

# Unveiling Barriers: Challenges to Access High-Quality Education in South African Music Schools for Underprivileged and Marginalised Communities



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## ABSTRACT

South Africa's music education landscape stands at the intersection of historical legacies, socio-economic disparities, and cultural intricacies, posing formidable challenges for underprivileged and marginalised communities. Despite strides made since the post-apartheid era, high-quality music education remains an elusive pursuit for many aspiring musicians. This study used a qualitative approach to explore and dissect the multifaceted challenges that hinder access to quality education within South African music schools. Adopting a descriptive phenomenological research design, this investigation involved ten music lecturers from diverse universities using the snowball sampling procedure. The interviews conducted using Microsoft Team, Zoom, and Google Team served as the primary means of data collection. Colaizzi's phenomenological data analysis technique was applied to distil rich insights from the participants' narratives, offering an in-depth exploration of their experiences and perceptions. The study unravels four overarching themes, each shedding light on critical aspects of the challenges faced by underprivileged and marginalised communities in South African music education. These themes include the music lecturers' perspectives on inclusivity and diversity in the music education curriculum, the challenges encountered by students from underprivileged backgrounds, the socio-economic impact on student engagement, and the role of cultural representation in creating an enriching educational environment. The study concludes that South African music education faces challenges related to inclusivity, diversity, socio-economic disparities, and cultural representation, which hinder access for underprivileged communities. Recommendations include revising the curriculum to incorporate diverse cultural perspectives, implementing support systems for underprivileged students, addressing socio-economic barriers through policies and initiatives, and enhancing cultural representation in music education.

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## INTRODUCTION

It is essential to emphasise the introduction of this study by providing a contextual framework to understand the complexities surrounding South Africa's music education landscape. The intersection of historical legacy, socio-economic inequities, and cultural nuances creates a dynamic and challenging landscape, especially for marginalized and disadvantaged people. By identifying these intersecting factors,

this study acknowledges the complex fabric that forms the learning experiences of aspiring musicians in South Africa.

Several studies have been engaged with the challenges faced by South African universities of music in underprivileged and marginalised communities.<sup>1</sup> For example, the historical legacies, deeply embedded in the nation's past, cast a long shadow over contemporary music education.<sup>2</sup> The remnants of apartheid and the historical injustices associated with it create a backdrop against which access to high-quality music education becomes a nuanced and often elusive pursuit.<sup>3</sup> The socio-economic disparities that have further compounded these challenges, as economic inequities may limit the opportunities available to individuals aspiring to engage with music education in a meaningful way,<sup>4</sup> while other scholars have highlighted the impact of cultural intricacies that introduce yet another layer, emphasising the importance of recognising and appreciating diverse cultural backgrounds in the pursuit of an enriched musical education.<sup>5</sup> These studies have been conducted in different contexts but they still provide a context upon which the challenges to accessing high-quality education in South African music schools for underprivileged and marginalised communities can be understood.

Despite the strides made since the post-apartheid era, a discernible gap persists in the literature on the specific challenges faced by underprivileged and marginalised communities in South African music education. The experiences of music lecturers, crucial agents in shaping the educational landscape, remain inadequately documented. This study seeks to address this gap by adopting a descriptive phenomenological research design to explore and articulate the nuanced challenges faced by these communities, providing a more holistic understanding of the barriers that obstruct high-quality music education.<sup>6</sup> The motivation behind this research lies in the recognition of the transformative power of music education and its potential to empower individuals from all walks of life. By identifying and understanding the obstacles faced by underprivileged and marginalised communities, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on educational equity. This study is driven by the aspiration to inform interventions, policy changes, and pedagogical approaches that foster a more inclusive and equitable music education landscape in South Africa. Ultimately, the research seeks to catalyse positive changes, promoting educational equity and creating pathways for individuals in underprivileged and marginalised communities to access the enriching world of high-quality music education. The following primary research questions were developed to seek answers that would clarify the ongoing crisis:

- a) What is the limited representation of diverse musical traditions in South African higher education?
- b) What are the challenges faced by underprivileged students?
- c) What are the socio-economic factors affecting student engagement?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Historical Legacies in South African Music Education*

The enduring impact of apartheid on South Africa's educational framework, particularly within the domain of music education, remains a profound and complex phenomenon. Apartheid policies, deeply rooted in discriminatory practices, have engendered deep-rooted disparities that persist in shaping access to quality education for both educators and students.<sup>7</sup> These historical legacies have significantly shaped the current

<sup>1</sup> Ndwamato George Mugovhani, "The Demise of Indigenous African Music in South African Schools and Institutions of Higher Learning," *African Musicology Online* 39 (2011): 1–22; Sakhiseni Joseph Yende and Nsizwazonke E Yende, "The Quest for Curricularisation of UMaskandi Zulu Traditional Music in Higher Education in the Context of Africanisation," *Journal of African Education* 3, no. 1 (2022): 103.

<sup>2</sup> Mugovhani, "The Demise of Indigenous African Music in South African Schools and Institutions of Higher Learning."

<sup>3</sup> Samson Diamond, "Transformative Teacher Training Strategies of Stringed Instruments in South African Community Music Programmes" (University of the Free State, 2023); Sibongile Margaret Mkhombo, "The Status of Indigenous Music in the South African School Curriculum with Special Reference to IsiZulu" (University of South Africa, 2019)..

<sup>4</sup> Mugovhani, "The Demise of Indigenous African Music in South African Schools and Institutions of Higher Learning."

<sup>5</sup> Zahra Al-Zadjali, "The Significance of Art in Revealing a Culture's Identity and Multiculturalism," *Open Journal of Social Sciences* 12, no. 1 (2024): 232–50; Boudina McConnachie, "Indigenous and Traditional Musics in the School Classroom: A Re-Evaluation of the South African Indigenous African Music (IAM) Curriculum" (Rhodes University, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> Yende and Yende, "The Quest for Curricularisation of UMaskandi Zulu Traditional Music in Higher Education in the Context of Africanisation."

<sup>7</sup> Mugovhani, "The Demise of Indigenous African Music in South African Schools and Institutions of Higher Learning"; Matthew McKeever, "Educational Inequality in Apartheid South Africa," *American Behavioral Scientist* 61, no. 1 (2017): 114–31; Elizabeth Walton and Petra Engelbrecht, "Inclusive Education in South Africa: Path Dependencies and Emergences," *International Journal of Inclusive*

educational landscape, impacting the allocation of resources, opportunities, and the overall structure of music education. Studies reveal the persistent effects of apartheid, highlighting the ongoing barriers that marginalized communities face in accessing equitable music education. Historical analyses uncover the multifaceted obstacles that obstruct these communities' pursuit of quality education, offering critical insights into the historical context and the interconnected factors contributing to existing disparities in South African music education.

### ***Cultural Representation and Inclusivity in Music Education***

Within the realm of music education, the imperative of cultural representation emerges as the cornerstone for fostering an inclusive and enriching learning environment.<sup>8</sup> Recognising the diversity of cultural perspectives is vital to creating a curriculum that resonates with the varied backgrounds of students, ensuring their participation and participation in the educational process. The absence of diverse cultural elements within the curriculum poses a significant challenge, hindering students' access to a holistic and comprehensive musical education. Research consistently emphasizes the importance of integrating diverse cultural elements into the fabric of music education.<sup>9</sup> These studies reveal that the absence of diverse cultural elements can limit students' access to a comprehensive music education and exacerbate feelings of alienation. Addressing these issues by integrating diverse musical traditions into the curriculum can provide valuable insight into overcoming disparities in South African music schools, particularly in underprivileged communities. This approach aligns with transformative pedagogical strategies that aim to create a more inclusive and representative educational environment.<sup>10</sup>

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical underpinning of this study draws from Critical Pedagogy, a paradigm first proposed by Paulo Freire and subsequently expanded upon by scholars such as Henry Giroux.<sup>11</sup> This chosen theoretical lens proves apt for addressing the intricate challenges pervasive in South African music education, particularly concerning historical legacies, socio-economic disparities, and cultural intricacies. Critical Pedagogy's foundational principles align seamlessly with the study's objectives, emphasising the comprehension and challenging of power dynamics, the promotion of inclusivity and diversity, and the advocacy for social justice within educational settings.<sup>12</sup> In the context of South Africa's post-apartheid era, where historical inequalities endure, Critical Pedagogy emerges as a pertinent framework for unravelling and rectifying these imbalances. This theoretical approach empowers educators and students alike to critically examine and address systemic issues, thus fostering a more inclusive and equitable music education landscape.<sup>13</sup> It distinctly acknowledges the significance of integrating diverse cultural elements into the curriculum, ensuring representation and relevance for all students, irrespective of their socio-economic background or cultural heritage.<sup>14</sup> The selection of Critical Pedagogy as the theoretical framework is substantiated by its direct alignment with the study's goals, emphasising transformative change, the empowerment of marginalised communities, and the promotion of inclusive practices within the unique context of South African music education.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In this comprehensive research effort, the qualitative research methodology was at the centre of attention, specifically employing the descriptive phenomenology design. The justification for opting for this design

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*Education* 28, no. 10 (2024): 2138–56; Sakhiseni J Yende, “Effectiveness of Music Education in Developing and Fostering Reading and Writing for Learners,” *Reading & Writing* 14, no. 1 (2023): 1–10.

<sup>8</sup> Tracy Jane Rohan, “Teaching Music, Learning Culture: The Challenge of Culturally Responsive Music Education” (University of Otago, 2011); Susan Harrop-Allin, “Ethnomusicology and Music Education: Developing the Dialogue,” *SAMUS: South African Journal of Musicology* 25, no. 1 (2005): 109–25.

<sup>9</sup> Corinne Meier and Chris Hartell, “Handling Cultural Diversity in Education in South Africa,” *SA-EDUC Journal* 6, no. 2 (2009): 180–92.

<sup>10</sup> Mugovhani, “The Demise of Indigenous African Music in South African Schools and Institutions of Higher Learning.”

<sup>11</sup> Henry A Giroux, “Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of Hope Revisited in Turbulent Times,” 2021.

<sup>12</sup> Giroux, “Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of Hope Revisited in Turbulent Times.”

<sup>13</sup> P. Freire, “A Response,” in *Mentoring the Mentor: A Critical Dialogue with Paulo Freire*, ed. P. Freire et al. (New York: Peter Lang, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> Frank Abrahams, “Critical Pedagogy for Music Education: A Best Practice to Prepare Future Music Educators,” *Visions of Research in Music Education* 7, no. 1 (2007): 10.

was rooted in the study's central focus – unravelling the intricate tapestry of experiences and perceptions held by music lecturers regarding the hurdles obstructing access to high-quality education in South African music schools for underprivileged and marginalised communities.<sup>15</sup> Building on the work of these scholars, the choice of descriptive phenomenology aimed to provide a nuanced understanding, allowing for a detailed exploration of the multifaceted challenges faced by these communities.<sup>16</sup>

The descriptive phenomenology design was deemed particularly fitting as it allowed the researcher to delve into the depths of participants' experiences, enabling a precise and articulate explanation of their perspectives. This approach, aligned with the methodologies suggested by Polit, Denise and Beck and Wertz, facilitated a profound comprehension of the intricate dynamics surrounding music education in underprivileged and marginalised South African communities.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the design was strategically chosen to contribute to a broader awareness of the challenges encountered by music lecturers in these specific contexts, in line with the insights presented by Pringle et al.<sup>18</sup>

The research involved ten participants from four South African universities strategically located in marginalised communities. Using virtual communication platforms such as Microsoft Team, Zoom, and Google Team allowed interviews to be conducted efficiently and cost-effectively, overcoming geographical barriers and facilitating the inclusion of participants from diverse locations. The decision to involve ten participants aligned with the recommendations of previous phenomenological studies, citing an optimal sample size ranging from 3 to 10 participants.<sup>19</sup> All selected participants actively participated as music lecturers in underprivileged and marginalised South African music schools. The snowball sampling procedure was used, recognising its suitability for this study given the diverse provinces of South Africa represented by the participants. The initial contact was established by identifying a lecturer with experience in teaching within marginalised communities, who then served as a gateway, referring the researcher to other potential participants.

Before the interviews, which were conducted through a combination of telephone calls and emails, the participants were diligently informed about the purpose of the study, and their informed consent was sought and obtained. The phenomenological data analysis employed Colaizzi's method, as outlined by Morrow et al.<sup>20</sup> Phenomenological data analysis is a qualitative research approach that seeks to explore and understand the lived experiences of individuals from their perspectives.<sup>21</sup> Rooted in phenomenology, a philosophical approach that focuses on the essence of human experiences, this method emphasizes the importance of capturing how participants perceive and make sense of their experiences. The relevance of phenomenological data analysis to a study lies in its ability to provide deep insights into subjective experiences of individuals. This approach allowed the researcher to identify and describe the core meanings and themes that emerge from the data.

The study employed Colaizzi's method for phenomenological data analysis, which involved the following steps: (1) obtaining a general sense of each transcript to immerse oneself in the data; (2) extracting significant statements that capture essential aspects of the participants' experiences; (3) formulating meanings from these significant statements; (4) organizing the formulated meanings into clusters of themes and overarching themes; (5) exhaustively describing the phenomenon under investigation; (6) describing the fundamental structure of the phenomenon; and (7) returning to the participants to validate the findings, ensuring that the analysis accurately reflects their experiences. In this article, Colaizzi's method proved effective in capturing and reflecting the participants' lived experiences.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Quinn Patton, "Two Decades of Developments in Qualitative Inquiry: A Personal, Experiential Perspective," *Qualitative Social Work* 1, no. 3 (2002): 261–83; Lawrence A Palinkas et al., "Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research," *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research* 42 (2015): 533–44.

<sup>16</sup> Annelie J Sundler et al., "Qualitative Thematic Analysis Based on Descriptive Phenomenology," *Nursing Open* 6, no. 3 (2019): 733–39.

<sup>17</sup> Denise F Polit and Cheryl Tatano Beck, "Generalization in Quantitative and Qualitative Research: Myths and Strategies," *International Journal of Nursing Studies* 47, no. 11 (2010): 1451–58; Frederick Joseph Wertz, *Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Analysis: Phenomenological Psychology, Grounded Theory, Discourse Analysis, Narrative Research, and Intuitive Inquiry* (Guilford Press, 2011).

<sup>18</sup> Jan Pringle et al., "Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: A Discussion and Critique," *Nurse Researcher* 18, no. 3 (2011).

<sup>19</sup> Janice M Morse, "Determining Sample Size," *Qualitative Health Research* (Sage Publications Sage CA: Thousand Oaks, CA, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> Rosie Morrow, Alison Rodriguez, and Nigel King, "Colaizzi's Descriptive Phenomenological Method," *The Psychologist* 28, no. 8 (2015): 643–44.

<sup>21</sup> K.R. Praveena and S. Sasikumar, "Application of Colaizzi's Method of Data Analysis in Phenomenological Research," *Med Leg Update* 21, no. 2 (2021): 914–18.

To protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, alphabetic identifiers were assigned to each participant. The culmination of this extensive research effort resulted in the extraction of insightful findings from the analysed data, which were meticulously presented in thematic form. This thematic presentation served as a structured and coherent narrative, shedding light on the complex challenges faced by music lecturers in underprivileged and marginalised South African communities, contributing to a deeper understanding of the barriers to high-quality music education in these contexts.

## **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

The study's findings, enriched by scholarly literature, reveal key themes about challenges and opportunities in South Africa's music education. Three main sections address these themes. First, limited representation of diverse musical traditions that explored how the curriculum often overlooks South Africa's diverse musical heritage, affecting cultural inclusivity. Second, challenges faced by underprivileged students that assessed obstacles like financial constraints and limited resources that hinder disadvantaged students in music education. Lastly, socio-economic factors affecting student engagement examined how poverty and inequality impact students' access to instruments and quality instruction, shaping their educational experiences. These insights offer a comprehensive view of the complexities in South Africa's music education, suggesting pathways for improving inclusivity, equity, and quality.

### ***Limited Representation of Diverse Musical Traditions***

Several music lecturers revealed a consistent concern about the current music education curriculum in South African schools. The curriculum is predominantly focused on Western classical music, leading to a significant underrepresentation of African and other non-Western musical traditions. This lack of diversity can result in students in marginalized communities feeling disconnected from their education, which can negatively impact their engagement and sense of cultural identity. Additionally, many schools lack the necessary resources and training to teach a diverse music curriculum effectively. For instance, Lecturer A mentioned that:

"The curriculum is heavily skewed towards Western classical music. There's very little space for African music, which is a crucial part of our cultural heritage."

Lecturer B highlighted that:

"Students from marginalized communities often feel disconnected from the curriculum because their musical traditions are not represented."

Lecturer C revealed that:

"Our curriculum does not reflect the diversity of South African music. We need to include more local genres and traditions to make it more inclusive."

Lecturer D stated that:

"The lack of representation of African music and other non-Western traditions is a significant gap. Students should be learning about their own musical heritage as well as others."

Lecturer E asserted that:

"Many schools lack the necessary instruments and materials to teach diverse musical traditions effectively. This is particularly true in underfunded schools serving marginalized communities."

Lecturer F emphasised that:

"Professional development opportunities focused on teaching diverse musical styles are scarce. Teachers need better training to handle a more inclusive curriculum."

Lecturer G said that:

"We need more resources that are culturally relevant. Right now, the materials available are predominantly Western-centric, which does not help in promoting diversity."

Lecturer H stated that:

"Students are more engaged when they see their own cultures reflected in the music they study. It helps them feel valued and respected."

Lecturer I declared that:

"Incorporating diverse musical traditions can boost students' confidence and interest in music education. They feel more connected and motivated to learn."

Lecturer J pointed out that:

"When students from marginalized communities see their musical traditions represented in the curriculum, it not only enhances their engagement but also fosters a sense of pride and identity."

Feedback from music lecturers and supporting literature underscore the need for a more inclusive music curriculum that represents the diverse musical traditions of South Africa. The dominance of Western classical music in education and its implications for cultural diversity.<sup>22</sup> This focus marginalizes non-Western musical traditions and limits students' exposure to a broader musical heritage. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive curriculum reform, increased funding, and targeted professional development to create a more inclusive and engaging music education environment.<sup>23</sup> This approach will ensure that all students see their cultural backgrounds reflected and valued in their education, thereby enhancing their participation and fostering a sense of pride and identity.

### ***Challenges Faced by Underprivileged Students***

This section presents the perceptions of ten music lecturers regarding the specific obstacles faced by students from underprivileged backgrounds in their pursuit of music education within South African music schools.

Lecturer A pointed out that:

"Many students from underprivileged backgrounds cannot afford private lessons or purchase musical instruments. This financial barrier limits their access to quality music education."

Lecturer B stated that:

"Schools in marginalized communities often lack the necessary resources and facilities, such as proper music rooms and instruments, to provide comprehensive music education."

Lecturer C mentioned that:

"Students from underprivileged backgrounds have limited exposure to diverse musical experiences and opportunities, such as attending concerts or participating in music festivals."

Lecturer D revealed that:

"Many students face socio-economic pressures, such as the need to work part-time jobs to support their families, which reduces the time and energy they can dedicate to music education."

Lecturer E highlighted that:

"Students from marginalized communities often experience feelings of inferiority and lack of self-confidence, which can hinder their participation and performance in music education."

Lecturer F described that:

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<sup>22</sup> Mugovhani, Ndumato George. "The demise of Indigenous African Music in South African schools and institutions of higher learning." (2011); McKeever, Matthew. "Educational inequality in apartheid South Africa." *American Behavioral Scientist* (2017); Walton, Elizabeth, and Petra Engelbrecht. "Inclusive education in South Africa: Path dependencies and emergences." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* (2022); Yende, Sakhiseni Joseph. "Effectiveness of music education in developing and fostering reading and writing for learners." *Reading & Writing*, (2023); Yende, Sakhiseni Joseph, and Nsizwazonke E. Yende. "The quest for curricularisation of uMakandi Zulu traditional music in higher education in the context of Africanisation." *Journal of African Education*, (2022).

<sup>23</sup> Mugovhani, Ndumato George. "The demise of Indigenous African Music in South African schools and institutions of higher learning." (2011).

"The curriculum's focus on Western classical music can create a cultural disconnect for students whose musical heritage is not represented, leading to disinterest and disengagement."

Lecturer G: declared that

"Many teachers are not adequately trained to address the unique needs of underprivileged students or to incorporate diverse musical traditions into their teaching."

Lecturer H accentuated that:

"Parents of underprivileged students may lack the time, resources, or knowledge to support their children's musical education, which can impact students' progress and motivation."

Lecturer I identified that:

"The social environment and peer influence in underprivileged communities can sometimes be unsupportive of academic and artistic pursuits, including music education."

Lecturer J said that:

"Many students from underprivileged backgrounds face transportation issues, making it difficult for them to attend music classes, rehearsals, or performances."

The response of the ten music lecturers reveals that underprivileged students in South African music schools face numerous obstacles, including financial constraints, lack of resources, limited exposure, socio-economic pressures, psychological barriers, cultural disconnect, insufficient teacher training, limited parental support, peer influence, and transportation issues.<sup>24</sup> Financial constraints significantly impact students' access to music education.<sup>25</sup> The lack of resources to buy instruments, lessons, and materials hinders the participation of underprivileged students. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach, including increased funding, curriculum reform, professional development for teachers, and supportive community environments.

### ***Socio-Economic Factors Affecting Student Engagement***

This section presents the observations of music lecturers regarding the socio-economic factors that significantly influence student engagement and success within the music education context, particularly in marginalized communities in South Africa.

Lecturer A stated that:

"Financial constraints are a major barrier for students from marginalized communities. Many students cannot afford musical instruments, private lessons, or other resources essential for their music education."

Lecturer B pointed out that:

"The cost of music education, including tuition fees and materials, can be prohibitive for students from low-income families. This financial burden limits their access to quality music education."

Lecturer C mentioned that:

"Students from marginalized communities often lack access to adequate resources, such as musical instruments, practice spaces, and recording equipment, which can hinder their ability to fully engage in music education."

Lecturer D acknowledged that:

"Schools in underprivileged areas often have limited resources and facilities for music education, which can impact the quality of education students receive."

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<sup>24</sup> Mkhombo, "The Status of Indigenous Music in the South African School Curriculum with Special Reference to IsiZulu."

<sup>25</sup> Yende and Yende, "The Quest for Curricularisation of UMaskandi Zulu Traditional Music in Higher Education in the Context of Africanisation."

Lecturer E mentioned that:

"Parental support and involvement play a crucial role in students' engagement and success in music education. However, many parents in marginalized communities may lack the time, resources, or knowledge to support their children's musical pursuits."

Lecturer F admitted that:

"In some cases, parents may prioritize other needs over music education, such as providing necessities or working multiple jobs to support the family, which can impact students' ability to fully engage in music."

Lecturer G revealed that:

"The lack of community support and infrastructure for music education in marginalized communities can be a significant barrier. Without access to community music programs or facilities, students may struggle to pursue their musical interests outside of school."

Lecturer H said that:

"Community organizations and partnerships can play a crucial role in supporting music education in marginalized communities. However, many communities lack the resources or infrastructure to provide these opportunities."

Lecturer I stated that:

"Socio-economic status can influence students' peer groups and social circles, which can in turn impact their engagement and interest in music education. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds may face negative peer influences that discourage them from pursuing music."

Lecturer J mentioned that:

"Conversely, students from more affluent backgrounds may have greater access to resources and opportunities, which can positively influence their engagement and success in music education."

The observations from music lecturers highlighted the complex interplay of socio-economic factors that influence student engagement and success in music education, particularly in marginalized communities. This paper explored these factors in-depth, focusing on their impact on student engagement and success in music education in South Africa, with a specific emphasis on rural universities. Socio-economic factors have a negative influence on student engagement and success in music education in South Africa, especially in rural-based universities.<sup>26</sup> These factors create barriers that limit access to quality music education and hinder students' ability to fully engage and succeed in their musical pursuits. Addressing these factors requires a comprehensive approach that includes increasing access to resources, providing support for parental and community participation, and addressing broader socio-economic inequalities. By addressing these challenges, South Africa can ensure that all students have access to quality music education and the opportunity to pursue their musical passions.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of the article analyzed through the lens of Critical Pedagogy, reveal pressing issues within South Africa's music education curriculum. The current focus on Western classical music, while excluding African and other non-Western traditions, marginalizes students from culturally diverse and underprivileged backgrounds. This exclusion reflects the power dynamics and cultural biases inherent in the educational system, leading to a disconnection from their education and hindering the development of their cultural identities. Critical Pedagogy advocates for addressing these imbalances by incorporating a wider range of musical genres and traditions into the curriculum.<sup>27</sup> Such an inclusive approach would affirm the cultural identities of all students and foster a more equitable educational environment.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Yende and Yende, "The Quest for Curricularisation of UMaskandi Zulu Traditional Music in Higher Education in the Context of Africanisation."

<sup>27</sup> Sheila L. Macrine, *Critical Pedagogy in Uncertain Times: Hope and Possibilities* (Springer Nature, 2020).

<sup>28</sup> Mugovhani, "The Demise of Indigenous African Music in South African Schools and Institutions of Higher Learning."



Students from underprivileged backgrounds encounter numerous barriers in pursuing music education, aligning with Critical Pedagogy's emphasis on challenging social inequalities. Financial constraints, lack of resources, and inadequate facilities restrict their access to quality music education, reinforcing existing socio-economic disparities. Moreover, limited exposure to diverse musical experiences stifles creativity and prevents students from engaging in music that reflects their cultural heritage, exacerbating their sense of alienation.

Socio-economic pressures, including the need to contribute to household income and academic success, further impede students' ability to engage in music education. Critical Pedagogy highlights the need to address these broader socio-economic factors, which often lead to music education being deprioritized. Psychological barriers, such as feelings of inadequacy and exclusion, also reflect the elitist and resource-dependent nature of current music programs, reinforcing the belief that students from underprivileged backgrounds are not worthy of or capable of success.

The cultural disconnect experienced by students, due to the emphasis on Western music in the curriculum, underscores the necessity for a transformative approach as advocated by Critical Pedagogy. It is evident that by revising the curriculum to include diverse musical traditions, improving resource access, and fostering parental and community support, the study calls for a holistic strategy to bridge socio-economic and cultural gaps. This approach aligns with the goal of Critical Pedagogy of promoting social justice and inclusivity in education, ensuring that all students, regardless of their background, have equitable opportunities to succeed in music education.

### **Discussion Summary**

The article examined the significant challenges that students, particularly those from underprivileged backgrounds, faced in accessing and succeeding in music education. It identified key socio-economic barriers, including financial constraints, limited access to resources, and lack of parental and community support, as primary obstacles to student participation. These issues were further exacerbated by the lingering effects of apartheid, which continued to shape South Africa's educational landscape. Financial constraints were highlighted as a major factor limiting access to music education, with many students unable to afford instruments, private lessons, or other necessary resources. This financial burden not only restricted their participation but also reinforced existing inequalities, as students from wealthier backgrounds had greater access to these essential tools. The article also emphasized the lack of parental and community support in marginalized areas, where parents often lacked the means or knowledge to support their children's musical pursuits. Additionally, insufficient community infrastructure for music education further isolated students from opportunities for musical development. The influence of socio-economic status on peer interactions was also noted, with disadvantaged students facing negative peer influences, while those from more affluent backgrounds benefited from better opportunities. Collectively, these factors deepened the inequalities in music education, limiting opportunities for underprivileged students.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this article several recommendations were proposed to address the socio-economic factors influencing student engagement and success in music education in South Africa: First, there is a need for curriculum transformation to make music education more inclusive of diverse musical traditions, particularly those of South Africa. By incorporating local genres and traditions into the curriculum, the education system can better reflect the cultural heritage of all students. This approach not only enriches the learning experience but also fosters a deeper connection between students and their cultural identity. Secondly, providing ongoing professional development opportunities for music educators is crucial. Enhancing educators' skills in teaching diverse musical styles and understanding the needs of students from marginalized communities can significantly improve educational outcomes. Training programs should focus on equipping teachers with the knowledge and tools to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students.

Additionally, fostering partnerships with local communities and organizations can provide essential support and resources for music education. These partnerships can help secure access to musical instruments, practice spaces, and cultural events, which are often lacking in underprivileged areas. Collaborative efforts between schools and community organizations can bridge resource gaps and create

a more enriched educational experience for students. Encouraging greater parental and community involvement in music education is another key recommendation. Workshops, information sessions, and collaborative projects can engage parents and community members, promoting a sense of ownership and pride in students' musical achievements. Active participation from parents and the community can also provide students with the support and motivation needed to pursue their musical interests. Lastly, implementing measures to alleviate the financial burden on students and their families is essential. Scholarships or grants for instruments and lessons can make music education more accessible to underprivileged students. Additionally, ensuring that schools in marginalised communities have adequate resources and facilities, including qualified teachers, is crucial for providing high-quality music education. These recommendations aim to create a more inclusive and equitable music education system in South Africa. By addressing financial constraints, improving resource availability, increasing parental and community support, and incorporating diverse musical traditions into the curriculum, it is possible to overcome the barriers that hinder student participation and success in music education.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the article "Unveiling Barriers: Challenges to Access High-Quality Education in South African Music Schools for Underprivileged and Marginalised Communities" provides valuable insights into the significant obstacles faced by students from underprivileged backgrounds in accessing and succeeding in music education. The study highlights the interplay of socio-economic factors, including financial constraints, limited resources, lack of parental and community support, and socio-economic status, all exacerbated by the legacy of apartheid. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach, including curriculum transformation to incorporate diverse musical traditions, professional development for educators, fostering community partnerships, increasing parental participation, and providing financial support through scholarships and subsidies. This multi-faceted strategy aims to create an inclusive and equitable music education system, ensuring all students have access to quality music education and the opportunity to pursue their musical passions.

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