



REVIEW ARTICLE

INTEGRATING ELECTRONIC MUSIC DEVICES INTO LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL MUSIC EDUCATION IN GULU CITY, UGANDA: PEDAGOGICAL AFFORDANCES, INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGES, AND EMERGING HYBRID MODELS

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ABSTRACT

Background: Electronic music devices are reshaping music pedagogy globally, yet evidence on their deployment in post-conflict urban settings in sub-Saharan Africa remains scarce. Lower secondary schools in Gulu City, Northern Uganda, have begun acquiring digital keyboards and music software, yet systematic evidence on their pedagogical deployment, affordances, and structural barriers to effective use is absent from the literature. **Objectives:** This study investigated the pedagogical affordances of electronic music devices in lower secondary school music education in Gulu City, identified infrastructure challenges constraining their integration, and examined hybrid instructional models constructed by teachers and community musicians. **Methods:** A qualitative mixed-methods design was employed. Purposive sampling was used to select five lower secondary schools in Gulu City. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with twelve music teachers, four focus group discussions with sixty students across Senior One to Senior Four levels, structured interviews with five school administrators, and key informant interviews with four community musicians. Thematic analysis guided data organisation and interpretation, cross-referenced against the Technology Acceptance Model and constructivist learning theory. **Results:** Three themes emerged. First, electronic devices expanded students' creative and compositional capacities and enhanced multimodal engagement, though pedagogical value was mediated by teacher competence and instructional intent. Second, unreliable electricity supply, inadequate maintenance budgets, and limited internet connectivity constituted persistent structural barriers that truncated the devices' instructional potential. Third, teachers and community musicians were collaboratively constructing hybrid models that wove digital tools with traditional Acholi musical practices, producing culturally responsive and contextually adaptive pedagogical approaches. **Conclusions:** Electronic music devices hold genuine promise for transforming lower secondary music education in Gulu City when embedded within sound pedagogical frameworks, supported by adequate infrastructure, and anchored in local cultural knowledge. Targeted investment in school electricity, in-service teacher training, and formalised community musician partnerships are recommended.

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INTRODUCTION

Music education in sub-Saharan African secondary schools is undergoing a quiet but consequential transformation. Across the region, electronic music devices including digital keyboards, computers installed with audio software, Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) controllers, loop stations, and smartphones loaded with music applications are entering classrooms that were, until recently, equipped only with acoustic instruments and chalkboards (1,2). This technological infusion carries significant pedagogical promise: electronic devices can expand students' compositional capacities, support multimodal engagement, and create new pathways for musical creativity that align with competence-based curriculum frameworks increasingly adopted across the continent (3,4).

Yet the conditions under which these devices are deployed, and the extent to which they genuinely enhance learning, remain incompletely understood particularly in low-resource post-conflict settings where infrastructure gaps and cultural dynamics complicate straightforward adoption narratives (5,6). Uganda's lower secondary curriculum, introduced through the Revised Lower Secondary Curriculum of 2020, emphasises competence-based learning across all subjects, including music (4). The curriculum explicitly calls for learners to develop practical musical skills, creative expression, and cultural appreciation goals that electronic music devices, in principle, are well-positioned to support (4,5). In practice, however, the integration of these devices into Ugandan secondary school music classrooms is uneven, contested, and structurally constrained. Teachers report enthusiasm for the