

Abstract

This article builds on enquiry aimed to discover Kenyan music teachers' perceptions and expectations of their role; their view of the training they received; head teachers' perceptions and expectations of the role of the music teacher; and the expectations of both music teachers and head teachers of a music teacher education programme in Kenya. The findings have steered a discussion towards suggestions for an improved framework to guide teacher education for music at all levels of education in Kenya.

Through questionnaires, a sample of 16 music teachers and 11 head teachers recorded their opinion that teachers were not adequately prepared to implement the music programmes; that the role of the music teacher covered in and out of class activities; and that this expectation could only be accomplished with proper academic and professional training. Guided by principles of indigenous African education and learning conceptual orientations, the discussions led to recommendations that call for better grounding of music teachers in the processes of music and ability to facilitate music learning.

Music in the public (government) schools in Kenya is a paradox. In early childhood education, music means singing at various intervals of the school day. In primary school, it is combined with fine art as a non-examinable subject called creative arts. In secondary school, it is an elective subject, presenting relatively few students for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE), a national examination that comes at the end of the secondary school cycle. The teacher training colleges (TTCs) have music in the timetable, with a singing content in the curriculum. At university, only two of the seven government institutions provide music as a subject. There is no middle-level music college. Yet song, dance and instrument playing characterize a range of activities in learning institutions. These include participation in the annual Kenya Music Festival competitions that involve thousands of pupils from nursery school to university.

In this environment, the music teacher is an undefined entity. Where music is taught, the teacher is expected to be well-trained and competent, supported by academic certificates and validated by students' examination results. Elsewhere, the music teacher is a choir trainer whose qualifications in music appear not to matter. Yet if music teachers were to impart knowledge and skills to learners through music, they would presumably require an understanding of how music works and the nature and concept of music. They would need to be familiar with diverse music types and have the ability to create and interpret music. Music teaching requires the ability to communicate these attributes of music, and to employ music in diverse circumstances to facilitate learning. This study sought to gauge school head teachers' and music teachers' perception of the latter's preparedness for such a role.

Background

In Kenya, government and private – mostly church-based – learning institutions offer teacher education. There are three levels of qualification:

1. Certificate in Education is awarded to graduates of a three-year post-secondary education prepared as generalist teachers for the primary school;

2.

Diploma in Education is awarded after three years of post-secondary education in either humanities or sciences to semi-specialized teachers for secondary school;

3.

A bachelor of education degree is awarded after four years of post-secondary training in two subjects with graduates destined for secondary school or teacher training college.

All three types of qualification are categorized as professional. The TTCs and diploma colleges follow a national syllabus, and candidates are assessed through a common examination. At the university level, each institution sets its own curriculum, seeing that each is governed by its particular charter. Since the curriculum is uniform at the lower levels of training, there are common provisions for teacher education in the country. The Ministry of Education has specific units that develop, monitor the implementation of and assess the outcome of the curriculum for primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. The Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) is the curriculum developer for all subjects, with objectives to enable the country to achieve broadly stated national goals that reflect its ethos and philosophy. These include enhancing culture and developing creativity, areas served well by music and other performing and creative arts in the curriculum. The Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards (DQAS), formerly the Inspectorate, is charged with monitoring quality in education, and standards. Examination matters rest with the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC). It sets, administers and oversees examinations for primary, secondary and post-secondary learning programmes, excluding university. The Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) is the employer of teachers for the state-funded institutions, once more excluding universities.¹