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Cultural Identity and Expression through Music Education in the Komenda Edina Eguafu Abrem Municipality

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Abstract: This study investigates how music education in Komenda Edina Eguafu Abrem (KEEA) Municipality of Ghana shapes and expresses learners' cultural identity. Drawing on Social Identity Theory and Cultural Transmission Theory situated in the interpretivist paradigm, using qualitative approach and case study design, the research explores the intersection of national policy reforms, indigenous musical traditions, and classroom practice. Data were collected from teachers, school administrators, learners, and community music practitioners through interviews, focus groups, classroom observations, and document analysis. Findings revealed that while Ghana's curriculum reforms and cultural policies aim to integrate indigenous music and foster cultural identity, implementation is hindered by limited teacher training, inadequate resources, and inconsistent school-community collaboration. Teachers and learners value indigenous music for its role in cultural expression and belonging, but Western music remains dominant in classroom practice. The study highlights the need for context-sensitive pedagogy, sustained community partnerships, and resource investment to bridge the gap between policy and practice. Recommendations are made for teacher professional development, curriculum reform, and increased engagement with local practitioners to ensure music education in KEEA supports the preservation and transmission of Ghana's rich musical heritage.

Keywords: Music Education, Cultural Identity, Indigenous Music, Curriculum Reform, Community Engagement, Cultural Transmission.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, music and culture are increasingly recognized as essential tools for identity formation, creative expression, and intercultural understanding. UNESCO frames culture and arts education as pivotal for sustainable development, global citizenship, and the appreciation of cultural diversity, as goals embedded in SDG 4.7. The 2024 draft *Framework for Culture and Arts Education* further emphasizes that music education contributes to social inclusion, creativity, individual and collective identity, and intercultural dialogue (UNESCO, 2025; McKoy, & Lind, 2022).

On the African continent, these global aims resonate strongly with longstanding traditions. Music has not been simply an art form but a medium of socialization, storytelling, moral education, and communal identity. Studies in South Africa show efforts to curriculum-recognized indigenous music education as a tool for cultural and national development (Yende, 2023). In Ghana, studies highlight the importance of

integrating multiple Ghanaian Languages and local music theory to achieve culturally responsive music pedagogy (Addaquay, 2024).

The intersection of global policy frameworks and African cultural-educational practices underscores the need to examine how music education in the Komenda Edina Eguafu Abrem Municipality reflects and shape cultural identity and expression.

In recent years, Ghana has implemented major curriculum reforms to make education more competency-based, creative, and culturally responsive. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA, 2019) introduced the Creative Arts and Design Curriculum as part of its standards-based reforms, emphasizing learner-centered approaches that nurture creativity, critical thinking, and cultural identity. The curriculum explicitly recognizes the arts, especially music, dance, and drama as essential element for transmitting Ghanaian cultural heritage and promoting

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national values of unity in diversity (NaCCA, 2019; Ministry of Education [MoE], 2020).

The Creative Arts curriculum encourages teachers to draw on local repertoires and community-based practices, thereby integrating indigenous music traditions into formal education. However, the extent of implementation varies, as many schools lack specialised music educators and adequate resources (Addaquay, 2024). Studies reveal that while curriculum policy supports local musical content, classroom practice often defaults to simplified Western songs and notation systems due to limited teacher training and instructional materials (Agbenyo *et al.*, 2025).

Recent Ghanaian scholarship underscores the need to strengthen teacher capacity and community participation in order to bridge the gap between policy and practice. Recent scholars in research argue that the dominance of Western-leaning theory marginalizes Ghanaian Languages and indigenous knowledge systems in music education, calling for pluralistic approaches that reflect Ghana's multilingual and multicultural context (Addaquay, 2024; Asare, 2022).

Ghana's cultural and educational policy framework establishes a clear mandate for integrating indigenous music into formal learning. However, effective implementation requires context-sensitive pedagogy, teacher professional development, and robust community-school partnerships to sustain Ghana's living musical heritage.

Although global and national education frameworks increasingly emphasize the integration of culture and creativity in learning, significant gaps remain in how these ideals are realized within local Ghanaian cultural contexts. The Creative Arts and Design Curriculum introduced by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA, 2019) aims to promote cultural identity, self-expression, and creativity through learner-centered pedagogy. However, research suggests that the practical implementation of these objectives across Ghana's regions is uneven, often constrained by inadequate teacher training and preparation, limited instructional resources, and weak community engagement (Addaquay, 2024).

In Komenda Edina Eguafo Abrem (KEEA) Municipality, which is rich in musical and cultural heritage, including Fante folk traditions, Asafo music, and festivals such as Bakatue, there is limited empirical documentation on how local music education reflects and sustains community identity. While schools in the municipality participate in national Creative Arts programmes, anecdotal evidence indicates that classroom music teaching remains largely theoretical and disconnected from indigenous musical practices and local cultural experiences. This disconnects risks eroding learners' sense of belonging and appreciation of their

heritage in favor of more Western-oriented curricular content (Asare, 2022).

Furthermore, few studies have examined how music education in KEEA Municipality serves as a medium for cultural identity formation and self-expression among learners. Most existing Ghanaian research address national-level curriculum design or teacher preparation but neglects the contextual realities of rural and semi-urban areas like KEEA (Addaquay, 2024). The lack of localized research limits understanding of how formal and informal music learning interact to shape learners' cultural consciousness.

These dynamics necessitate a comprehensive investigation into how music education in the Komenda Edina Eguafo Abrem Municipality fosters or constrains cultural identity and expressive continuity among learners. Such research provides essential insights for educators, policymakers, and community stakeholders seeking to enhance the cultural relevance of Ghana's music education system.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Clarifications on Culture

Culture encompasses the shared practices, values, beliefs, symbols and artefacts of a group, and the context in which music and education occur. In educational research, culture is seen as both a resource and a milieu for identity formation and meaning-making through music (Barton, & Riddle, 2022).

2.2 Cultural Identity

Cultural identity refers to how individuals align with particular cultural groups, internalize shared meanings, and negotiate belonging or difference with others (Barton, & Riddle, 2022). In music education contexts, cultural identity relates to how learners perceive themselves in relation to their musical heritage and the musical practices they engage with.

2.3 Expression

Expression in music education conveys how learners and communities use music to articulate emotions, values, cultural memories, and identities. Through participatory music-making, learners express both individual and collective voices (Campbell, 2022).

2.4 Music Education

Music education involves formal and informal learning of music, including skills (instrumental and vocal), knowledge (history and theory), musical participation (ensembles and performances), and cultural engagement. Recent Ghanaian research indicates that music education must move beyond technical Western-centric models to encompass culturally responsive practices (Addaquay, 2024).

2.5 Indigenous Music

Indigenous music refers to the musical traditions rooted in local communities, transmitted through communal and oral practices, often embedded in rituals, festivals, and everyday life. Research highlights how such music is under-represented in formal curricula despite its importance for cultural identity (Addaquay, 2024; Barton, & Riddle, 2022).

2.6 Relationship between Music and Cultural Identity

Indigenous music acts as both a mirror and a constructor of cultural identity. Studies show how traditional African music aids cultural preservation and identity formation (Barton, & Riddle, 2022). Within education, research has found that traditional music used in schools plays a pivotal role in transmitting cultural norms and values (Addaquay, 2024). The relationship is not one-dimensional; music can reinforce existing identities, facilitate the emergence of hybrid identities, and serve as a site of negotiation between global and local cultural influences (Barton, & Riddle, 2022).

2.7 Theoretical Underpinning

This study is grounded in two interrelated theories that provide a foundation for understanding the relationship between culture, identity, and music education: Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Cultural Transmission Theory. These frameworks together explain how individuals form and express cultural identity through musical participation and how indigenous music practices are sustained across generations.

Social Identity Theory offers insight into how group membership and participation in communal activities, such as music-making shape one's sense of belonging and collective identity (Barton, & Riddle, 2022). Within the educational setting, this theory helps to explain how learners in the Komenda Edina Eguafu Abrem Municipality (KEEA) construct their cultural identities through engagement in local music traditions.

With regards to Cultural Transmission Theory, Anglada-Tort *et al.*, (2023), on the other hand, emphasizes how cultural values, beliefs, and practices, including indigenous music, are passed on from one generation to another generation. It underscores the role of oral traditions, mentorship, and community participation in maintaining cultural continuity. In the context of this study, the theory helps illuminate how indigenous music functions as both a pedagogical tool and a medium of cultural preservation within music education in KEEA. These theories provide a lens through which the study explores how music education can serve as a platform for cultural identity formation and expression, while sustaining indigenous musical heritage in a rapidly changing educational environment.

2.8 Global Perspectives on Music, Culture, and Education

International policy frameworks over the past five years have placed renewed emphasis on culture and the arts as essential components of quality and inclusive education. The UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education (World Conference on Culture and Arts Education, February 2024) foregrounds culture and arts education as an “ecosystem” to be integrated across formal, non-formal, and informal learning contexts. The Framework argues that culture and arts education promote holistic human development, social inclusion, creativity, and intercultural dialogue, and calls on Member States to mainstream culture and arts learning in curricula, teacher education, and policy planning (UNESCO, 2024). Closely related, the operationalization and monitoring of SDG Target 4.7, education for sustainable development, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity, has been refined in recent UN guidance and metadata (UN Statistics & UNESCO, 2025), highlighting the need for countries to attach importance to teacher education and assessments including global citizenship and cultural learning.

Contemporary research shows that music education can directly promote identity formation, inclusion, and intercultural understanding when pedagogies are culturally responsive and participatory. Studies and reports from diverse contexts highlight that school music programmes that integrate local repertoires, invite community “culture-bearers,” and emphasize creative hands-on learning foster learners' cultural awareness, social belonging, and emotional expression (Murphy & Shortall, 2023). Empirical work in early childhood and school settings has also demonstrated that combining traditional and intercultural music materials supports children's aesthetic development and intercultural competence (Argyriou, 2025; Murphy & Shortall, 2023).

UNESCO's (2024) Framework flags structural obstacles, including uneven resource allocation, digital divides, and the need for teacher professional development to scale culturally relevant arts education. Academic analyses further caution about cultural homogenization and curriculum Westernization, the tendency for school music curricula to privilege Western classical and notation-based traditions at the expense of indigenous and participatory practices (Kivijärvi & Väkevä 2020; & Mantie, 2024). Such tendencies can marginalize local musical knowledge and weaken the capacity of music education to sustain community identity. Scholars therefore argue for curriculum redesigns that recognize multiple musical literacies, validate indigenous pedagogies, and build sustained school-community partnerships to ensure that music education is both locally meaningful and globally informed (UNESCO, 2024; Murphy & Shortall, 2023).

While international frameworks and research support the cultural and identity functions of music education, achieving these outcomes at the municipal or school level requires context-sensitive pedagogy, teacher support, and intentional inclusion of indigenous musical practices. The present study addresses this global policy-to-practice gap within the Komenda Edina Eguafo Abrem Municipality (KEEA).

2.9 African Perspectives on Music, Culture, and Identity

Music in African societies functions as a pervasive educational medium, serving socialization, storytelling, moral instruction, and identity formation rather than merely entertainment. Ethnomusicological and education studies emphasize the holistic role of African musical practices: songs, drumming, and performative rituals encode history and communal values, teach language and social norms, and mark life-cycle events and civic occasions (Lingold, 2023). In many communities, musical participation is a primary means through which children learn the collective memory and behavioural expectations of their people: learning occurs through observation, imitation, and active participation in communal performance rather than through abstract, classroom-only instruction (Lingold, 2023)

Contemporary African scholars have increasingly focused on indigenous music pedagogy, that is, how traditional modes of musical transmission can inform formal education. Studies have shown that blended approaches - combining community-based oral pedagogies with school programmes enhance learners' musical competencies and cultural rootedness (Yende, 2024; Yende, 2023). Parallel research calls for explicit inclusion of indigenous instruments, repertoires, and community culture-bearers in school programmes to sustain intergenerational transmission (Lingold, 2023).

Across the continent, governments and educators are experimenting with integrating traditional music into formal curricula, but implementation remains uneven. Case studies document pilot initiatives and curriculum revisions that seek to legitimize indigenous music, for example, African Music curricula in South African schools and exploratory programmes leveraging digital platforms to archive and teach traditional repertoires (Nyamwaka, 2025). Nevertheless, resource constraints, inadequate teacher preparation, and policy gaps continue to limit scale and impact (Agbenyo, 2025; Yende, 2024).

A persistent debate in the literature contrasts Western notation with oral and participatory traditions. Critics caution that curriculum Westernization, wherein school music privileges staff-centered notation, harmony, and Western classical repertoires, marginalizes vernacular musical literacies and undermines music's social functions in African contexts (Nyamwaka, 2025).

Advocates for decolonizing music education call for plural pedagogies that validate oral transmission, contextual listening, improvisation, and community apprenticeship as legitimate knowledge forms within school music (Yende, 2024). These debates are directly relevant to the Komenda Edina Eguafo Abrem Municipality: understanding local practices and teacher capacities will be crucial for designing culturally responsive music education that sustains identity while meeting national curriculum goals.

2.10 Music, Culture, and Education in Ghana

Ghana's education system has undergone significant reforms aimed at strengthening the place of music and culture in teaching and learning. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA, 2019) introduced the Standards-Based Curriculum for Kindergarten to Basic Six, which emphasizes creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Within this new framework, Creative Arts, which integrates music, dance, drama, and visual arts, has been designed to promote cultural appreciation and creative expression among learners. The Ministry of Education (MoE, 2020) further reinforced these goals through the Common Core Programme for Basic Seven to Basic Ten, ensuring continuity and progression in the development of artistic and cultural competencies. These reforms signify a deliberate policy shift toward holistic education that values the creative and cultural dimensions of learning alongside literacy and numeracy.

National cultural policies in Ghana have also played a significant role in shaping the direction of Creative Arts and Design education. The Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC), through the National Cultural Policy, has emphasized the need to preserve Ghana's cultural heritage while promoting the creative industries for socio-economic development (Asare, 2022). The policy advocates integrating cultural education into the national curriculum to strengthen national identity and foster appreciation for indigenous traditions. UNESCO-supported reviews and cultural initiatives have also encouraged collaboration between MOTAC and the Ministry of Education to ensure that cultural education becomes a practical component of formal schooling rather than an extracurricular activity. Despite these positive intentions, implementing such policies has faced challenges due to weak coordination among agencies and inadequate resourcing of the Creative Arts sector in schools (Asare, 2022).

Ghanaian researchers have contributed significantly to the discourse on integrating indigenous music into the formal education system. Isabirye (2021) highlights the pedagogical importance of indigenous Ghanaian music forms such as highlife, traditional drumming, and folk songs in fostering cultural identity and student engagement. Music educators argue that indigenous music provides a more relatable learning context for learners, linking musical experiences to their

daily lives and community values and that integrating indigenous music in schools enhances participation, creativity, and moral development as in consonance with the goals of the NaCCA (2019) curriculum reforms.

However, several challenges hinder the full realization of these reforms and the implementation of the basic school curriculum. Teacher training remains one of the most critical issues as many teachers at the basic level have limited training in music education, particularly in indigenous forms. As a result, they often feel unprepared to teach the Music aspect of the Creative Arts. Pre-service teacher education programmes, especially in Colleges of Education, tend to prioritize literacy, Sciences, and numeracy leaving minimal time for specialised arts training programmes. In-service professional development opportunities in Music and Dance are also rare, making it difficult for teachers to update their skills to be culturally responsive to traditional music pedagogies. The lack of trained music educators has contributed to the inconsistent implementation of the Creative Arts curriculum across all levels of education in Ghana.

Resource constraints further compound the problem as most schools in Ghana lack adequate teaching and learning materials for music education. Instruments such as drums, rattles, and xylophones, essential tools for practical music-making, are often unavailable. Schools in rural areas, where many indigenous traditions remain vibrant are particularly affected by the lack of structured support and resources to translate community knowledge into classroom instruction. In addition, insufficient instructional time allocated to Creative Arts subjects and the prioritization of examinable core subjects discourage teachers from devoting meaningful attention to music. Assessment practices also remain largely theoretical, with limited emphasis on performance, creativity, and cultural understanding, which are central to music education (MoE, 2020).

These challenges reflect a broader tension between policy and practice. While educational and cultural policies acknowledge the importance of integrating music and cultural heritage in education, systemic barriers, such as teacher preparation, inadequate funding, and poor coordination, limit progress (NaCCA, 2019). The absence of collaboration between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture weakens the implementation of policy frameworks designed to promote cultural sustainability through education. Moreover, the examination-oriented nature of Ghana's education system continues to marginalize non-core subjects such as Creative Arts, despite their potential to contribute to holistic learning and national identity formation (Asare, 2022).

To move forward, regular in-service training programmes and continuous professional development should be organized to build teachers' competence and confidence in delivering culturally responsive music instruction. Collaboration with local artists and cultural practitioners can provide practical mentorship to ensure the authenticity of classroom experiences (Addaquay, 2024). Additionally, developing regionally grounded teaching materials that reflect local music traditions would support teachers and make lessons more relevant to learners' cultural contexts. Curriculum assessment practices should also be revised to include performance-based evaluation that values creativity, participation, and cultural understanding (Arko-Mensah & Agyeiwaah, 2023).

Ghana's recent educational reforms, national cultural policies, and scholarly contributions collectively affirm the importance of integrating music and indigenous culture into the education system. The standards-based curriculum introduced by NaCCA (2019) and the MoE (2020) framework create a strong foundation for nurturing creativity and cultural identity among learners. Research by Ghanaian scholars such as (Arko-Mensah & Agyeiwaah 2024) demonstrates that indigenous music can serve as a powerful tool for education, fostering both artistic and moral development. Nevertheless, realizing these ideals requires addressing persistent challenges related to teacher training, curriculum implementation, and resource availability. Strengthening inter-ministerial collaboration, investing in teacher capacity, and providing culturally grounded learning resources will ensure that music education in Ghana truly reflects the country's rich cultural heritage while equipping learners for creative futures.

2.11 Indigenous Music and Cultural Identity Formation

Indigenous music plays a fundamental role in shaping learners' understanding of self, heritage, and belonging to the community in Ghana. By engaging with local musical traditions, learners not only acquire musical skills but also develop a sense of identity rooted in their communities' cultural history (Addaquay, 2024). Participation in indigenous music activities, such as singing folk songs or learning drum patterns, allows learners to connect with ancestral practices, reinforcing their understanding of the values, beliefs, and social norms that define their cultural heritage (Arko-Mensah & Agyeiwaah, 2023). In doing so, music becomes both a medium and a marker of identity, enabling learners to situate themselves within a broader communal and historical context.

Language, performance, and communal participation are central to the transmission of indigenous music and the reinforcement of cultural identity. Many traditional songs are composed in local Languages embedding linguistic nuances, proverbs, and moral lessons within the musical experience (Addaquay,

2024). This use of Language not only fosters linguistic competence but also deepens learners' appreciation for their mother tongue as a vessel of cultural expression. Performance practices, including call-and-response singing, group drumming, and choreographed dance movements, encourage active participation, collaboration, and social cohesion. Through these collective performances, learners internalize social values such as respect, cooperation, and responsibility, which are integral to their communities' cultural frameworks.

Traditional musical forms such as singing and dancing, drumming, and festival performances serve as key mechanisms for reinforcing cultural continuity. In the Fante communities of the Central Region, festivals like the Aboakyer and Oguaa Fetu Afahye are accompanied by distinct drumming rhythms, dance routines, and ceremonial songs that narrate historical events and communal myths (Asare, 2022). When learners are engaged in these music forms in school or community settings, they help perpetuate these cultural narratives, ensuring that knowledge and practices are transmitted across generations. Drumming patterns, in particular, often function as coded communication, linking learners to historical storytelling, spiritual practices, and social hierarchies, thereby reinforcing their understanding of communal identity and heritage.

2.12 Challenges in Integrating Indigenous Music into Formal Education

Integrating indigenous music into formal education in Ghana and across Africa faces multiple interrelated challenges. Many teachers responsible for teaching music or Creative Arts lack specialist backgrounds in music, particularly in indigenous pedagogies, which undermines their confidence and effectiveness in delivering culturally relevant lessons (Asare, 2022; Ghunney, 2015). Without sufficient pre-service or in-service training, teachers often default to familiar Western music models or provide minimal coverage of local musical content. Studies show that Ghanaian music curricula, as well as higher-education programmes in music, heavily emphasize Western notation, theory, and instruments, often marginalizing indigenous instruments and participatory musical practices (Addaquay, 2024; Asare, 2022; & Ghunney, 2015). This creates a disconnect between learners' home musical worlds and the formal classroom environment, limiting the relevance of lessons and constraining learners' cultural identity formation.

Research conducted in Ghanaian basic schools indicates that textbooks, teaching aids, and indigenous musical instruments are often scarce or unavailable, and classroom spaces are typically inadequate for active, participatory music-making (Netshivhambe, 2024). Even when the curriculum encourages the inclusion of local music, inadequate resources prevent teachers from effectively implementing culturally responsive lessons.

Indigenous music is often transmitted orally within families and community settings, but formal schools rarely integrate local culture-bearers into classroom teaching. As a result, the link between school music education and community musical life remains weak, undermining the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge (Prest, 2020).

Despite these challenges, Ghanaian and broader African studies highlight several strategies for successfully integrating indigenous music. In South Africa, effective programmes incorporated community musicians and participatory learning approaches to embed indigenous music meaningfully within the curriculum. Diamond (2023) and Addaquay (2024) demonstrate that incorporating local Languages alongside Western-oriented music theory enhances cultural relevance and learner engagement. Similarly, studies on the use of folk resources in Ghanaian basic schools reveal that teachers who creatively leverage community-based instruments, folk songs, and oral traditions are better able to deliver meaningful and culturally affirming music lessons (Mpandashulu, 2024). Public advocacy and policy reports further emphasize the role of school, community partnerships and resource provision to sustain indigenous musical heritage (Prest, 2020). Collectively, these findings suggest that integrating indigenous music into formal education requires deliberate support in teacher training, curriculum design, resource allocation, and community engagement, all of which are critical for implementing culturally responsive music education in the Komenda Edina Eguafu Abrem Municipality.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study employed qualitative approach situated in inter pretivist research paradigm to examine how music education influences learners' cultural identity and expression in the KEEA Municipality. A qualitative approach facilitates an in-depth understanding of participants lived experiences, perceptions, and interactions with both indigenous and formal music curricula (Creswell & Poth, 2023). It further enables the exploration of context-specific factors such as teacher pedagogical practices, community involvement, and local musical traditions, which may not be adequately captured through quantitative methods. The study adopts a case study design, focusing on selected Basic and Junior High Schools within the KEEA Municipality. The case study approach is appropriate for examining complex social and educational phenomena within their real-life contexts and is particularly suitable for investigating culturally embedded educational practices such as music education (Williamson, *et al.*, 2021). The study involved 10 teachers, 10 head teachers, 10 learners and 10 community members purposively selected from 20 schools across the Municipality. Teachers and headteachers were selected based on their active involvement in Creative Arts instruction, while learners were drawn from classes actively engaged in

music-related activities. Community music practitioners were identified through school recommendations and local cultural networks. This sampling approach ensured the inclusion of information-rich participants capable of providing meaningful insights into the research phenomenon (Patton, 2020). This sample size was considered based on the qualitative sample frame of Adler and Adler (2012) on homogeneity of the sample for qualitative studies. Additionally, Creswell (2009) further argues that selecting a large number of interviewees will result in superficial perspective and the overall ability of a researcher to provide an in-depth picture diminishes. The sample size was guided by the principle of data saturation, where data collection continues until no new themes or emerge (Guest *et al.*, 2020).

3.1 Data Collection Methods

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers, headteachers, and community music practitioners. An interview guide was used to explore participants' perceptions of music education, the integration of indigenous music, pedagogical challenges, and perceived impacts on learners' cultural identity through open-ended questions to allow participants provide detailed narratives and clarifications.

3.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Focus group discussions were conducted with learners to explore their shared experiences of music education, using indigenous songs for demonstration and explanation of concepts as well as perceptions of cultural identity and expression. The participants were organized into eight focus groups of five participants to ensure active participation, balanced interaction, and effective moderation. The use of FGDs was academically justified, as focus group methodology literature recommends group sizes of 6-10 participants for optimal interaction and depth of discussion. Smaller groups were deemed appropriate given the age of the learners and the need to create a comfortable environment that encourages open expression. Conducting multiple focus groups also enhanced the credibility of findings by allowing comparison of emerging themes across groups and supporting data saturation (Akyıldız, & Ahmed, 2021).

3.3 Classroom Observations

Classroom observations were conducted twice during music lessons to document teaching practices, the use of indigenous instruments, participatory learning methods, and learner engagement. Observation checklists were developed in line with the research objectives to ensure systematic data collection.

3.4 Data Analysis

Relevant documents, including Creative Arts curricula, lesson plans, were reviewed to examine formal approaches to the teaching and learning of music education and the extent to which indigenous music

content is incorporated. Data from interviews, FGDs, classroom observations, and document analysis were analyzed using thematic analysis. All audio-recorded data were transcribed verbatim and coded inductively to identify recurring themes and patterns related to music education practices, cultural identity formation, and challenges in integrating indigenous music. NVivo software was employed for coding to ensure systematic analysis. Triangulation across multiple data sources (interviews, FGDs, observations) were used to enhance credibility and validity of findings (Nowell *et al.*, 2017). Triangulation across multiple data sources enhanced the credibility and validity of the findings (Kraiwani *et al.*, 2023).

4.5 Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, confidentiality and anonymity were ensured through the use of participant codes rather than real names. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. Permission was obtained from school authorities, and community leaders prior to data collection. The trustworthiness of the study was ensured through triangulation of data sources and methods (interviews, FGDs, observations, and documents). Member checking, whereby preliminary findings were shared with selected participants for validation. Maintenance of an audit trail documenting methodological decisions, data collection procedures, and analytical processes to enhance dependability and confirmability.

3.6 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Background and Experience of Teachers

The study revealed that songs introduced to participants during their course of study and at their professional development training sessions were mostly Western music with limited exposure to indigenous songs as participant 'D' remarked: *"The songs my Tutors used when I was in college were mostly Western songs. They scarcely used our own traditional songs so I don't have any idea about the usage of our traditional songs for teaching. At our professional training session, the story has not been different.* Most teachers who teach Music and Dance neither have background in Music Education nor specialised in music and that their ability to teach Music and Dance was low because they do not have the skill to engage learners in musical activities let alone incorporating indigenous songs in their lesson. These have negative effect on the learners in that; the school is depriving the learners from developing positive attitude to culture. This finding corroborates an earlier finding where Nompula (2012) argues that teachers do not know how to integrate the different areas of arts and culture, despite having theoretical ideas of how to do it. This shortfall created the situation where each teacher taught only a selected aspect of the curriculum in their lessons, thereby neglecting the other aspects; a practice that fails to meet the holistic learner-development expectation of the Creative Art curriculum.

The disconnects between teacher preparation and local musical heritage means educators often lack the skills and confidence to facilitate music education that affirms and expresses learner's cultural identities. This affirms (Yeboah, 2021; Komabu, & Dawson, 2024) that systemic bias in training can inhibit the incorporation of indigenous music into classroom practice, making it difficult to use music education as a tool for cultural identity formation.

The study revealed that cultural custodians in KEEA Municipality such as master drummers in ensembles such as *adowa*, *kete*, *fɔntɔmfɔm*, *apatampa*, were usually engaged during special school events such as speech and prize and awards days to train the learners rather than regular teaching. This episodic involvement limits the transmission of cultural knowledge through music education. Both practitioners and schools desire more sustained collaboration, which scholars identify as crucial for effective cultural identity formation (Nutekpor, 2023).

3.7 Curriculum Implementation

Despite curricular constraints, teachers made deliberate efforts to include local music forms such as folk songs, storytelling, and community traditions in lessons. However, these efforts were carried out individually rather than systemic, as curricula designers and implementors often prioritize the use of Western instruments and repertoire. As participants 'K' remarked, *"I am not familiar with the suggested songs in the syllabus so I try to use the songs I learnt from the community. In most cases, most of the songs were not relevant to the topic but I had no option than to use it"*. This limits the consistent use of music education to nurture and express cultural identity among learners. Scholars emphasize that without place-based, flexible curricula, the potential of music education to reinforce cultural identity remains underutilized (Schaller, 2021; Matsunobu, & Hebert, 2025).

3.8 Lack of Resources

Persistent lack of resources especially indigenous instruments and songbooks further undermines teachers' ability to center music education on culture. Teachers complained about lack of traditional musical instruments like drums, castanet, xylophone and other traditional instruments, which are essential and cannot be left out in musical performance as well as cultural expression as in consonant with (Simonette, 2024). Participants recounted the challenges they faced whenever they try to engage learners in musical activities owing to unavailability of musical instruments in the schools. Participant 'H' remarked that *there is not a single musical instrument in our school that could be used for teaching and learning. However, I try to improvise by using milo and milk tins as well as tables anytime I want to use music to introduce my lesson"*.

Resource allocation for indigenous music is sporadic, often tied to special events rather than sustained programming. This limits opportunities for learners to engage in music as a living expression of their culture. The need for dedicated funding for local instruments and regular collaboration with community musicians to ensure music education contributes meaningfully to cultural identity. These factors reduce the visibility and value of local musical traditions, thereby weakening their role in cultural identity formation.

Despite these challenges, participants recognized that indigenous songs foster a sense of belonging and cultural identity among learners and that if learners perform songs from their own heritage, they feel more connected to who they are. They advocated for policy reforms and stronger school-community partnerships to leverage music education for cultural identity development. Current scholars support the need for both systemic change and grassroots engagement (Alnajem, 2024; Kertz-Welzel, 2021).

Singing indigenous songs in schools boost learners' engagement and strengthens connections to the Ghanaian cultural heritage. Boakye and Ampiah (2020) support the view that culturally relevant music education affirms the worth of learners' backgrounds and encourages authentic self-expression. Learners described singing in their mother tongue and learning local songs as experiences that help them express their personal and communal identities. Learner 'C' shared her view that: *"When I sing a song in my mother tongue, I feel at home and connected to the people around me"*. It is therefore important that learners are made to sing indigenous songs to sustain their interest in lessons and to help them develop interest in their culture. Singing indigenous song would not only help learners develop positive attitude towards the Ghanaian culture but also learn moral values in that most of the traditional songs are imbued with moral values. Therefore, by embedding moral principles in the fabric of indigenous songs, teachers can guide children towards responsible behaviour and positive societal contributions as learners mature into adulthood.

3.9 CONCLUSION

The study revealed that music education has the potential to shape and express cultural identity, but this potential is constrained by systemic biases, inadequate qualified teachers, lack of resources, and infrequent collaboration with cultural custodians. Where indigenous music was included, learners experienced greater confidence and involvement, as well as cultural connectivity. To realize the full potential of music education as a foundation and bed rock for cultural identity, reforms are needed in teacher training curriculum, resource allocation, and school-community partnership.

Recommendations

A review of College of Education Music and Dance curriculum by curriculum designers and all stakeholders in education to require immersive practical modules on indigenous music, including fieldwork with traditional musicians and cultural custodians so that teachers are fully equipped to use indigenous songs as a means for cultural perpetuation as well as shaping and expressing learners' cultural identity.

Teachers expressed a desire for more professional development with local musicians and greater institutional support for indigenous music education and that, partnering with cultural custodians and targeted training can empower teachers to use music education as a platform for cultural identity formation and expression.

There is the need for KEEA Municipal Assembly to create a fund dedicated for purchasing, sharing and maintaining indigenous musical instruments and songbooks, as well as ensuring that every school has material resources needed to facilitate music education that truly reflects and builds cultural identity. Investing in indigenous music resources and formalizing school-community partnerships to ensure music education sustains and celebrates cultural identity could be ideal.

Teachers should integrate regular learners-led performances and creative projects that highlight local language and cultural stories into the school as a means of providing learners the opportunities to express and develop their cultural identity through indigenous songs.

The Municipal Directorate of education in KEEA should establish a formal partnership programme that embeds local cultural custodians as resource persons in schools, ensuring learners benefit from authentic, community-rooted cultural identity.

Future research will employ the role of traditional music in child development as well as the influence of contemporary music on child development.

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