kalinde & Bwalya, 2023) [37] and was to provide an alternative career pathway for those not strong in academic pathways (CDC, 2013; Education, 1996).

**Prospects of music curriculum**

In the 21st century era, it is imperative to address the shifting educational plane and adapt to the changing needs of students (de Reizabal, 2022) [19]. For example literature indicates that, expanding music curricula to encompass a diverse array of musical styles and cultures is not only a matter of cultural enrichment but also an essential educational imperative (Cain, Lindblom, & Walden, 2013) [7], that provide holistic education (Cosumov, 2023) [15]. This holistic perspective emphasises that knowledge is interconnected, encouraging students to develop a more comprehensive worldview that values diversity and the interplay of ideas, cultures, and disciplines where western and non-western music cultures are integrated (Clark & Wallace, 2015) [13]. Katz (2010) [38] is right by observing that, integration of technology into music education is transforming the field by offering students unprecedented learning, creative, and collaborative opportunities. As observed by Gouzouasis and Bakan, (2011) [30], the future of ME may depend on seamless technology integration. As Crawford (2013) [16] adds that, digital tools for composition, theory, and online collaboration will now become key in ME. A study by Namaiko (2015) [49] in Zambia revealed that, integration of technology in ME would greatly enhance pupils' interest at high school and consequently improve quality of ME programmes. As observed by Han (2022) [32], the gap between theory and practice is then bridged. In addition, interdisciplinary ME curricular especially those that link music with science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM), hold great promise for enriching students' educational experiences that foster holistic development in the future (Leavy *et al*., 2023) [41]. The holistic development entails training the mind, heart and hands. As such, competence based curricular that emphasises hands on activities, can uplift a more practical approach to ME instruction. As guided by Garnett's (2013) [28] study, future training will have to take into account the importance of proper teacher placement, meaning matching teachers to their areas of expertise such as guitarist, violinist and vocalist. Furthermore, how to integrate technology and indigenous music in classroom set up will have to be factored in the teacher training curriculum.

**Methodology**

This study was grounded in an interpretivist ontology and adopted an anti-positivist epistemological stance, aligning with the qualitative research approach. A multi-site case study design was employed, encompassing Southern,

Copperbelt, and Lusaka provinces. The study examined policy documents on music education (ME) in Zambia and collected data from curriculum developers, music educators across primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, as well as learners. The focus was on curriculum structure, pedagogical practices, and perspectives on the future of ME in Zambia.

**Sample Size**

The study initially targeted 126 participants; however, the final sample comprised 106 individuals. This group included one curriculum developer, 24 music teachers, 40 primary and secondary school learners studying music, eight music lecturers, and 33 students from colleges and universities offering music education. Additionally, the research involved an analysis of key education curriculum documents relevant to music education in Zambia.

**Sampling Procedure**

The study employed a combination of purposive and convenience sampling techniques to select research sites and participants (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017) [14]. As an inclusion criteria, primary schools, secondary schools, colleges, and universities that provide music education were purposefully sampled. Similarly, purposive sampling was used to select music teachers and learners at secondary schools, colleges, and universities, as they possess specialised knowledge and experience related to music education. For primary schools, a convenience sampling approach was adopted for selecting teachers and learners based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study. Finally, the curriculum developer was purposefully sampled due to the significance of his role in shaping music education curriculum, making their insights particularly relevant to the study.

**Data Collection Techniques**

Data was obtained through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and document analysis (Creswell, 2014) [17]. Primary data was gathered through interviews from music teachers, learners, and a curriculum developer which helped get detailed insights on curriculum and practice. Additionally, focus group discussions with teachers and learners facilitated interactive exploration of practice. While real classroom practices were captured through participant and non-participant observations at educational institutions (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017) [14]. Secondary data on ideologies, approaches and ME curriculum was collected from ME curriculum documents via online downloads and hard copies obtained from University of Zambia library. Triangulation of these techniques ensured a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between music education curriculum and music education practices in the light of ideological foundations that underpin them (Creswell & Poth, 2016) [18].

**Trustworthiness and Credibility**

Credibility and trustworthiness were enhanced through video and audio recordings of observations, focus group discussions, and interviews, respectively. Recordings ensured accurate data capture and served as reference points. Interview transcripts were member-checked to confirm the accuracy of outcomes. Finally, triangulation of data sets from curriculum documents, observations of actual learning, interviews and focus group discussions helped to complement each other's strength and weaknesses.

**Data Analysis**

Qualitative data, both primary (interviews, focus group discussions, and observations) and secondary (curriculum documents), were analysed thematically (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017) [14]. This involved transcribing audio and field notes, data familiarisation, coding (open, axial, and selective), categorisation, theme generation and refinement, and report writing (Braun & Clarke, 2006) [5]. Primary data sets were coded using both *in vivo* and researcher-assigned labels. Secondary data underwent initial content analysis followed by thematic analysis, consistent with the primary data (Creswell & Poth, 2016) [18]. The initial themes generated were many and through selective coding, they were collapsed to four which are ideological foundations of ME in Zambia, pedagogical approaches to ME in Zambia, curriculum and implementation and the prospects of ME in Zambia.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the research process. Approval was obtained from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) at UNZA in May 2024 (Wiles, 2013) [61]. Permissions were also secured from relevant authorities, including provincial and district education officers, as well as institutional leaders, who facilitated access to music teachers and learners. The curriculum developer's consent was also obtained. All participants were informed of the terms of their involvement, emphasising voluntary participation, the absence of remuneration, and the freedom to withdraw at any time (Creswell & Poth, 2016) [18]. Informed consent was documented through signed consent forms, ensuring a clear agreement to participate in the study.

**Findings and Discussions**

Triangulation of data from curriculum documents, interviews, focus group discussions and observations yielded four themes upon which the discussion is framed. The themes are ideological foundations of ME in Zambia, pedagogical approaches to ME in Zambia, curriculum and implementation and the future prospects of ME in Zambia.

**Ideological foundations of ME in Zambia**

This theme arose from a quest to answer research question one on the Ideological foundations upon which current ME curriculum is anchored. The overarching finding under this theme revealed that, through history Zambia's ME curriculum and education in general have been embedded firstly in humanistic ideological views. Curriculum documents still carry traces of humanism in their curriculum goal emphasis as seen in phrases like 'life long education' and 'harmonious development of all faculties of learners (Zambia, 2022; CDC, 2013abe; Education, 1996; Education, 1992), which are humanistic beliefs (Cosumov, 2023 [15]; Halder, 2023) [31]. Cosumov (2023) [15] supports these findings in his argument that humanistic education harmoniously develops the mind, soul, and body to transmit values across generations. The current study's findings suggest that the aim of government is to focus on applying knowledge rather than just knowing it, hence developing the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Focus on

learning 1992 document emphasises a curriculum that addresses the body, mind, affective, and social needs. However, the policy lacks specific guidance on achieving this, diminishing the value of subjects like music education by placing it solely under the affective domain, despite its potential benefits in social, cognitive, and psychomotor areas (Education, 1996:44).This oversight ignores the crucial role of teachers in holistic teaching and undermines humanism's goal of benefiting the community (Education, 1977). For example, interviews and focus groups revealed that teachers and learners were unaware of humanism as a national ideology. This gap in knowledge identified above can impact how teachers provide instruction in institutions of learning. Firstly they might not align their instruction to national goals and secondly their instruction will be uncoordinated leading to unintended ME goals and a general curricular failure might ensue (Education, 1996). Therefore, policies should be prescriptive rather than merely descriptive to establish a balanced power dynamic between policymakers and implementers. This approach would ensure a stronger alignment between the principles outlined in music education policies and their actual implementation in educational institutions (CDC, 2023)

Findings also show that as at 1996, curriculum pronouncements on ME in the curriculum documents, espouse liberal democratic ideals. As such, all forms of education practice and curricular generation therefore should espouse these liberal democratic principles (CDC, 2013a; CDC, 2013d; Education, 1996). However, responses from interviews and focus groups by teachers and learners, showed mixed awareness of democratic ideals as an educational ideology that guide instruction and learning, potentially creating a disconnect between curriculum and practice. Due to democracy as an ideal, music education at secondary school is optional but compulsory at primary school. De Villiers' (2015) study corroborates the current findings where it is revealed that, the South African ME policies are embedded in democratic principles. Texturally, Education (1996:2), liberal democracy can guide the formulation of educational policies and their implementation. Yet, the overlaps between humanistic and democratic goals seem unclear. For instance, humanism aims at education that embrace the whole community, yet as a democratic goal music is an optional subject in schools and usually given to one class (Mwila, 2015) [48]. This approach may exclude learners who have an interest in music but are placed in classes where it is not offered. Overlooking the role of interest in music education could result in a cohort of students who struggle to perform well, potentially hindering effective implementation by teachers. To address this, policies should provide clear guidance such as allowing students to select music regardless of their assigned class and considering overall enrolment numbers when forming classes. This would help align the music education curriculum with humanistic and democratic ideals, ensuring greater inclusivity and accessibility.

The policy content use the term aesthetic areas to refer to music. This gives an impression that curriculum pronouncements on ME in the policy documents, are also underpinned in aestheticism as an ideological worldview. Furthermore, the inclusion of content on technology in the Zambian music syllabus (CDC, 2013a; CDC, 2013d) to enhance instruction and comprehension is reflective of aestheticism in music education (Li & Sun, 2023 [43]; Zhang, 2018) [62]. A recent study by Men (2024) compared French and Chinese ME and revealed that both nations espouse aesthetic ME hence affirming current study results. The curriculum, while seemingly good, contains terms that could be misconstrued regarding music education (ME). For example "the arts can also serve for the teaching and learning of other areas" (Educating, 1996:38). The challenge here is that, using arts (music) to teach other subjects, may reduce music to a mere conduit, thereby diminishing its importance as a subject (Farrugia, 2020) [27]. The gap in music education (ME) lies in the prevailing narrative that emphasizes music as a tool for teaching other subjects rather than as a subject of study in its own right. This lack of coherence in curriculum statements may contribute to teachers neglecting ME in practice (Chase *et al*., 2014) [12]. Observations revealed that many primary school teachers prioritize art and physical education over music, often replacing music with another subject despite its inclusion in the timetable. This disconnect between curricular expectations and classroom practice highlights a significant gap that hinders the effective implementation of ME.

To address this, curriculum pronouncements must be explicit in their intentions to ensure alignment with actual teaching practices. The study's findings—showing that ME policies are rooted in humanism, democracy, and aestheticism—support the Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) approach, which emphasizes the importance of examining the forces and contexts shaping policy development (Cardno, 2018 [8]; Diem *et al*., 2014) [21]. Understanding these underlying influences is crucial for explaining why gaps exist between policy directives and their implementation, ultimately informing more effective curriculum reforms.

**Pedagogical Approaches to Music Education in Zambia**

Research question two sought to find out the pedagogical approaches adopted by the curriculum in ME towards its implementation in Zambia. The findings in the curriculum documents show that ME is approached as a practical or vocational subject (Education, 1996:36). Hence music is deemed as an area that enhances tactile skills that can be used in the world of work for not only self-sustenance, but also for national development. This can be through music composition, music instrument production and costume making. Furthermore, findings reveal that music is approached as a means to promote cultural education (Education, 1977:43). This is aimed at preserving the Zambian cultural identity that include traditional songs, folksongs, costume, dances and instruments through classroom practice. However, interviews and focus group discussions indicated that very few teachers are keen to teach cultural music, hence creating a gap in curriculum implementation. This finding is corroborated by Kakoma (2017) [36] in Zambia and Buthelezi (2016) [6] in South Africa who both found that teachers were unwilling to teach cultural music despite curriculum mandates. Further results show that, music should be approached as a means to positive use of leisure (Education, 1996:56). The focus of this approach is to bridge the divide between extracurricular and core curricular activities, as well curb vices associated with unproductive leisure times in learners such as smoking and crime. Other findings show that music is a means to holistic learning which address not only the cognitive but affective and psychomotor aspects of learners (Education,

1996:4.29). The learner should not only be holistically developed, but also emotionally developed to be worthwhile citizens with balanced state of minds (Educating, 1996:39), who can contribute immensely to national development as decreed in the curriculum (Education, 1977:50). Finally the ME curriculum is approached as part of integrated arts (CDC, 2003). Hence the need to teach ME integratively from primary school through tertiary institutions (Kalinde & Bwalya, 2023) [37]. These projected pedagogical approaches in the curriculum appear perfect, however results from interviews and focus group discussions show that, practice in institutions has done little to achieve these intended goals. This is due to power struggle between curriculum developers and implementers, where the latter is rarely involved in curriculum development thereby affirming the position of CPA theory (Diem *et al*., 2014) [21]. CPA holds that curriculum developers should not impose curricular content made them, but rather involve teachers in the process. The ownership that ensue from this involvement energise teachers to implement ME curriculum with passion (Schmidt, 2009).

**Curriculum and implementation**

This theme responds to research question three which seeks to understand how curriculum and practice align in terms of ideological foundations, specialised facilities, inclusion, technology and compulsory nature of ME at primary school. Curriculum pronouncements, like teacher training and administrative support, lack clarity on how ideological foundations should be communicated to educators in learning institutions and eventually how they can be implemented. This was evident from interviews and focus groups, where both teachers and learners expressed limited awareness of ME-related ideological and curriculum pronouncements. One teacher recalled encountering a general policy document only as part of an assignment during training. From a Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) perspective, which emphasises understanding policy contexts for effective implementation, this lack of awareness may contribute to poor ME implementation in Zambia (Cardno, 2018 [8]; Diem *et al*., 2014) [21]. Educators must be well-informed about national guiding philosophies and policy directives to plan and teach ME effectively, as philosophy provides direction (Onyiuke, 2015) [53] while policy grants authority (Westerlund, 2012) [60].

The findings reveal a disconnect between curriculum documents and implementation in real-world experiences. For example, while the curriculum states that all schools will have specialised rooms for practical subjects, including music (Curriculum Framework, 2023; Education, 1996), interviews and focus groups indicated otherwise. Only universities and colleges had designated music rooms, but these lacked essential features such as acoustics, soundproofing, recording facilities, and proper storage. This failure to implement policy commitments in infrastructure negatively impacts ME practice, reducing policy directives to political rhetoric (Chase *et al*., 2014) [12]. Given that music can be disruptive due to its sound levels, the lack of proper facilities may also cause conflicts among teachers (Abou-Dargham, 2012) [1]. This situation contrasts with a study in England, where all schools visited had designated music rooms, although their quality varied (Welch *et al*., 2016) [63].

Similarly, the policy states that people with disabilities will have access to ME (Education, 1996) but fails to specify how this will be achieved. This lack of clarity may lead to uncoordinated implementation, depriving learners of quality instruction and undermining policy goals. Furthermore, while policy recognizes the importance of technology in enhancing ME and includes it in the curriculum, interviews and focus groups painted a different picture. Challenges such as power outages, lack of government-provided equipment, and limited technological expertise have hindered its integration, widening the gap between policy intentions and classroom realities (Crawford, 2013) [16]. This finding aligns with Namaiko's (2015) [49] study, which identified low technology use in Zambian secondary schools.

Additionally, curriculum documents state that music is compulsory for all primary school learners (Education, 1996; Education, 1977). However, interviews revealed that many teachers neglect music in favour of art and physical education, despite their training in ME methods. This practice undermines ME goals and creates a significant barrier to achieving intended policy outcomes.

**The future prospects of ME in Zambia**

The research question four explored the envisioned future of the ME curriculum, focusing on technology integration, specialized training, a standalone ME policy, and a more practical approach to instruction. All four data sets emphasized the crucial role of technology in enhancing music education and recognized it as a policy issue requiring compliance (Han, 2022) [32]. Advanced technology integration emerges as a key feature of a future ME curriculum. Interview findings highlight the need for the government to fulfil its obligation in providing resources, bridging the gap between policy and practice in ME. Aligning policy text, context, and consequences, as outlined in CPA, would strengthen implementation efforts (Cardno, 2018) [8].

Regarding teacher training, interview and focus group data suggest reforming primary school teacher education to include specialized music training for generalist teachers. This aligns with existing policies on specialized teaching at the primary level and would enhance classroom delivery by ensuring that training is driven by interest and expertise (Ndhlovu *et al*., 2021) [50]. Furthermore, responses from interviews and focus groups highlighted the need for a standalone ME policy document to provide clear guidelines, addressing the current policy gap.

Another significant recommendation from all data sets is a reformed ME curriculum that prioritizes practical instruction over theory, adopting a competency-based approach to learning. Understanding what will be most effective in the future of ME is critical, especially when solutions come directly from those affected. This aligns with the socio-cultural aspect of CPA, which emphasizes that policies grounded in the lived experiences of stakeholders are more likely to succeed (Cardno, 2018 [8]; Chase *et al*., 2014 [12]; Diem *et al*., 2014) [21].

**Conclusions**

This study concludes that while the Zambian Music Education (ME) curriculum is grounded in humanistic, liberal democratic, and aesthetic principles, there is a significant gap between these ideological foundations and

their practical implementation in schools. A key challenge identified is the lack of awareness among teachers and learners regarding these ideological underpinnings, which has contributed to inconsistencies in teaching practices and a diminished recognition of music education's value.

The study further highlights that ME in Zambia is delivered through multiple avenues, including vocational training, cultural preservation, holistic learning, and integrated arts. However, the effectiveness of these approaches is constrained by a disconnect between curriculum developers and implementers, leading to inconsistencies between policy directives and classroom realities. Key shortcomings identified include limited specialised facilities, insufficient inclusion strategies, inadequate technology integration, and weak enforcement of music as a compulsory subject at the primary level.

Within the scope of this study, these challenges indicate that curriculum pronouncements often fail to translate into meaningful improvements in classroom practice. To address these gaps, the study suggests that the future of ME in Zambia must focus on integrating technology, strengthening specialised teacher training, developing a standalone ME policy document, and adopting a more practical, competency-based curriculum. These reforms are critical in bridging the divide between policy and practice, ensuring that music education contributes effectively to students' holistic development and the broader cultural landscape of Zambia.

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