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Can indigenous music learning processes inform contemporary schooling?

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Abstract

This autoethnographic study investigated possibility of incorporating indigenous pedagogies into Ugandan school music and, possibly, general education. School music education in Uganda currently occurs within a colonial-influenced system that does not connect with learners' indigenous cultures. The colonial system fosters belief that "western" is modernity and "indigenous" is backwardness that should be erased. School music learning is currently experienced in a teacher-dominated, "banking" (Freire, 1970) school system that disempowers learners and produces graduates who cannot address the musical needs of their worlds. Ugandan government measures to improve music and general education have not improved the situation. Literature on the role that indigenous pedagogies could play in a contemporary music education is limited. Through this study, I sought to understand what might happen when indigenous education pedagogies are incorporated in a contemporary, formal school setting. Informed by relevant literature, I interrogated and analyzed my own learning and teaching experiences in Ugandan communities and schools and found that embedding indigenous learning and teaching processes in music classrooms fostered growth in learner leadership, ownership, agency, and identity in the context of mutually shared participatory experiences that learners found relevant and meaningful—experiences that engendered joyful, passionate, collaborative learning, and reification of reflective practice among learners.

Keywords

Cultural relevancy in education, decolonizing music education, indigenous music education, social constructivist music education, transforming music education

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