COMPETENCY OF MUSIC PRODUCTION GRADUATES FROM KENYAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS TO PRODUCE LOCAL MUSIC: PERSPECTIVES OF GRADUATES, MUSIC PRODUCERS, AND MUSICIANS

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A Thesis Submitted to the Institute of Postgraduate Studies of Kabarak University in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of Master of Music Education Degree

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This thesis titled, **"Competency of Music Production Graduates from Kenyan Tertiary Institutions to Produce Local Kenyan music: Perspectives of Graduates, Music Producers, and Musicians"** written by **Bichanga Brian Nyandieka** is presented to the Institute of Postgraduate Studies of Kabarak University. We have reviewed the thesis and recommend it be accepted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for award of the degree of Master of Music Education.

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ABSTRACT

Kenya's music industry, rich in historical and cultural diversity, has evolved from its pre-colonial roots—characterized by distinct tribal musical styles and instruments—into a dynamic contemporary scene influenced by both indigenous traditions and global trends. Despite these developments, a significant gap exists between the training provided by Kenyan tertiary institutions and the practical demands of the local music industry. While current curricula emphasize technical proficiency along Western musical paradigms; however, the industry places high value on social narratives and cultural references. In response to this, this study interrogated key stakeholders in the music production industry in order to: (1) assess the perceived readiness of Kenyan music production graduates to produce music that meets industry demands; (2) examine the alignment between theoretical and practical knowledge gained in tertiary programs and industry requirements; and (3) explore the perceived value of musical talent versus formal education among Kenyan musicians. Guided by Vygotsky's Social Constructivism and Bourdieu's Cultural Capital Theory, this study adopted a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach to understand stakeholders' lived experiences and perceptions of music production education in Kenya. Conducted in Nairobi County, the study used purposive sampling to select 27 participants including: six music production graduates, five producers, five musicians, and eleven other music industry professionals. The findings reveal critical gaps in the preparedness of Kenyan music production graduates and highlight several key issues. Graduates stated they were unprepared to meet the practical and cultural demands of the music industry, with a notable disconnect between their academic training and industry expectations. While providing essential technical skills, formal education was found lacking in addressing the cultural competencies and contemporary production techniques required for the local market. Graduates with formal training were perceived to have limited knowledge on matters bordering on cultural identity, which is crucial for resonating with local audiences. Conversely, informal, self-taught producers demonstrated greater adaptability and a stronger grasp of local music trends. The study concluded that music production education should strike a balance between technical training and cultural education, reflecting both traditional and contemporary music practices. Accordingly, this study contributes to existing knowledge by emphasizing the need for educational reforms that integrate practical experience, cultural understanding, and adaptability. Recommendations include updating music production curricula to incorporate local music trends and provide hands-on learning experiences, strengthening partnerships between educational institutions and industry professionals, and fostering continuous learning for graduates. Additionally, it proposes continuous collaboration between industry experts and educators to bridge the gap between academic learning and industry practice.

Keywords: *Graduate Competency, Cultural Literacy, Music Production Industry, Local Music*

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BREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADMI   Africa Digital Media Institute

DAWs   digital audio workstations

DMGT   Model of Giftedness and Talent

KUREC   Kabarak University Research Ethics Committee

MKO   More Knowledgeable Other

NACOSTI   National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation

PwC   PricewaterhouseCoopers

RGMA   Red Giant Media Agency

SMM   School of Music and Media

UKZN   University of KwaZulu-Natal

ZPD   Zone of Proximal Development

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Graduate Competency – Refers to the ability of Kenyan music production graduates to effectively meet the technical, creative, and professional demands of the local music industry. This includes proficiency in both the theoretical and practical aspects of music production, as well as adaptability to local industry standards and trends.

Kenyan Sound – Denotes the wide array of musical genres and styles that has been composed or produced by Kenyans, reflecting the country's unique musical identity.

Musician – Refers to individuals actively engaged in the creation or performance of music within the Kenyan context, including singers, rappers, songwriters, composers, and instrumentalists who contribute to Kenya's evolving music scene.

Auxiliary Industry Professionals – This term includes influential figures within the Kenyan music industry, such as music promoters, media executives, deejays, streaming platform managers, and radio station personnel, who play an important role in shaping and supporting the industry.

Kenyan Music Production Education – Refers to formal academic programs offered by Kenyan tertiary institutions that aim to train students in the technical, creative, and business aspects of music production.

Tertiary Institutions – Refers to post-secondary educational institutions that offer formal training in music production including universities, colleges, and technical institutions, which equip students with theoretical knowledge and practical skills in music production and sound engineering.

Western Music Production Paradigms – Refers to music production techniques and practices rooted in Eurocentric traditions. This includes mixing, mastering, and sound design approaches that are heavily influenced by Western genres such as rock, pop, electronic music, and classical music. These paradigms often serve as a global reference point in the music production industry.

Cultural Knowledge – Represents an understanding and internalization of Kenya's musical heritage, encompassing both traditional and contemporary music. It includes knowledge of ethnic musical traditions, historical contexts, linguistic diversity, and social themes that influence Kenyan music. It also extends to performance practices, production techniques, and cultural symbolism that shape Kenya's unique sound.

Level of Preparedness – Refers to the degree to which music production graduates are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in the industry. This includes their technical proficiency, cultural competency, and ability to adapt to industry-specific challenges in the Kenyan context.

Local Identity – Denotes the expression of Kenya's cultural identity through music, reflecting the social, linguistic, and ethnic diversity of the country. Local identity in music is manifested through the use of indigenous musical elements, language, and themes that resonate with Kenyan audiences.

Technical Proficiency – Refers to the understanding and skill set required for the technical aspects of music production, including sound engineering, mixing, mastering, and the use of digital audio workstations (DAWs).

Cultural Competencies – Refers to the abilities and skills required to integrate cultural knowledge into the music production process. This includes understanding the nuances of Kenyan cultural elements, incorporating traditional rhythms and melodies, and adapting local themes to contemporary music production practices.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

On a rainy Thursday afternoon in April 2022, I found myself in a small, recording studio in Kilimani, Nairobi. I was working on my debut album with long-time friend and music production classmate, Lloyd Amenya. The studio hummed with creative energy as Lloyd, a recent graduate from one of Kenya's prestigious universities, and I collaborated to refine our envisioned music productions. He navigated through Ableton, a digital audio workstation (DAW) for music production, adjusting sound levels and applying audio effects with a blend of confidence and uncertainty. While the production quality was high, the songs lacked the resonance of popular hits, and I struggled to pinpoint the missing element.

As our sessions progressed, it became evident that despite Lloyd's impressive technical prowess, he faced challenges in creating a sound with broader market appeal. This personal experience exemplifies a broader issue in music production education: the gap between technical training and market-oriented skills. Recognizing his frustration, I resolved to analyse popular local hits with Llyod to identify the missing elements in our songs including cultural references related to genre-specific production techniques. We then discovered that distinctive music often integrated familiar local musical elements, linguistic nuances, and catchy structural components, which are crucial and had previously overlooked in our creative process. Despite our efforts to incorporate these aspects, the process and final product felt somewhat mechanical and overly structured, as if we were merely following a formula rather than freely expressing our artistry. This realization only deepened our frustration, and ultimately led us to pause the project. This unfortunate experience encapsulates the broader challenges of how music production

education in Kenya grapples with balancing rich cultural traditions, rapidly evolving global trends, and alignment of academic training with industry needs.

The journey of music production education, globally and in Kenya, is a relatively recent that mirrors the technological and cultural evolutions that have transformed the music industry over the past fifty years. Globally, the institutionalization of music production education emerged in the mid-20th century, propelled by significant technological advancements and music industry transformations. As noted by Théberge (2012), the advent of multitrack recording in the 1960s and 1970s fundamentally transformed music production, creating a pressing need for professionals who were not only technically proficient but also creatively inclined. This shift led to the development of specialised academic programs such as the Music Production and Engineering major at Berklee College of Music in 1983. These early curricula aimed to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and the practical skills required in professional recording environments (Pras & Guastavino, 2011).

The advent of multitrack recording revolutionized the music industry by enabling simultaneous recording of multiple sound sources onto discrete tracks allowing unprecedented flexibility in recording and production processes, enabling sound engineers to mix and manipulate individual elements without affecting the entire performance. Before this development, recording was largely a live affair where musicians had to perform together repeatedly until achieving a satisfactory take. If one musician made a mistake, the entire group had to start over, making the process tedious and time-consuming (Chatterjee 2022). The pioneering work of musician Les Paul in the 1950s played a key role in the evolution of music production. He collaborated with Ampex, an American electronics company founded in 1944, to develop one of the first multitrack recorders, enabling different instruments and vocals to be recorded

independently. This collaboration led to the creation of the Sel-Sync eight-track recorder, which allowed different instruments and vocals to be recorded independently. This innovation laid the foundation for what would become standard practice in recording studios, fundamentally changing the music production landscape. By the 1960s, four-track recorders had become conventional, allowing iconic bands like *The Beatles* to utilise this technology to create complex sounds capes that were previously unimaginable.

As the music production industry evolved, so did the educational landscape, with a growing demand for skilled professionals with the ability to navigate complexities in multitrack recording. This led to the establishment of specialized programs such as the Music Production and Engineering major introduced at Berklee College of Music in 1983 (Berklee College of Music Website, retrieved 29 September 29, 2024). This program was one of the first to formally address the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills required for success in professional recording environments. These early curricula were designed with the understanding that modern music production required not only musical talent but also a comprehensive grasp of technology, acoustics, and sound engineering principles. Students learned not only how to operate recording equipment but also how to apply creative techniques to enhance their productions (RGMA, 2022). This blend of technical training and artistic development became a hallmark of music production education. The programs developed during this period aimed to create well-rounded professionals capable of meeting the demands of an increasingly sophisticated industry. They emphasized hands-on experience with state-of-the-art equipment and software, providing students with opportunities to engage in real-world projects. This approach fostered a new generation of music producers who could seamlessly integrate technology with artistry. The impact of these educational initiatives has been profound

(Berklee College of Music Website, retrieved September 29, 2024). Graduates from programs like Berklee's have gone on to shape the sound of contemporary music across genres, employing their skills in various capacities—from studio engineers to live sound technicians. The global spread of formal music production education has mirrored technological advancement and economic development.

In Europe and North America, the 1990s saw a significant rise in music production programs at both vocational and university levels. These courses were often integrated into existing music departments, resulting to what Boehm (2007) describes as a "hybrid discipline" that combined traditional musicianship with cutting-edge technology skills. While the global trend in music production education advanced rapidly, Africa's development in this field has been more recent and varied. South Africa, however, emerged as a continental leader in the late 1990s and early 2000s with institutions such as the University of Cape Town and the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) pioneering music technology programs that set a benchmark for the region. These courses are notable for their balanced approach, combining technical skills with a deep understanding of African musical traditions and production aesthetics (Harkins, 2018). The introduction of music technology programs in South Africa reflected a global shift towards integrating technology in music education. Since then, UKZN has been at the forefront of this movement, offering comprehensive courses in Electro-Acoustic Music that emphasize both practical and theoretical knowledge. According to UKZN's Department of Music, these courses cover a wide range of topics, including digital multi-track recording, audio for multimedia, mixing, and algorithmic composition using software like Max/MSP (University of KwaZulu-Natal website, retrieved September 29, 2024). This curriculum is designed to equip students with skills necessary to navigate the complexities of modern music production. For instance, the Electro-Acoustic Music 1A

module provides students with hands-on experience in multi-track recording and mixing using industry-standard software such as Pro Tools. This practical training is complemented by theoretical coursework that explores the principles of sound engineering and production techniques (University of KwaZulu-Natal website, retrieved September 29, 2024). What sets these programs apart is their commitment to incorporating African musical traditions into the curriculum. This approach not only enriches students' understanding of global music practices but also fosters a sense of cultural identity and pride. Harkins (2018) notes that, this blending of traditional African music with contemporary production techniques creates a unique educational experience that prepares students for diverse career paths within the music industry.

The formalization of music production education in Kenya, beginning in the early 2000s, aligned with seismic shifts in the country's music industry landscape. This period saw the proliferation of affordable digital recording technology and the emergence of popular genres such as Genge and Kapuka which created a demand for skilled producers. These producers needed to adeptly navigate both local musical idioms and global production standards to succeed in an increasingly competitive landscape (Kidula, 2012). In response, several institutions introduced specialized courses in music technology and production. Notably, Technical University of Kenya (formerly known as Kenya Polytechnic), Kenyatta University, Kabarak University, Africa Digital Media Institute (ADMI), among other tertiary institutions played pivotal roles in shaping the educational framework for aspiring music producers. These institutions recognized the importance of equipping students with both technical skills and an understanding of the cultural contexts shaping their music. At the Technical University of Kenya, the Department of Music and Performing Arts offers comprehensive programs covering various aspects of music production, including practical musicianship, sound engineering, and music business

(Technical University of Kenya website, retrieved September 29, 2024). The curriculum was designed to provide students with hands-on experience using contemporary recording equipment and software, blending creativity and technical proficiency. Additionally, the emergence of local genres Gengetone (a fusion of hip-hop), Arbantone (a blend of dancehall), and Afro-Neo Benga (a modernized version of traditional Benga), has significantly influenced the Kenyan music scene. As Kidula (2012) notes, these genres reflect a unique cultural identity that resonates with local audiences while also appealing to global markets.

Therefore, educational programs should put emphasis on adapting their curricula to not only technical skills but also reflect the cultural significance of these evolving local musical forms. However, the introduction of these programs has not been without challenges. Mochere (2022) points out significant gaps that exist in Kenyan universities curricula in equipping students with the comprehensive technical skills needed in the local music production industry. This disconnect between education and industry needs is further complicated by the unique cultural landscape of Kenyan music. As Akuno (2000/2001) argues, graduates need both technical musical knowledge and awareness of cultural influences on music to effectively meet industry demands. The Kenyan music scene, characterized by its fusion of traditional rhythms and contemporary global influences, presents a distinctive landscape for music production graduates. Genres like Afro-Neo Benga, with intricate guitar work, and the heavy-bass- beats of both Arbantone and Gengetone demand a nuanced understanding of both local musical heritage and modern production techniques (Wakilisha, 2021). The frustration that Lloyd Amenya faces impacts his ability to thrive in the evolving local music industry in Kenya. One critical issue is the lack of industry-specific cultural knowledge, which hampers graduates' ability to produce music that resonates with local audiences while adhering to

global standards. Kidula (2012) notes that many educational programs focus on Western musical paradigms, neglecting the rich tapestry of African musical traditions. This gap in cultural understanding often results in a disconnection between the music produced and its cultural roots. Research indicates that graduates lacking a strong foundation in local genres and practices often struggle to create works that authentically reflect the diverse influences in Kenyan music. This deficiency can significantly impact their marketability and effectiveness as producers (Harkins, 2018; Kidula, 2012; Nyairo, 2016). The lack of exposure to industry realities of the music exacerbates these issues, underscoring the need for educational programs that effectively balance technical proficiency with cultural literacy.

Many educational institutions fail to provide students with practical experiences that reflect the complexities of working in the field stifling their creativity and flexibility. Lack of opportunities for students to engage with industry professionals or participate in live projects, lead to missed experiences that foster innovative thinking (Campbell, 2004). Furthermore, without insight into current market trends and genre-specific knowledge, graduates may find themselves ill-equipped to adapt to an ever-changing musical landscape (Wakilisha, 2021). Thus, the combination of inadequate cultural education and limited industry exposure creates significant barriers for aspiring music producers in Kenya. To address these challenges, many music production graduates turn to alternative educational resources, particularly online platforms like YouTube. These platforms offer tutorials and insights from established professionals, supplementing formal education with practical, industry-relevant knowledge. While this self-directed learning can be valuable, it also highlights the shortcomings of formal educational programs in meeting the needs of aspiring producers. Although formal music production programs provide structured learning environment and credentials, they may not fully

reflect the current realities of the local music industry. This disconnect often leads to graduates struggling to secure clients or employment and requiring extensive on-the-job training to become effective in their roles.

The gap between educational programs and industry needs has broader implications for Kenya's cultural and economic development. Nyairo (2016) argues that a thriving local music industry is crucial for preserving and evolving Kenya's cultural heritage. Producers play a key role in shaping contemporary Kenyan music, and their ability to blend traditional elements with modern production techniques can significantly enhance the global appeal and commercial success of Kenyan artists. Economically, the potential of a well-developed music industry is substantial. A Kenya Copyright Board report (2020) estimated that a well-supported music industry could contribute up to 2% of Kenya's GDP. However, realizing this potential requires a workforce of skilled producers capable of creating music that appeals to both local and international audiences. Consequently, the burgeoning Kenyan music industry, with its growing international recognition, demands well-trained, culturally astute music producers. This need underscores the urgency of aligning educational programs with both global standards and local cultural nuances.

Reflecting on the challenging experience of pausing the project with Lloyd and witnessing first-hand the struggles of talented graduates trying to bridge the gap between their formal education and the complex demands of Kenya's diverse music industry, this led to the examination of the current state of music production education in Kenya. This study examines how well educational programs align with industry needs, and explores the strategies to enhance the preparedness of graduates for the dynamic world of music production. Specifically, it aims to address the critical disconnect between academic curricula and practical industry requirements, the lack of cultural context in technical

training, and the need for more hands-on, industry-relevant experiences in music production education.

By focusing on these aspects, this study aimed to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on the future of music production education in Kenya and its role in shaping the country's musical landscape. Using a phenomenological approach that utilizes qualitative methods, this study provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of music production education in Kenya. The research design incorporates in-depth interviews with music production graduates, producers, and musicians, among other industry professionals, along with focus group discussions. This approach allowed for a rich exploration of the lived experiences of those directly involved in music production education and practice in Kenya. Moreover, by examining best practices from other countries and considering Kenya's unique cultural and economic context, this research proposes actionable recommendations to improve music production curricula. These recommendations aim to create educational programs that not only equip students with cutting-edge technical skills but also foster a deep understanding of Kenya's rich musical heritage. As Watching Lloyd wrestle with the complexities of blending traditional and contemporary sounds clarified the urgency of addressing the gaps in music production education. The future of Kenya's music industry–and indeed, a significant part of its cultural identity–depends on nurturing a generation of producers skilled in navigating the intersection of tradition and innovation. This thesis therefore represents a step towards realizing that future, contributing to the development of a music production education system that truly serves the needs of Kenya's vibrant and evolving music industry.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Kenyan music producers operate within a landscape shaped by strong consumer preferences for distinctive local musical elements. These preferences, which often

prioritize local identity, set the standard by which music producers are evaluated, with the success of a track being largely dependent on its ability to resonate with the local audience. Therefore, chart success of a producer's work is not only a reflection of technical proficiency but also the ability to create music that aligns with Kenyan cultural identity and contemporary trends.

The entry of music production graduates from Kenyan tertiary institutions into the industry reveals a significant gap between their educational training and the demands of the local market. While tertiary music production education is largely focused on technical proficiency, often following western paradigms, Kenyan genres such as Arbantone and Afro Neo Benga also thrive on thematic emphasis on social narratives and cultural references. These genres skilfully blend traditional Kenyan elements with contemporary production techniques, creating an evolving 'Kenyan sound' that many graduates struggle to produce due to limited exposure to local trends and cultural nuances during their education.

This disconnect between formal education curricula, and industry expectations constitutes a significant barrier for graduates seeking to establish themselves in the local music market. While formally educated producers excel in technical skills, they often lack the cultural literacy and practical industry experience necessary to create music that truly resonates with Kenyan audiences. As a result, many graduates are compelled to seek supplementary training or mentorship to bridge this gap, and some even choosing different career paths due to an inability to meet market demands. This situation raises a critical question, to what extent are Kenyan tertiary institutions adequately preparing music production graduates to meet the evolving tastes, cultural expectations, and dynamic nature of the local music industry?

This thesis explored the perspectives of key stakeholders on the competencies of music production graduates, offering insights into how educational institutions can better align their curricula with the realities of the Kenyan music industry.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of music production graduates, music producers, musicians, and auxiliary industry professionals concerning graduates' competencies in producing Kenyan local music. The findings inform recommendations for enhancing music production education and strengthening the alignment between academic preparations with industry requirements in Kenya. This investigation aims to contribute to the development of culturally responsive educational frameworks that more effectively prepare graduates to meet the demands of the local music industry.

1.4 Research Objectives

i. To establish the perceived level of preparedness of Kenyan graduates to meet production demands of the local music industry.

ii. To find out the perspectives of local music producers on the applicability of knowledge gained in tertiary institutions to the local music industry.

iii. To explore musicians' perspectives on the relationship between talent and formal education in successful music production practice.

1.5 Research Questions

i. How do Kenyan music production graduates perceive their preparedness to meet the demand of producing local Kenyan music on demand for the local industry?

ii. To what extent does the theoretical and practical knowledge gained from tertiary

music production programs align or misalign with the actual needs of the Kenyan music production industry?

iii.   What are the views from Kenyan musicians regarding the value of innate musical talent versus formal music education in the context of music production?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is particularly significant in its potential to contribute towards bridging the gap between music education provided by universities in Kenya and the needs of the local music industry. By exploring the perspectives of key stakeholders, this study aimed to deepen the understanding of how well tertiary-educated music producers are prepared to meet the expectations of the Kenyan music scene.

The findings sought to provide valuable insights into the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the theoretical and practical knowledge imparted in tertiary music programs, particularly concerning their alignment with distinct musical elements prevalent in Kenyan genres. This understanding informs efforts to enhance the responsiveness of music production education, ensuring that graduates are better equipped to cater to local tastes and artistic expressions. Moreover, by examining the relative importance attributed to natural talent versus formal education in music production, this study has the potential to contribute to ongoing discussions about what drives success in the Kenyan local music production industry. The insights gained from the viewpoints of musicians and the general public will shed light on the potential appeal and acceptance of music produced by tertiary-educated producers, informing strategies for fostering greater appreciation and support for their work.

1.7 Justification of the Study

This study was driven by the crucial need to assess whether music production graduates from Kenyan tertiary institutions are sufficiently equipped to meet the specific demands and artistic expressions of the local music scene. Through collection and analysis of perspectives of key stakeholders, the study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of current music production programs in equipping graduates with essential skills and knowledge necessary to produce music that resonates with local tastes and cultural contexts. This was vital as it contributes to the ongoing discourse on the quality of music education in Kenya, with valuable insights from three key groups: music producers seeking to understand industry requirements, educational institutions striving to align curricula with market demands, and policymakers responsible for accrediting and oversight of tertiary institutions. The study provides a comprehensive evaluation that can inform strategic decisions about music production education at both institutional and policy levels.

1.8 Scope of the Study

This study explores the preparedness of Kenyan music production graduates to meet the demands of the local industry, with a specific focus on the alignment between the theoretical and practical knowledge gained from tertiary institutions and real-world expectations. Situated in Nairobi, the vibrant heart of Kenya's music scene, this research leverages the city's rich diversity, which includes a plethora of recording studios, music production tertiary institutions, and media houses. Nairobi was chosen as the focal point for this investigation due to its dynamic music landscape, making it an ideal setting to examine the intersection of music production education and industry practices (Eisenberg, 2015).

The study targeted recent music production graduates—those who have completed their programs within the last five years—from various Kenyan tertiary institutions. This focus ensured that the data captured current trends in both educational content and industry demands, which are rapidly evolving due to advancements in music production (Bennett, 2008). To provide a comprehensive understanding of the Kenyan music production ecosystem, the study extended beyond formally trained graduates to include: informally trained producers, both formally educated and self-taught musicians, as well as auxiliary industry professionals such as deejays, streaming platform executives, and local radio station managers. This inclusive approach aligns with Simpson's (2015) assertion that informal learning processes play a crucial role in shaping industry professionals and provides an important counterbalance to formal education systems.

Engaging with this diverse range of participants was essential for gaining a holistic understanding of the music production landscape in Kenya. Focusing solely on graduates would have provided an incomplete picture; as Norton (2016) points out, industry competencies are shaped not only by formal education but also by a variety of factors including informal learning and mentorship. Expanding the scope allowed the study to identify potential gaps in formal curricula, since informally trained producers and self-taught musicians often possess valuable skills that may be overlooked or undervalued in traditional academic programs. Green (2002) emphasizes that many critical skills in music production—such as creativity, adaptability, and technical proficiency—are often acquired outside the classroom. By comparing the experiences of formally and informally trained individuals, this study sheds light on areas where informal learning complements, or even surpasses traditional education.

Moreover, engaging with auxiliary industry professionals such as deejays and streaming platform executives, provided crucial insights into how effectively educational systems

prepare graduates for real-world challenges. These professionals are at the forefront of music distribution and audience engagement, and their perspectives were invaluable for assessing whether graduates possess the skills necessary to create music that resonates with local audiences while meeting industry standards. Throsby and Zednik (2011) argue that understanding marketplace needs is critical for music producers, making input from industry professionals essential for evaluating the practical applicability of educational programs. Their insights enabled this study to examine whether educational institutions are effectively equipping graduates with the requisite knowledge and skills needed to succeed in Kenya's competitive, and technologically driven music production landscape.

In addition to examining the relationship between education and industry needs, this study addressed the ongoing debate around the role of inherent musical talent versus formal education in shaping successful music producers. McPherson and Williamson (2015) argue that while natural talent plays a role, formal education is critical for honing technical skills and imparting the theoretical knowledge needed for professional music production. By exploring how natural abilities interact with acquired skills, this research offers important insights for the future of music production education in Kenya. The comparative analysis of formal education and informal learning pathways provides a nuanced understanding of the competencies necessary for success in the Kenya's music industry and highlights ways educational programs can be adapted to better reflect these demands.

Through a broad yet focused approach, this study provides a detailed overview of the current state of music production education in Kenya, evaluating its alignment with industry needs and proposing strategies to enhance graduates' preparedness for real-world industry demands. The findings hold promise for policymakers, educational institutions, and industry stakeholders highlighting necessary steps to bridge gaps

between music production education and professional practice. By addressing challenges and leveraging Kenya's unique cultural strengths, this research to contribute significantly to the developing a more robust and culturally relevant music production industry in Kenya.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

This study was confined to the perspectives of selected key stakeholders within the music production field in Nairobi. While this focus allowed for an in-depth exploration of the local music production landscape, it may not fully capture the perspectives of the broader music industry across Kenya. Regional variations in music production practices, influenced by differing cultural and economic factors, may not be fully represented in the findings. As Yin (2009) points out, geographic limitations can impact the external validity of the research, potentially limiting the generalizability of the results to other regions in Kenya where music production practices and educational experiences could vary significantly. This geographical limitation means that insights drawn from Nairobi's urban, cosmopolitan environment may not fully apply to areas such as Mombasa or Kisumu, where local music genres and industry dynamics differ. Excluding perspectives of those outside Nairobi meant that the study may have overlooked the unique challenges and opportunities present in rural and regional music production settings. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), regional context plays a crucial role in shaping industry practices, and studies focusing on a single urban area risk under representing the broader industry landscape.

The inherently subjective nature of qualitative research means that the findings were influenced by the interpretations of both the researcher and the participants. Although efforts were made to maintain objectivity, personal biases and experiences inevitably coloured the analysis. As Denzin and Lincoln (2011) observe, qualitative research is

interpretive by design, with the researcher playing a central role in making sense of the data. This subjectivity, while providing rich, contextual data, may have influenced the conclusions drawn from the research, particularly in how participants' narratives were interpreted. Reflexivity, as emphasized by Creswell and Poth (2018), was critical in this study to minimise the impact of personal biases, though complete neutrality remains difficult to achieve.

While focusing on the Kenyan local music production industry provided valuable insights specific to this context, it limits the applicability of the results to other regions or countries. Kenya's music industry is shaped by unique cultural, economic, and social dynamics, which means that the findings may not be directly transferable to music production contexts outside the country. Throsby (2010) notes, local industries are often heavily influenced by regional market conditions and cultural preferences, which may differ significantly from global trends. This limitation dictates that caution should be exercised when applying these insights to other music production sectors, especially in Western or Asian markets, where the industry operates under different structures and pressures.

The study also faced practical limitations, particularly in relation to scheduling conflicts and the time constraints among participants. Many of the participants, being active professionals in the music industry, had demanding schedules that made it challenging to coordinate interviews and follow-up sessions. These logistical challenges, as described by DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019), are common in qualitative research and can impact the depth of engagement. Such scheduling issues may have limited the ability to conduct more in-depth interviews or extended observations, which could have provided additional layers of insights. In particular, the study's aim to achieve gender balance in the sample was somewhat affected by the scheduling difficulties, resulting in participant

pool with a higher proportion of male professionals. This, in turn, may have impacted the study's ability to fully capture the gender dynamics within the music production industry in Kenya.

Despite these limitations, this study provides valuable insights into the current state of music production education in Kenya and its alignment with industry needs. By acknowledging its limitations, the research remains transparent in its scope and conclusions, allowing future studies to address the gaps identified. For instance, future research could investigate regional music production practices or explore the gender dynamics within the industry more thoroughly, providing an even more comprehensive understanding of Kenya's music production landscape.

This chapter has laid the groundwork for investigating the competency of music production graduates in Kenya's music industry. Beginning with a personal narrative that illuminates the gap between technical education and industry demands, the chapter traced the evolution of music production education globally and in Kenya. This historical context illustrated how technological advancements and cultural dynamics have shaped current educational practices, leading to the present challenges faced by graduates in meeting industry expectations. The research problem, objectives, and questions have been carefully articulated to examine graduate preparedness, evaluate knowledge applicability, and explore the complex relationship between talent and formal education in Kenyan music production.

Chapter Two presents a comprehensive literature review, examining existing scholarship on music production education, graduate competency, and industry demands through the theoretical lenses of Vygotsky's Social Constructivism and Bourdieu's Cultural Capital theories. Chapter Three details the research methodology, explaining the phenomenological approach and qualitative methods employed to gather and analyse

stakeholder perspectives. Chapter Four presents and analyses the findings on graduate competency and industry alignment, while Chapter Five concludes with recommendations for enhancing music production education in Kenya. Together, these chapters provide a thorough investigation into how educational institutions can better prepare graduates for success in Kenya's dynamic music industry.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature review is divided into three sections. The first section analyses existing research on the preparedness of graduates to meet industry demands by looking at the role of universities. The second section assess music producers' satisfaction with the competency of Kenyan music graduates. The final section delves into musicians' perspectives on whether talent or education is the most valuable asset in music production.

2.2 Music Production Graduates' Perception of their Preparedness to Meet the Demands of the Music Industry

The practical preparedness of music production graduates is a critical topic, especially in contexts where traditional and modern music industries intersect, such as in Kenya. Numerous studies emphasise the importance of ensuring graduates' success in the industry (Akuno, 2000/2001; Bennett & Bridgstock, 2014; Bennett et al., 2016; Bridgstock, 2011; Draper & Hitchcock, 2006; Mochere, 2022; Monteiro et al., 2022). These findings underscore the crucial role universities play in equipping students with the relevant skills for professional success, underscoring their responsibility to prepare students for the demands of the professional world.

A recurring theme in the literature is the critical need to align music production curricula with the evolving demands of the music industry. Mochere et al. (2020) highlight a significant challenge stemming from the misalignment between university music curricula and the dynamic requirements of the job market in Kenya. This misalignment is a central issue that contributes to the difficulties faced by music production graduates. Mochere et al. (2020) provide a valuable insight into the Kenyan context by

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comparing the music production curricula of two institutions. Their comparative approach sheds light on the current state of music education in Kenya and directly addresses the preparedness of Kenyan graduates for the local music industry. Building on this, Larson (2019) emphasizes the increasing importance of preparing music education students for popular music styles. Although Larson's work is not specific to Kenya, it raises an important issue regarding the legitimacy of popular music within educational institutions. This perspective is particularly relevant when considering the Kenyan music industry, which encompasses a wide range of musical styles, including popular local genres. The discrepancy between traditional music production education and the demands of the contemporary music industry, as elucidated by Larson, may be more salient in the Kenyan context.

According to Akuno (2000/2001), in order to meet the demands of the music industry, graduates must not only need to have technical knowledge but also have an awareness of the cultural influences shaping music. This perspective underscores the importance of integrating cultural knowledge into music education at the university level. Akuno (2000/2001) proposed a three- mode view of music for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. In this context, music is perceived as a concept, an object, and an activity. As a concept, music involves the impression, thought, or idea that occupy the mind, defined by four key elements: temporal, tonal, qualitative, and expressive. As an object, music is viewed as a work of art, created through the relationship between different sound clusters. While as an activity, music becomes an event of sociocultural significance for those involved in its performance. While this three-mode view provides valuable insights into the nature of music, it falls short of addressing the practical challenges of incorporating local Kenyan music traditions into formal music production education. The framework, though comprehensive, it remains largely theoretical and

abstract, without clear strategies for bridging the gap between Western and indigenous music pedagogies. Akuno's three-mode framework does not adequately elucidate the systematic integration of indigenous musical forms, such as Afro Neo Benga and Arbantone, into university curricula.

In contrast, Adedeji (2010) emphasizes the importance of incorporating indigenous musical elements, as seen in his examination of Yoruba culture's influence on Nigerian popular music. His research highlights how cultural identity is negotiated through local music, particularly in urban spaces like Lagos, and underscores the role of Yoruba language and traditions in shaping modern Nigerian popular music. This approach could inform the development of a more empirically grounded, and culturally relevant framework for Kenyan music education, where indigenous genres such as Arbantone and Afro Neo Benga play a central role in the industry. Integrating these elements could enhance the cultural fluency of Kenyan graduates, addressing the gap between theoretical models and the practical realities of local music production. On the other hand, McConnachie (2021) highlights the ongoing initiatives aimed at decolonizing music education frameworks to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills. These decolonization efforts seek to shift away from the dominant Western paradigms that often marginalize local music traditions. This is particularly important in Kenya, where music production graduates must navigate a complex industry that blends indigenous cultural elements with global trends. McConnachie's research is instrumental in elucidating the need for curricular evolution to encompass a broader spectrum of cultural practices relevant to the local industry, thereby augmenting the practical preparedness of graduates. To further explore the implications of this approach, it's valuable to consider complementary perspectives on cultural role of music. In this context, Anderton et al. (2013) offer a framework that expands upon

McConnachie's ideas, providing deeper insights into the complex relationship between music, culture, and industry. Anderton et al. (2013) emphasize the importance of viewing music not only as a product, but as a cultural and social force. They argue that music carries symbolic meaning and is deeply embedded in cultural practices. This perspective aligns with the challenges faced by Kenyan music production graduates, who must produce music that resonates with local audiences while meeting global industry standards. The assertion that "subgenres form, and scenes are created that support and reinforce these meanings" (p. 10) directly applies to the Kenyan context, where genres such as Arbantone and Afro Neo Benga have emerged by blending traditional musical elements with contemporary production techniques. However, without proper education on these local traditions, graduates may lack the cultural competence and literacy to meaningfully contribute to the development of these evolving genres.

The practical preparedness of music production graduates largely hinges on their capacity to apply technical skills in real-world environments. While theoretical knowledge provides the foundational understanding of music production concepts, it is through hands-on experience that students gain the confidence and proficiency needed to thrive in the dynamic music industry. The importance of experiential learning and strong industry connections emerges is a key theme emerging from the literature. Toulson and Hepworth-Sawyer (2018) emphasize the significance of connected learning journeys in music production education. Their work, which draws from their experiences in delivering, designing, and developing higher education courses in music production, provides valuable insights into effective educational approaches. The authors highlight the importance of Kolb's Experiential Learning Model as a recurring function necessary in advancing through Bloom's cognitive domain. This perspective is particularly relevant to the research objective, as it suggests that practical, hands-on experience is crucial for

developing the competencies required in the music industry. In the Kenyan context, adopting connected learning journeys and emphasizing experiential learning could significantly enhance graduates' preparedness for the local music industry. Similarly, Draper and Hitchcock (2006) emphasize the importance of work-integrated learning is a critical educational approach that allows students to merge their classroom knowledge with practical industry experience. This method ensures that students develop tangible skill set, including proficiency in sound engineering, digital audio workstations (DAWs), and live production setups, which are vital for their future careers. Work-integrated learning not only develops technical proficiency but also exposes students to the operational realities of the industry, such as time management, working under pressure, and collaborating with diverse teams of professionals. These competencies, rarely taught in traditional classroom settings, are essential for navigating the high stakes environment of music production. Almi et al. (2011) explore a similar phenomenon in the context of software engineering, highlighting a significant gap between industry requirements and the readiness of graduates. Their study shows that despite formal education, graduates frequently lack the specific, industry-relevant skills needed to meet real-world demands. Almi et al. (2011) argue that this discrepancy stems from a misalignment between the educational curriculum and the actual needs of the industry, emphasizing that graduates often enter the workforce with broad theoretical knowledge but insufficient practical skills. This gap is attributed to the industry's increasing demand for highly specialized skills and the evolving nature of job roles, which educational programs may not fully address. By engaging with real-world projects, students can familiarize themselves with industry trends and expectations, gaining insights into audience preferences, emerging technologies, and the business side of music production. In the Kenyan context, where the music production industry is a fusion of both traditional music elements and modern

global trends, this experiential learning becomes critical. Kenyan graduates must navigate two interconnected worlds: one that values local music and another that demands modern production techniques often driven by Western tools and conventions. The challenge lies in being able to fluidly integrate these two worlds, a skill that can only be honed through practical real-world exposure.

Williamson and Cloonan (2007) emphasize the necessity of having a comprehensive understanding of the contemporary music industry when developing teaching strategies for higher education. Literature indicates that incorporating industry participation into educational practices not only enhances the relevance of the curriculum but also fosters the adaptability of graduates, as evidenced by research on Kenyan music graduates. Williamson and Cloonan argue that it is essential for educators to have a thorough awareness of the current music industry to create effective teaching strategies. Compatibly, Mochere (2017) discusses the need for experiential learning within music curricula, advocating for methods that promote discovery learning and creativity.

These approaches can help bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills, which are increasingly demanded by employers in the music sector. Research on Kenyan music production graduates demonstrates their adaptability to industry changes, which underscores the importance of a responsive educational framework. Literature also reveals that many music educators face challenges in implementing effective teaching methodologies due to outdated curricula and insufficient resources. This often leads to disconnect between what is taught in academic settings and the skills required in the professional environment (Mochere, 2017). Integrating industry participation into music education is widely recognized as a vital component for enhancing learning outcomes. Studies indicate that collaboration with industry professionals provide students with valuable insights, networking opportunities, and practical experience, essential for their

future careers. Ogari et al. (2019) highlight the critical role of assessment tools and techniques in evaluating vocal music performance among university students, suggesting that industry- informed assessments can lead to improved educational practices. In addition, various authors have noted that adapting curricula to include emerging trends and technologies can significantly improve the preparedness of graduates for real-world challenges. To ensure that graduates are adaptable to the industry, it is important for institutions to stay attuned with societal trends and needs. Staying informed about these changes will equip institutions to provide graduates with the confidence and the skills they need to succeed in their respective fields. Mantie et al. (2017) emphasize the importance of updating the traditional music education curriculum to include skills in music production, entrepreneurship, global music studies, and service learning.

While literature emphasizes the importance of developing a music production curriculum that balances technical proficiency with cultural literacy, several gaps emerge about the current study on Kenyan music production graduates. Akuno's (2000/2001) three-mode view of music, while providing a comprehensive theoretical framework, falls short in addressing the practical challenges of incorporating local Kenyan music traditions into formal music production education. Adedeji's (2010) work on Nigerian popular music offers valuable insights into cultural integration but lacks specificity to the Kenyan context and its unique genres like Arbantone and Afro Neo Benga.

This study has built upon Adedeji's approach by focusing on Kenyan musical genres and their integration into music production education, providing a more targeted analysis of the local industry's needs. Additionally, McConnachie's (2021) focus on decolonizing music education frameworks, while crucial, does not provide concrete strategies for implementation in the Kenyan music production industry. Anderton et al.'s (2013) perspective on music as a cultural and social force, though relevant, does not specifically

address the challenges faced by Kenyan graduates in blending traditional elements with modern production techniques. This study has extended Anderton's framework by examining how Kenyan graduates navigate the intersection of traditional and contemporary music production, offering insights into the specific challenges and opportunities in the local context. Draper and Hitchcock's (2006) emphasis on work-integrated learning, while valuable, does not fully explore how this approach can be tailored to the unique fusion of traditional and modern elements in Kenyan music production. Williamson and Cloonan's (2007) call for a comprehensive understanding of the contemporary music industry in teaching strategies but they lack specific guidance on how to achieve this in the rapidly evolving Kenyan music scene. This study has provided such guidance by analysing the current state of the Kenyan music industry and offering recommendations for aligning educational strategies with its evolving needs.

There is a notable lack of research specific to the Kenyan music production context despite the fact that much of the literature reviewed provides valuable insights into music production education and industry preparedness. The work of Mochere et al. (2020) stands out as one of the few studies directly addressing the Kenyan music production landscape. This gap in the literature underscores the importance of the study. By focusing on the perceived level of preparedness of Kenyan graduates to produce music on demand from the Kenyan local music industry, this study has the potential to make a significant contribution to the understanding of music production education in Kenya.

2.3 Music Producers' Perception on Knowledge Gained in Tertiary Institutions

The perception of music producers regarding the knowledge and skills gained by graduates from tertiary institutions is a critical yet understudied area, particularly in the context of the rapidly evolving music industry in Kenya. This review critically examines the existing literature on this topic, with an emphasis on its applicability to the Kenyan

music production landscape. Brown's (2007) study on the challenges faced by performing arts graduates in securing employment indirectly touches on the importance of local musical heritage. He points out that graduates with a strong grounding in local musical traditions are often more employable in markets where cultural authenticity is prized. When applied to the Kenyan context, this suggests that music production graduates who understand and can incorporate Kenyan musical styles—such as Afro Neo Benga, Arbantone, and traditional folk music—into their productions may hold a competitive advantage. Although focused on a broader performing arts context, Brown's analysis opens the discussion about the need for tertiary institutions to integrate local music forms into their curricula.

Despite this realisation, there are still few empirical studies that particularly address the perceptions of Kenyan music producers on this matter. Hernández-March et al. (2009) expand on this basis by putting out a framework for assessing graduate competencies in relation to industry needs. Their research emphasizes the importance of aligning educational outcomes with the expectations of employers, particularly in creative fields like music production. According to Hernández-March et al., music producers often expect graduates to possess both technical skills and cultural literacy enabling them to produce music that reflects local tastes and traditions. This framework is particularly relevant to the Kenyan music industry, where local producers prioritize culturally resonant productions that appeal to the Kenyan audience. Kenyan producers expect graduates to be proficient in both modern production techniques and the integration of local rhythmic and melodic structures, which are key to creating music that resonates within the Kenyan market. However, the study by Hernández- March et al. y lacks specificity when applied to the Kenyan context, as it does not delve into how well Kenyan tertiary institutions are preparing graduates for these culturally specific tasks.

Munnelly (2020) adds a crucial dimension to this discourse by critiquing traditional music education programs for their tendency to prioritize artistic development at the expense of market-oriented skills. His study reveals that while many graduates excel in composition, arrangement, and performance, they often lack industry-specific competencies needed to thrive in a professional setting. Munnelly's findings are particularly relevant to the Kenyan context, where the rapid evolution of the local music industry may be outpacing curricular adaptations in tertiary institutions. As Kenyan music genres increasingly fuse local sounds with global trends, the market demands producers who are creative and adaptable and tech-savvy. Munnelly's analysis underscores the need for institutions to regularly update their programs, ensuring that graduates are prepared for both the artistic and commercial realities of the industry. Roberts (1992) adds a global perspective on the challenges faced by music producers, exploring the complex relationship between global and local cultures.

Through a comprehensive examination of musical traditions across various geographical contexts, Roberts identified two primary models to explain the interaction between global and local cultures in music: Cultural Imperialism model posits that global (often Western) cultural forms dominate and potentially erase local traditions. In Kenyan music production, the model could manifest as a reliance on Western production techniques and musical styles in educational curricula at the expense of local musical heritage. Conversely, the Indigenization model suggests that global influences interact with local traditions to create new, hybrid forms of cultural expression—a concept particularly relevant to contemporary Kenyan music genres, which often blend traditional elements with global trends. Roberts' work, grounded in postcolonial theory and cultural studies, emphasizes the importance of music in constructing and preserving cultural identity, even in the face of globalizing influences. This raises critical questions for Kenyan music

production education: How can tertiary institutions prepare students to navigate the tension of preserving cultural authenticity and appealing to global markets? Are students being equipped with the skills necessary to create innovative, hybrid musical forms that resonate both locally and internationally? The Indigenization model offers a more optimistic perspective, suggesting that global influences can creatively interact with local traditions, enriching cultural expression rather than erasing it. However, this process is not without its complexities. As Roberts highlights, economic and political power significantly shape global music trends.

This adds a layer of complexities for Kenyan music producers who must balance artistic considerations with market dynamics to appeal to the local and international audiences. This global-local tension that Roberts describes is likely a defining feature of the Kenyan music production landscape, yet it remains unclear to what extent tertiary education institutions are preparing students to navigate these challenges. Are the educational programs adopting an 'imperialist' approach by focusing primarily on Western production techniques, or are they fostering 'indigenization' by blending global and local knowledge within their curricula? Perspectives from active music producers on these issues could provide valuable insights on the effectiveness of current educational approaches.

Brown's (2007) study, though seminal in its approach to creative industries, presents several limitations when applied to the Kenyan music production context. Brown's methodology, which primarily focuses on Western performing arts graduates, assumes a certain structural similarity in creative industry that may not hold true to Kenya's unique context. The study's emphasis on "unpredictable labour markets" and "intense competition" as primary challenges fails to account for the unique socio-economic factors and informal economic structures that often characterize the Kenyan music

industry. Moreover, Brown's assumption of a linear transition from education to employment does not consider the entrepreneurial nature of many music production careers in Kenya. Similarly, the study by Hernndez-March et al. which broadly focuses on general industry requirements, limits its applicability to the nuanced demands of Kenyan music production. Rooted in a competency-based education model, their approach risks oversimplifying the complex, and often tacit knowledge required in music production. The framework's focus on "authentic music production" raises critical questions such as: Whose definition of authenticity is being employed? and How does this concept of authenticity align with the diverse musical traditions and evolving contemporary scenes in Kenya? Furthermore, Hernndez-March et al.'s methodology, likely developed in a Western academic context, may not adequately capture the informal learning processes and apprenticeship models that often play a crucial role in Kenyan music production education.

The study's assumption that industry needs can be clearly defined by discrete competencies may fail to capture the fluid, rapidly evolving nature of skills required in Kenya's music industry. Munnelly's (2020) observation about the prioritization of artistic development over market-oriented skills in traditional music education programs adds a crucial dimension to this discourse. However, this binary opposition between artistic and market-oriented skills may be overly reductive, particularly in the Kenyan context. It fails to consider the possibility that artistic development and market orientation might be deeply intertwined in Kenya's music industry, where cultural authenticity and commercial viability often go hand in hand. Moreover, Munnelly's study, like many others in this field, assumes a universal definition of "market-oriented skills." This assumption is problematic when applied to the Kenyan context, where the music market operates under different dynamics compared to Western markets. The rapid evolution of Kenya's music

industry-driven by factors such as increasing internet access, mobile money systems, and changing consumer behaviours-suggests that relevant market skills may require a more nuanced understanding of the local context.

The challenge of aligning music production education with rapidly evolving industry demands is a global concern with significant implications for the Kenyan context. Bielmeier's (2021) study, *Aligning Audio Production Curricula with Industry Trends and Stakeholder Needs*, offers valuable insights into this issue, although it does not specifically address the Kenyan music context. Using mixed-methods approach with surveys, interviews, and curriculum analysis, Bielmeier identifies a persistent gap between audio production education and contemporary industry demands.

To bridge this gap, Bielmeier proposes a dynamic curriculum framework focused around a foundational creative recording project. This project-based approach is designed to be adaptable, allowing for the integration of modern industry trends while fostering core competencies in audio production. It emphasizes a balance between technical proficiency and creative problem-solving, mirroring the multifaceted nature of professional audio production work. Moreover, Bielmeier's framework encourages collaborative learning and utilizes project-based assessment methods, moving away from traditional testing towards a more holistic evaluation of students' work and skills.

Whereas Bielmeier's study provides a promising approach to audio production education, its applicability to the Kenyan context requires careful consideration. The Kenyan music industry, characterised by a rich diversity of traditional and contemporary genres, presents unique challenges and opportunities that Bielmeier's Western-centric framework may fully addressed. For instance, genre blending-a crucial skill in Kenya's diverse music landscape-may require more explicit attention than Bielmeier's model provides. Nevertheless, several aspects of Bielmeier's work resonate with the Kenyan context and

offer valuable directions for further research. The focus on aligning curricula with industry needs is particularly relevant, given the rapid evolution of Kenya's music scene. While the flexibility of Bielmeier's creative recording project could potentially accommodate exercises in genre blending, the effectiveness of such an approach in the Kenyan context remains unexplored. It would be valuable to investigate how Kenyan producers view the importance of genre blending skills and whether current educational approaches adequately address this crucial aspect of contemporary Kenyan music production.

Furthermore, Bielmeier's emphasis on continuous dialogue between educators and industry professionals raises important questions about the state of such collaboration in Kenya. Future studies could examine the current level of industry-education interaction in Kenya's music production sector and explore producers' perspectives on how this collaboration could be enhanced to improve educational outcomes. The balance between technical and creative skills in Bielmeier's curriculum model merits examination within the Kenyan context. Do Kenyan music producers perceive a similar need for this balance, or do they prioritize these skills differently based on the specific demands of the local industry? This question becomes particularly relevant when considering potential disparities in technological resources between Western institutions and some Kenyan institutions. While Bielmeier's study offers a thoughtful approach to aligning audio production education with industry needs, its applicability to the Kenyan context remains uncertain. Kenya's music industry, with its unique blend of traditional and contemporary elements, distinct technological context, and its particular industry dynamics, may require thoughtful adaptations to Bielmeier's model to be more effective.

Connell and Gibson's work, *Sound Tracks: Popular Music, Identity, and Place* (2003), provides a framework for understanding the dynamics of local music production within a

global context. Their exploration of how popular music reflects and shapes cultural identities is particularly relevant to the Kenyan music scene. Connell and Gibson argue that music is not merely a form of artistic expression but also a significant vehicle for cultural globalization and local identity formation. This perspective is crucial when considering the experiences of Kenyan music producers as they navigate the tension between global musical trends and local traditions, constantly negotiating the balance between adapting global influences while maintaining cultural authenticity. Their analysis of how commercial interests can impact the production and distribution of music-often prioritizing marketability over authenticity-resonates strongly with the challenges Kenyan producers face in an increasingly globalized industry. Moreover, Connell and Gibson's discussion of authenticity and credibility in music production raises important questions for Kenyan producers about how they define their musical identity amidst global influences. This tension between global appeal and local authenticity is a key area for Kenyan tertiary music education in to address in order to effectively prepare students for industry realities.

Complementing these cultural considerations, Zagorski-Thomas's *The Musicology of Record Production* (2014) provides a complementary perspective focusing on the technical and perceptual aspects of music production. Zagorski-Thomas argues that recorded music is fundamentally different from live music and requires a unique analytical approach. This insight is particularly relevant for Kenyan music production education, where students must be prepared to create music within specific constraints and possibilities of recorded media. Zagorski-Thomas's emphasis on the social construction of technology in music production offers a valuable lens through which to examine how Kenyan producers adapt global technologies to local contexts. This process of technological adaptation is crucial for maintaining cultural authenticity while engaging

with international markets-a challenge that is at the heart of contemporary Kenyan music production. Furthermore, Zagorski-Thomas's multidisciplinary approach, incorporating theories from psychology and sociology, enriches our understanding of how sound is created and perceived. This holistic perspective aligns well with the complex realities of the Kenyan music industry, where producers must consider not only technical aspects but also cultural significance and audience perceptions.

Considering these theoretical frameworks in relation to Bielmeier's (2021) emphasis on aligning curricula with industry needs, highlights the need for a multifaceted approach to music production education in Kenya. Such an approach must balance technical skills with cultural awareness, global trends with local traditions, and bridge theoretical knowledge with practical application. In my study on Kenyan music producers' perceptions of tertiary education, these themes converge in significant ways. By examining how producers perceive the knowledge gained in tertiary institutions, we can begin to understand how well current educational approaches prepare students to navigate the complex landscape described by Connell and Gibson, as well as Zagorski-Thomas.

This study, for example, explores how Kenyan producers perceive the balance between learning global production techniques and maintaining local musical traditions. It investigates whether producers feel their education has equipped them to adapt technology to local contexts, as suggested by Zagorski-Thomas's work on the social construction of technology in music production. Moreover, the research delves into how producers manage the tension between commercial pressures and cultural authenticity, a key theme in Connell and Gibson's work. By gathering producers' perspectives on these issues, the study aims to inform the development of more relevant and effective music production curricula in Kenyan tertiary institutions. Ultimately, by bringing together the

cultural insights of Connell and Gibson, the technical and perceptual focus of Zagorski-Thomas, and the curriculum alignment strategies of Bielmeier, this study seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in Kenyan music production education. It aims to bridge the gap between global theoretical frameworks and local industry realities, paving the way for educational approaches that truly prepare students for the dynamic world of Kenyan music production.

The reviewed literature provides a foundation for understanding the challenges and dynamics in music production education, particularly in relation to industry needs and cultural contexts. However, several significant gaps emerge when considering the focus of this study on Kenyan music producers' perceptions of knowledge gained in tertiary institutions that warrant further investigation. Notably, there is a limited exploration of how local musical traditions are integrated into the curriculum of tertiary institutions. While Roberts (1992) discusses the tension between global and local cultural influences and Connell and Gibson (2003) examine and the role of music in cultural identity formation, their work does not specifically address how Kenyan educational institutions navigate these complexities.

This study bridges this gap by investigating producers' perceptions on how well their education prepared them to work with Kenyan musical styles and traditions. Another significant gap in the existing literature is the inadequate attention paid to informal learning processes. As seen in Bielmeier's (2021) work, on curriculum alignment, the focus is predominantly on formal educational structures, yet in the Kenyan context, informal learning and apprenticeship models may play a crucial role in music production education. By exploring how producers view the balance between formal education and informal learning experiences in their professional development, this study provides a more holistic picture of music production education in Kenya. The literature also falls

short in addressing the technological challenges faced by Kenyan producers. Although Zagorski-Thomas (2014) discusses the social construction of technology in music production, there is limited research on how Kenyan producers adapt global technologies to local contexts. Furthermore, while the importance of balancing global trends with local traditions is acknowledged in the literature, there is insufficient exploration of genre blending in Kenyan music. The literature also reveals a dearth of research on industry-education collaboration in Kenya. Bielmeier (2021) emphasizes the importance of ongoing dialogue between educators and industry professionals, the current state of such collaboration in Kenya's music production sector remains under-researched.

In conclusion, while the existing literature provides valuable theoretical frameworks and insights from other contexts, there is a clear need for research that specifically addresses the unique aspects of Kenya's music production landscape. This study addresses some these gaps by providing empirical data on Kenyan music producers' perceptions of their tertiary education, with a focus on cultural relevance, technological adaptation, genre blending, and industry-education collaboration. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive and context-specific understanding of music production education in Kenya, paving the way for more effective educational approaches that truly prepare students for the dynamic world of Kenyan music production.

2.4 Views of Musicians on Whether Talent or Education is the Most Valuable Asset in Music Production

The Kenyan music industry presents a complex landscape where the interplay between innate talent and formal education continually shapes the trajectories of local artists and producers. This review explores the ongoing debate over the relative importance of talent versus education in Kenyan local music production, drawing on various studies and industry perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of this multifaceted

issue. Hallam's (2006) research presents a compelling argument for viewing musical ability as a socially constructed phenomenon, shaped by cultural norms, subgroup dynamics, and individual experiences. This perspective stands in stark contrast to earlier views, such as those proposed by Galton (1869) and Howe (1999), which emphasized the concept of "born geniuses" or "natural talents." Hallam suggests that what we consider "musical talent" is not a fixed, innate attribute, but rather a complex, multifaceted construct that develops over time through interaction with the environment.

This viewpoint has profound implications for understanding the development of music production skills in Kenya. It suggests that the abilities valued in Kenyan music production–whether technical proficiency or creative innovation–may be more malleable and responsive to educational interventions than previously thought. However, Hallam does not discount the role of individual differences or predispositions. Instead, she emphasizes the interplay between these innate factors and environmental influences, including formal education and informal learning experiences. This nuanced view resonates with the experiences of many Kenyan producers who recognize the value of both natural ability and acquired knowledge. In addition, Hallam highlights the importance of motivation and self-efficacy in the development of musical skills.

This aspect is particularly relevant to the Kenyan context, where many producers face significant challenges in terms of resources and industry support. The role of self-belief and perseverance in overcoming these obstacles and developing one's skills cannot be overstated. The emphasis on the multiple components of musical ability–including aural skills, technical proficiency, expressivity, and creativity–provides a framework for understanding the diverse skill set required in Kenyan music production.

Nonetheless, applying Hallam's work to the Kenyan music production scene also raises important questions about the nature of formal music education in the country. If musical ability is indeed socially constructed and developable, how can educational institutions best nurture these abilities? How can curricula be designed to balance the development of technical skill with the cultivation of creativity and cultural authenticity?

The debate surrounding the relative importance of innate talent versus formal education in music production takes on new dimensions when considering the specific skills valued in professional settings. In this context, Herbst and Albrecht's (2017) study on the skillset of professional studio musicians in Germany provides valuable insights that can inform our understanding of the Kenyan music production landscape. Herbst and Albrecht's research, titled *The Skillset of Professional Studio Musicians in the German Popular Music Recording Industry*, employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews of professional musicians, producers, and engineers. Their study aimed to identify the most crucial skills for success in the recording industry, challenging traditional assumptions about musical virtuosity. Contrary to expectations, Herbst and Albrecht found that technical virtuosity on an instrument, while important, was not the most critical factor for success in studio work.

Their research highlighted a constellation of skills that were highly prized in the industry. Among these, stylistic versatility emerged as a key attribute, with musicians who could authentically perform across various genres being in high demand. This versatility was closely tied to strong improvisational abilities, allowing musicians to adapt quickly to different musical contexts and contribute creatively to recording sessions. Herbst and Albrecht's study also emphasized the importance of theoretical knowledge, particularly in music theory. This was valued for academic reasons and its practical applications in spontaneous composition and arranging. Studio musicians who

could quickly understand complex harmonic structures, suggest alternative chord progressions, or compose complementary parts on the spot were seen as invaluable assets in the recording process. Furthermore, the study highlighted the importance of certain personal qualities, such as the ability to work well in a team, maintain a positive attitude under pressure, and communicate effectively with other musicians and producers. These soft skills were often considered as crucial as musical abilities in determining a studio musician's success and employability.

When we consider these findings in the context of Kenyan music production, several important implications emerge. Herbst and Albrecht's research challenges the notion that natural talent or technical prowess alone is sufficient for success in the music industry. This view aligns with the perspectives of some Kenyan musicians who recognize the value of a broad skill set. The emphasis on stylistic versatility in Herbst and Albrecht's study is particularly relevant to the Kenyan context, where the music scene is characterized by a rich diversity of genres and styles. Kenyan producers who can navigate this diversity, blending traditional elements with contemporary sounds, may have a significant advantage. This point resonates with the observations of Kenyan musicians who highlight the importance of genre blending and adaptability in the local industry. Moreover, the value placed on theoretical knowledge in Herbst and Albrecht's study presents an interesting counterpoint to some perspectives in the Kenyan industry that prioritize innate talent or practical experience over formal education. While some Kenyan producers express concern about the rigidity of formal education, the German study suggests that, theoretical knowledge, when applied creatively, can significantly enhance a musician's versatility and spontaneity.

However, it's crucial to recognise that Herbst and Albrecht's study was conducted in the context of the German popular music industry, which may differ significantly from the

Kenyan music landscape in terms of resources, cultural expectations, and industry structures. Therefore, the applicability of these findings to the Kenyan context is not automatic and requires careful consideration. For instance, while the German study emphasizes the importance of formal music theory knowledge, the Kenyan music scene may place greater value on understanding local musical traditions and cultural contexts.

In the ongoing debate about nurturing talent in specialized fields, Vaiman, Collings, and Scullion's (2017) study, *Contextualising talent management*, provides insights on the challenges and opportunities in Kenyan music production education. They argue that effective talent management cannot be approached with a one-size- fits-all mentality. Instead, they propose that the development of talent-including creative and technical skills-must be deeply rooted in the specific context in which it occurs.

Their study examines how factors such as organizational culture, industry demands, and broader societal influences shape the most effective approaches to nurturing and developing talent. A key finding of their research is that talent management strategies that are highly attuned to local conditions tend to be more successful than those that attempt to apply universal principles without consideration for context. This contextualization, they argue, should take into account not only the immediate organizational environment but also the broader industrial landscape and cultural environment where talent development takes place. Additionally, Vaiman et al. emphasize the importance of flexibility and adaptability in talent management. They suggest that as industries evolve and cultural expectations shift, the strategies for developing talent must also change. They argue that this dynamic approach to talent management, is crucial for maintaining relevance and effectiveness in rapidly changing environments.

In consideration of Vaiman et al.'s findings within the context of Kenyan music production education, several important implications emerge. Firstly, their emphasis on

contextual sensitivity resonates strongly with the unique characteristics of the Kenyan music industry. Kenya's rich and diverse musical traditions in, combined with the rapid evolution of contemporary music styles, creates a complex landscape that demands equally nuanced educational approaches. For instance, the study suggests that effective music production education in Kenya should be deeply rooted in local musical traditions while addressing the demands of the contemporary global music market. This perspective resonates with some of the Kenyan musicians who emphasize the importance of maintaining a unique "signature" rooted in local traditions. However, achieving this balance in formal education settings remains a significant challenge. As new genres emerge and production techniques advance, educational institutions must continuously adapt their curricula in order to remain relevant and responsive to industry needs.

This may require a more flexible approach to curriculum design, one that can quickly incorporate new trends and technologies while still preserving a strong foundation in fundamental skills and Kenyan musical heritage. Furthermore, the insights by Vaiman et al. on considering broader societal influences in talent management strategies have significant implications for music production education in Kenya. Given the cultural significance and social impact of music in Kenyan society, these factors should be considered in developing educational approaches. This aligns with Elliott's (2012) concept of "artistic citizenship," which emphasizes the importance of understanding the broader role of music in society. Notably, while Vaiman et al.'s study provides valuable insights, its broad focus on talent management across various industries means that its application to the specific context of music production education requires careful consideration. The unique dynamics of the creative industries-and music production in particular-necessitates additional research to fully understand how these principles can be most effectively implemented.

In the evolving landscape of music production education, the tension between structured learning and creative exploration remains central. Burnard et al.'s (2015) study, *The Imperative of Diverse Musical Creativities in Academic and Professional Worlds*, provides valuable insights into this dynamic, challenging traditional views of creativity within educational and professional music settings. Burnard et al. conducted an extensive investigation into musical creativity across various contexts, from formal educational settings to professional music industries. Their research, which combined theoretical analysis with empirical case studies, focused on how different forms of musical creativity are valued, developed, and expressed in different environments. A key finding of their study was the identification of multiple forms of musical creativity, each with distinct characteristics and contexts.

These ranged from individual creativity to collaborative and intercultural approaches, including traditional and digital forms of music-making. Burnard et al. argued that these diverse creativities often flourish in environments that allow for exploration, risk-taking, and breaking of conventional boundaries. They observed that, while formal education provides essential foundational knowledge and skills, it is often less structured, more exploratory approaches that foster the adaptability and innovation crucial for success in the professional music world. They noted that, musicians and producers who could navigate between different forms of creativity, adapting their approaches to suit various contexts, were particularly well-positioned to thrive in the ever-changing music industry. When we consider Burnard et al.'s findings in the context of Kenyan music production education, several important implications emerge. Their emphasis on diverse forms of creativity resonates strongly with the rich and varied Kenyan musical landscape, where traditional forms coexist and blend with other contemporary genres. These insights suggest that Kenyan music production education could benefit from a more pluralistic approach to

creativity—one that values both traditional musical knowledge, innovative, and boundary—pushing practices. The study's emphasis on exploratory approaches are particularly relevant to the experiences of Kenyan music producers, who often face challenges related to the rigidity of formal training. Furthermore, Burnard et al.'s work challenges us to reconsider how creativity is nurtured in Kenyan music production programs, noting that while formal education provides essential technical skills and theoretical knowledge, it may not always foster the adaptability and innovative thinking required in the professional world. This is reflected in the concerns expressed by some Kenyan musicians. It is important to note that Burnard et al.'s do not advocate for the abandonment of formal education; rather, they suggest a need for balance that integrates structured learning with more exploratory approaches. Their findings emphasize on the importance of being able to navigate between different forms of creativity-an approach that is particularly relevant to the Kenyan context, where producers often need to blend traditional elements with global trends. This suggests that Kenyan music production education might benefit from incorporating more flexible, project-based learning approaches that allow students to experiment with different creative modes and adapt to various musical contexts.

In the ongoing debate about talent and its development in specialized fields such as music production, two significant studies offer valuable insights on the Kenyan context: Gagné's (2004) Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT) and Thompson and McIntyre's (2013) research on decision-making in music production. Gagné's (2004) represents a paradigm shift in how we conceptualize the development of exceptional abilities, distinguish between "giftedness" which Gagné defines as natural abilities or aptitudes, and "talent", which he describes as systematically developed skills. According to Gagné, transformation of natural abilities into developed talents is catalysed by

intrapersonal and environmental factors, as well as chance the model identifies six natural ability domains-intellectual, creative, social, perceptual, muscular, and motor control-as the foundational "raw material" or "potential" for talent development. The model then outlines how these natural abilities can be developed into talents through learning, training, and practice. This developmental process, according to Gagné is influenced by two catalysts: intrapersonal factors (such as motivation, volition, and personality), and environmental factors (including milieu, people, provisions, and events). Gagné's DMGT has profound implications for our understanding talent development in Kenyan music production.

It suggests that, while natural abilities may provide a foundation for success in, systematic development through learning and practice is crucial. This perspective challenges simplistic notions of innate talent as the sole determinant of success and instead emphasizes on the role of education, training, and environmental factors in shaping musical abilities. In the Kenyan music production landscape, Gagné's model invites us to consider how natural abilities in areas such as auditory perception, creativity, and motor control (crucial for operating production equipment) interact with educational resources, cultural influences, and individual motivation to shape skilled music producers. The model raises questions about how the Kenyan music industry and educational system can better support the developmental process that transforms natural abilities into developed talents.

While Gagné's model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding talent development, it does not specifically address the unique challenges and decision-making processes involved in music production. This gap is where Thompson and McIntyre's (2013) research becomes particularly relevant. Their study, *Rethinking Creative Practice in Record Production and Studio Recording Education: Addressing*

the Field, delves into the complex nature of decision-making in music production environments. It emphasizes that effective music production involves more than technical proficiency or creative intuition alone. Instead, it requires the ability to make informed decisions in complex, often unpredictable environments. Through their analysis of professional music production practices, Thompson and McIntyre highlight the concept "adaptive expertise," in music production. This expertise involves more than just knowing how to operate equipment or apply music theory; it requires an ability to navigate the social, cultural, and economic dimensions of music production. Their findings suggest that successful producers must be able to balance technical knowledge with interpersonal skills, cultural awareness, and business acumen.

Thompson and McIntyre's work is particularly pertinent to the Kenyan context, where music producers often need to navigate a diverse cultural landscape, blend traditional and contemporary elements, and face resource constraints. Their findings suggest that music production education in Kenya should go beyond teaching technical skills to include training in decision-making, problem-solving, and adaptability.

When we consider these two studies in relation to the Kenyan music production scene, several key insights emerge. Gagné's DMGT provides a framework for understanding how natural musical abilities can be developed through education and practice, challenging the notion that successful producers are simply "born" with talent. This aligns with the perspectives of some Kenyan musicians who recognize the value of both innate ability and acquired knowledge. At the same time, Thompson and McIntyre's research highlights the complex, multifaceted nature of music production work, suggesting that education programs need to prepare students for more than just the technical skill. This resonates with the experiences of Kenyan producers, who frequently have to navigate not only artistic decisions, but also cultural, economic, and interpersonal

challenges in their work. Although Gagné's model is comprehensive, it does not account for the influence of specific cultural contexts, such as Kenya's diverse musical heritage, on development of music production talent. Research is needed to understand how Kenyan cultural factors shape the transformation of natural abilities into developed talents in music production. In addition, Thompson and McIntyre's study was conducted in well-resourced Western contexts, highlighting a gap in understanding how decision-making in music production might differ in resource-constrained environments like many Kenyan studios. Both studies focus primarily on formal educational contexts, however, given the prevalence of informal learning in the Kenyan music scene, research is needed on how Gagné's developmental processes and Thompson and McIntyre's decision-making skills are acquired outside formal educational settings. Moreover, while Thompson and McIntyre touch on technological aspects, there is still a need to understand how Kenyan producers adapt to and innovate with different levels of technology, blending traditional and modern approaches.

The literature reviewed reveals a complex interplay between innate talent and formal education within the context of Kenyan music production, challenging simplistic views of musical ability and highlighting the need for a nuanced, culturally sensitive approach to music education. Hallam's (2006) conceptualization of musical ability as a socially constructed phenomenon provides a compelling framework for understanding the malleability of music production skills in Kenya. Meanwhile Herbst and Albrecht's (2017) findings on the importance of versatility and theoretical knowledge offer valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of professional music production. Vaiman et al.'s (2017) emphasis on contextualized talent management strategies underscores the importance of tailoring educational approaches to the unique characteristics of the Kenyan music industry. Burnard et al.'s (2015) work on diverse musical creativities

reinforces the need for educational models that balance structured learning with exploratory approaches, particularly relevant in Kenya's rich and varied musical landscape.

Additionally, Gagné's (2004) DMGT model, and Thompson and McIntyre's (2013) research on adaptive expertise in music production collectively suggest that success in Kenyan music production likely stems from a combination of developed natural abilities and acquired decision-making skills. However, the application of these predominantly Western-centric models to the Kenyan context reveals significant gaps in our understanding. These gaps include the need for research on how specific cultural factors influence talent development in Kenyan music production, how decision-making processes operate in resource-constrained environments, and how informal learning pathways contribute to the development of production skills. Furthermore, there is a critical need to investigate how Kenyan producers navigate the tension between preserving traditional musical elements and embracing global trends, and how education can better prepare them for this challenge. As the Kenyan music production industry evolves, these knowledge gaps present both challenges and opportunities for music production education. This study contributes to the development of a more culturally responsive and industry-aligned educational model that can effectively nurture the diverse talents and skills required in Kenya's unique musical landscape.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in an integrative theoretical framework that combines Lev Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory with Pierre Bourdieu's Cultural Capital Theory. This comprehensive approach enabled a thorough examination of both the learning processes and the socio-cultural factors that shape the experiences and success of individuals within the Kenyan music production landscape. By integrating these two

theories, this study provided an understanding of how music production graduates in Kenya develop their skills, navigate industry demands, and negotiate the complex interplay between formal education and practical experience. Vygotsky's Social Constructivism offered valuable perspectives on the learning processes that occur within social and cultural contexts, crucial for understanding how music production skills are acquired and refined in Kenya. Bourdieu's Cultural Capital Theory, on the other hand, provided a framework for analysing the broader societal structures and power dynamics that influence success in the industry, offering a lens through which to examine why certain skills, knowledge, and connections are valued over others.

2.5.1 Lev Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory

Lev Vygotsky's (1896-1934) Social Constructivism Theory, offers a framework for understanding the development of knowledge and skills within social and cultural contexts. At its core, the theory posits that learning is inherently social, occurring through interactions with others and mediated by cultural tools and signs. Vygotsky (1978) argued that higher mental functions in individuals originate from social interactions and that learning happens through the internalization of these exchanges.

A key concept in Vygotsky's theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which highlights the space between what a learner can achieve independently and what they can accomplish with guidance. In the context of Kenyan music production, the ZPD represents the gap between a graduate's current skills and the industry-standard competencies they can achieve with mentorship from experienced producers. This concept was particularly relevant to the first objective of this study, which sought to assess the perceived level of preparedness of Kenyan graduates to produce music on demand. By examining the ZPD of music production graduates, insights emerge on the gap between formal education and the skills required in the industry, as well as the

potential for growth through guided experience. Closely related to the ZPD is the role of the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO). In Vygotsky's theory, MKO refers to individuals with greater expertise who guide learners through their ZPD. In the Kenyan music industry, MKOs may include experienced producers, sound engineers, and industry veterans who mentor emerging professionals. This concept of the MKO was vital for understanding how knowledge and skills are transferred within the industry, often through informal mentorship relationships that supplement or even supplant formal education. This aspect of Vygotsky's theory provided a foundation for exploring how graduates bridge the gap between their theoretical knowledge and practical industry requirements. It directly addressed the second objective of this study, which aimed to understand producers' perspectives on the applicability of theoretical and practical knowledge gained in tertiary institutions. Building on the concepts of ZPD and MKOs; Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) introduced the idea of scaffolding.

This metaphor describes the temporary support provided by MKOs to learners operating within their ZPD. In the context of music production, scaffolding might involve an experienced producer guiding a graduate through complex mixing techniques, gradually reducing support as the graduate gains proficiency. The scaffolding process in music production is dynamic and responsive, with support being gradually withdrawn as graduates demonstrate increased competence. This notion is particularly relevant for understanding how graduates transition from formal education to professional practice, providing insights into the types of support needed to develop independent producers capable of innovating within the Kenyan music scene. Another key aspect of Vygotsky's theory is the concept of cultural mediation, emphasizes how cultural tools and signs shape learning processes. In the Kenyan context, these tools include both physical elements, such as production software and recording equipment, and psychological

elements, like industry jargon and local musical traditions. The concept of cultural mediation is especially pertinent when examining how graduates adapt their skills to local music genres and production styles, which directly ties into the study's focus on the applicability of knowledge gained in tertiary institutions to the local industry context.

Scholars have expanded on Vygotsky's work in various fields, providing additional insights relevant to this study. For instance, Lave and Wenger (1991) developed the theory of situated learning which emphasizes that learning is inherently tied to authentic contexts and activities.

This perspective is particularly relevant to understanding how music production skills are acquired in real-world studio environments, rather than solely through classroom instruction. Their concept of "legitimate peripheral participation" offers a framework for understanding how newcomers to the music production industry gradually acquire skills and knowledge through participation in the community of practice. In the field of music education, Wiggins (2015) applied social constructivist principles to understand collaborative music-making and learning processes. This application provides insight into how Kenyan music producers might learn through collaboration with peers and mentors in studio settings. Wiggins' work highlights the importance of social interaction in developing musical skills and understanding, which is particularly relevant in the collaborative environment of music production.

Vygotsky's theoretical framework and its subsequent elaborations provide valuable insights into the cognitive and social dimensions of learning for music production graduates in Kenya. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this theory when applied to this specific context. One notable gap is the theory's focus on structured learning environment, which may not fully account for the prevalence of self-taught producers in Kenya. As Chaiklin (2003) notes, Vygotsky's theory may not fully

capture learning that happens outside formal educational settings, a common scenario in the Kenyan music production landscape where many successful producers have developed their skills through informal pathways. Another limitation is that while Vygotsky acknowledges cultural mediation, his theory does not provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how global music production techniques are localized and adapted in different contexts. Robbins (2001) argues that more nuanced approaches are needed to understand cross-cultural learning and adaptation, particularly in industries like music production that are heavily influenced by global trends and technologies. Furthermore, Vygotsky's theory doesn't adequately address how economic factors impact learning and skill development, a crucial consideration in the resource-limited environment of Kenya's music industry. In addition, the theory does not deeply explore the power dynamics specific to professional industries, which are crucial in understanding career trajectories in music production.

Notwithstanding these limitations, Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory offers a robust foundation for analysing the complex learning processes inherent in the Kenyan music production industry. It offers valuable insights into how knowledge is constructed through social interaction, the role of cultural tools in shaping learning, and the importance of guided experience in skill development. To address the gaps in Vygotsky's theory and provide a more comprehensive theoretical framework for this study, we turn to Pierre Bourdieu's Cultural Capital Theory.

2.5.2 Pierre Bourdieu's Cultural Capital Theory

Pierre Bourdieu's Cultural Capital Theory provides a complimentary understanding of the social and cultural dynamics that influence success within the Kenyan music production industry. Bourdieu (1986) expands the concept of capital beyond economic considerations to include cultural, social, and symbolic forms. This multifaceted view of

capital provided a lens through which to examine the factors contributing to a graduate's success in the Kenyan context. At the core of Bourdieu's theory is the concept of cultural capital, which exists in three states: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized. Embodied cultural capital refers to the long- lasting dispositions of the mind and body, which in the context of music production might include technical proficiency with production software, an ear for mixing local genres, or familiarity with diverse Kenyan music styles. Objectified cultural capital consists of tangible cultural goods, such as studio equipment or production software. The ability to effectively utilize these objects is closely tied to one's embodied cultural capital. Institutionalized cultural capital pertains to academic qualifications and credentials, such as degrees or certificates from tertiary institutions offering music production programs (Bourdieu 1986).

The concept of cultural capital is particularly significant for understanding how knowledge gained in educational settings applies to the Kenyan music production industry. Bourdieu's framework allows for an examination of how various forms of cultural capital are valued in this context and how this valuation may diverge from traditional academic expectations. For instance, while formal education provides institutionalized cultural capital through recognized qualifications, it does not necessarily equip graduates with the practical skills or industry connections that are often more highly valued in the field. This observation resonates with Brown and Hesketh's (2004) work on the relative value of credentials in competitive job markets, where they argue that the relationship between educational credentials and occupational outcomes is increasingly tenuous. Bourdieu also emphasizes the importance of social capital, defined as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). In the music production industry, social

capital is crucial for accessing opportunities, collaborations, and industry knowledge. This aspect helps explain why informally educated producers—who may have developed extensive networks through practical experience—often have advantages over their formally educated counterparts who lack these connections. The influence of social capital is directly relevant to assessing graduates' preparedness to navigate the industry and produce music that meets market demands.

Additionally, Bourdieu (2018) introduces the concept of symbolic capital, which refers to resources available based on honour, prestige, or recognition. In the realm of music production, symbolic capital can manifest through industry awards, chart successes, or reputations among peers. This concept is particularly pertinent when exploring whether talent or education holds greater value in music production. It suggests that recognition within the industry may carry more weight than formal educational credentials alone. Another critical component of Bourdieu's theory (1993) is his notion of "field", which he describes as a structured social space characterized by its own rules and schemes of domination. The Kenyan music production industry is conceptualized as a distinct field with specific valuations attached to different forms of capital.

This perspective elucidates why formal education does not always translate directly into success in this arena; practical skills and industry connections often take precedence over institutional qualifications. Bourdieu's (1993) idea of "habitus" further enriches this analysis by referring to the dispositions and embodied behaviours individuals develop through their life experiences. In the context of this study, habitus can explain how individuals from varied educational backgrounds—whether formal or informal— approach music production and navigate the industry differently. Graduates from formal institutions may cultivate a habitus aligned with academic expectations, while informally educated producers might possess a habitus more attuned to the realities of the industry.

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Scholars have applied and expanded Bourdieu's theory in various contexts, providing additional insights relevant to this study. Lareau and Weininger (2003) interpret cultural capital as the ability to meet the implicit expectations and criteria of evaluation in institutional settings. This interpretation is particularly relevant when considering how music production graduates navigate industry expectations that may differ significantly from academic standards. Thornton's (1995) concept of subcultural capital, which highlights how status operates in specific cultural contexts, provides valuable insights into the unique valuation of skills and knowledge in the Kenyan music scene. This perspective explains why certain forms of knowledge or experience may be highly valued within the music production community, even if they are not recognized in more formal or mainstream settings.

Applying Bourdieu's framework to the Kenyan music production industry revealed valuable insights into its dynamics. The industry's valuation of capital often prioritizes forms acquired through practical experience (embodied cultural capital) over formal education (institutionalized cultural capital). Success in this field frequently hinges on knowledge of local music trends and production techniques tailored to popular genres—elements that formal education may not adequately provide.

Moreover, as it was uncovered in the analysis, informally educated producers often demonstrated greater adeptness to convey their social and cultural capital into economic and symbolic forms within the industry. This observation directly relates to the ongoing discussions about what holds more value in music production: talent (embodied cultural capital) or education (institutionalized cultural capital). Additionally, the habitus developed through informal learning experiences align closely with field-specific realities, contributing to greater success for those who navigate these dynamics effectively.

2.5.3 Integration of Theoretical Frameworks

The integration of these theoretical frameworks enriched the analysis of learning and skill development within the Kenyan music production industry. Toynbee (2000) explored how cultural production operates within specific social contexts, emphasizing the role of local institutions and constraints in shaping creative practices. This perspective aligns with the notion that educational experiences must be understood within the broader socio-cultural environment, as highlighted by Hesmondhalgh (2013), who discussed the interplay between cultural capital and creative industries. By using this integration, this study provided a more comprehensive understanding of how graduates navigate their transition into the music industry.

In assessing the perceived preparedness of Kenyan graduates to produce music on demand, it became essential to consider how educational institutions could better align their curricula with industry expectations. Banks (2010) indicates that graduates often face challenges in adapting their skills to meet professional standards, suggesting a need for enhanced mentorship and practical training opportunities. Furthermore, when evaluating the applicability of theoretical and practical knowledge gained in tertiary institutions, scholars like McRobbie (2002) emphasized the importance of contextualizing learning experiences to ensure relevance in dynamic fields such as music production. This integrated approach allowed for a nuanced examination of both individual learning processes and the structural factors that influenced graduates' readiness for industry demands, ultimately contributing to a more vibrant and innovative music production sector in Kenya.

This chapter examined the literature on music production education in Kenya focusing on three main areas: graduate preparedness, industry perspectives on formal education, and the relationship between talent and education. The review revealed significant gaps

between academic training and industry needs, particularly regarding the balancing technical skills and cultural knowledge. By applying Vygotsky's Social Constructivism, and Bourdieu's Cultural Capital Theories, the review established a framework for understanding how music producers develop competency within Kenya's unique cultural context. While existing research provides valuable insights into music education broadly, there remains limited investigation into Kenya's specific music production landscape. The following chapter outlines the methodology used to address these gaps.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter delineates the methodological framework implemented in this study, which sought to investigate the lived experiences and perceptions of music production graduates and industry stakeholders within the Kenyan context. It covers the research design, location, target population, sampling procedures, data collection instruments, and analysis methods, as well as the ethical considerations that were observed. The methodology facilitated an in-depth understanding of the alignment between music production education and industry needs, providing practical recommendations for improving education practices in the sector.

3.2 Research Philosophy and Design

This study was grounded in Interpretivism as its philosophical foundation. Epistemologically, I acknowledged that knowledge about music production competency is subjectively constructed through the lived experiences of graduates and industry professionals. This understanding guided the choice of a qualitative approach, as it allows for the exploration of multiple realities and interpretations of graduate competency in the Kenyan music production context. Ontologically, this research recognized that reality in music production education is socially constructed and multiple, varying across different stakeholders' experiences and perspectives. Axiologically, I acknowledged my position as both researcher and music production graduate, employing Husserl's epoché to bracket personal values and experiences while maintaining transparency about my role in the research process. Following these philosophical underpinnings, this study adopted a qualitative research approach, characterized by its emphasis on gathering rich, subjective data that reflects the lived

experiences of participants. Qualitative research endeavours to address empirical challenges through profound engagement with individual perspectives, facilitating the generation of actionable insights that can directly inform praxis (Masaryk & Sokolová, 2012). This approach was flexible, adapting to the unique research context through methods such as thematic analysis and narrative inquiry (Yin, 2009). Such a design aligned with the goals of this study, which sought to explore the competency of music production graduates to produce local music on demand through the perspectives of music production industry stakeholders.

The phenomenological design was selected for its capacity to elucidate the quintessence of participants' lived experiences and perceptions vis-à-vis music production education and professional praxis. As Lester (1999) emphasizes, phenomenology is particularly effective at illuminating individual perspectives, challenging assumptions, and providing insights that might not emerge from more structured research approaches. This design allowed the study to delve deeply into how key stakeholders—graduates, educators, and industry professionals—perceive and make sense of the competencies of music production graduates in the Kenyan context. Furthermore, this approach was critical for a study examining the interplay between formal education and the dynamic needs of the music production industry. Through a rigorous examination of participants' lived experiences, this investigation elucidated systemic lacunae within the educational framework that impede graduates' capacity to fulfil industry expectations. This process also highlighted areas where education could be improved to better align with the realities of the music production profession in Kenya. The strength of phenomenology lies in its ability to facilitate rich, detailed accounts of personal experiences, which was achieved through the use of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These methods are characterized by minimal structure, allowing participants

to freely express their thoughts and reflections on the research topic. Lester (1999) notes that by minimizing undue influence from the researcher, phenomenology allows for a more authentic representation of participants' experiences. This was crucial for the study, as it sought to accurately capture the perspectives of individuals navigating both the academic and professional aspects of music production.

Given that the purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of music production graduates, music producers, musicians concerning graduate competency towards the production of Kenyan local music. Burch (2021) proposes that applied phenomenology involves not only describing participants' experiences but also interpreting these experiences to inform practical theory and action. This framework integrates phenomenological analysis with insights from other disciplines—in this case, music education and industry practices—to address real-world problems. In line with Burch's model, this study first identified the interdisciplinary problem of disconnect between music production education and industry needs. Using phenomenology, the research examined how music production graduates experience their education and make meaning of their professional work.

This allowed for an in-depth characterization of the challenges and opportunities that graduates encounter as they transition from formal education to industry practice. Employing Husserl's (1977) concept of epoché, I bracketed my preconceptions regarding the Kenyan music production industry and its educational paradigms. This phenomenological reduction facilitated an unbiased approach to data collection, ensuring that participants' perspectives were not refracted through the prism of personal presuppositions. This was fundamental as it assisted me to avoid imposing my own interpretations on participants' narratives, allowing for a more genuine exploration of lived experiences (Vagle, 2014). I was able to engage deeply with the participants'

accounts of their transition from education to industry practice without pre-empting what I expected to find. This was especially essential given the variability in participants' experiences—while some found success in the industry, others faced significant barriers, and it was important to understand these diverse experiences on their own terms.

By integrating these phenomenological insights with findings from music production education research and industry perspectives, the study developed actionable recommendations aimed at enhancing the alignment between education and industry expectations. Burch (2021) argues that applied phenomenology is well-suited for interdisciplinary research, particularly when it aims to bridge theoretical understanding with practical outcomes. This approach was crucial for ensuring that the study's findings were not only academically rigorous but also relevant and applicable to the real-world challenges faced by music production graduates and professionals in Kenya. Through this method, the study was able to offer distinct insights while remaining relevant to the practical concerns of educators, policymakers, and industry stakeholders. By gathering and analysing subjective data from various groups, the research produced insights that could inform curriculum development, teaching practices, and industry engagement. This practical application is a hallmark of applied phenomenology, ensuring that the study contributes meaningfully to both academic scholarship and professional practice.

3.3 Location of the Study

This study was conducted in Nairobi County, (see appendix XI), Kenya's capital and largest urban centre. (Nairobi City County, website, retrieved September 28, 2024). Nairobi was chosen due to its unique blend of educational, cultural, and economic significance, particularly in the field of music production. The city hosts a large number of institutions offering formal music production training, making it an ideal location to explore the relationship between education and industry practice in this field

(Commission for University Education, 2021). Nairobi's cosmopolitan nature further amplified its relevance as a research site. As the economic and cultural hub of the country, Nairobi attracts individuals from diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, and cultures. This diversity not only enriches the city's artistic landscape but also fosters a dynamic fusion of traditional and contemporary music styles. Nairobi's cultural dynamism is characterized by the perpetual dialectic between indigenous sonic traditions and global musical paradigms, fostering a singular milieu for musical innovation (Nyairo, 2016). The city's artistic scene is emblematic of this intersection, with Nairobi serving as a locus for the synthesis of indigenous Kenyan musical elements and global influences. Musicians in Nairobi are known for blending traditional Kenyan sounds—such as those from ethnic groups like the Kikuyu, Luo, and Luhya—with modern genres like hip-hop, Afrobeat, and electronic music (Kubuka website; Standard Media Newspaper website, retrieved September 28, 2024). Indeed, Nairobi was an optimal environment for investigating the complexities of music production in Kenya, as it reflects the ongoing dialogue between local cultural heritage and contemporary global trends.

In addition to its cultural diversity, Nairobi has historically been a hub for commercial music production. As Eisenberg (2015) points out, since the 1970s, the city has been home to numerous recording studios that have played a central role in shaping the popular music landscape in Kenya. These studios cater to a wide range of musical genres, from traditional folk music to cutting-edge urban sounds, making the city an important centre for music production innovation. This longstanding tradition of music production makes Nairobi an ideal location for studying the training and professional development of music producers, as well as the interplay between formal education and industry demands. Moreover, Nairobi's role as a commercial hub ensures that it attracts musicians, producers, and other industry stakeholders from across Kenya and beyond.

This influx of talent, combined with the city's infrastructure, allows for a cross-pollination of ideas and practices, enabling the emergence of unique musical forms. The presence of numerous music production studios, performance venues, and creative spaces also provides a rich backdrop for studying how possessive graduates of music production programs navigate the professional landscape and engage with the industry. Thus, the combination of Nairobi's educational infrastructure, cultural diversity, and music production history makes it an ideal site for this study. The city's ability to facilitate the synthesis of local and global influences positions it as a focal point for exploring the intricacies of music production in Kenya and understanding how formal education aligns with the practical needs of the industry.

3.4 Population of the Study

The population of interest for this study encompassed a diverse range of stakeholders within the Kenyan music production industry, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the sector. The key groups included music production graduates, music producers, and musicians, each of whom play critical roles in the industry's ecosystem. However, to gain a more holistic understanding of the music production landscape in Kenya, the study also incorporated additional stakeholders from related sectors—including deejays, media representatives, and digital music platform executives—who influence the distribution, consumption, and promotion of local music.

The primary participants—music production graduates, producers, and musicians—were selected based on their direct involvement in the creation, performance, and production of music. These groups were central to the study, as their experiences provided key insights into how formal education prepares individuals for professional practice in the music industry. When studying this professional practice, it was essential to include participants who can speak directly to the processes and challenges inherent in their

fields (Creswell, 2013). Music production graduates were included because they represent the direct outcomes of Kenya's formal music production education system. Their experiences offered vital feedback on the efficacy of educational programs in equipping them with the skills required by the industry. By examining the lived experiences of these graduates, the study was able to address whether formal education adequately prepares them for the culturally practical demands of the music production industry in Kenya. Maxwell (2013) asserts the importance of including recent graduates in studies focusing on education-to-career transitions, as they can provide detailed reflections on how their training aligns with industry realities. Music producers— especially those with at least 10 years of professional experience—were selected based on their established track records of working with local artists, encounters with graduates and shaping the sound of contemporary Kenyan music.

As industry veterans, their insights into the production process, and creative trends were essential for understanding how education aligns with professional practice. Leavy (2017) highlights the significance of engaging industry professionals in research on creative sectors, as they can offer both historical context and current challenges faced by the industry. Musicians, as performers and songwriters, were included for their perspectives on how formal music education influences not only their technical skills but also their creative processes. Musicians' experiences helped to illuminate the broader cultural and artistic implications of music production education, particularly in a context like Kenya's, where traditional and modern influences frequently intersect. It was fundamental to involve musicians in research on music production education, as they provided insights into the artistic experience from a different perspective (Bennett, 2008).

In addition to these core participants, the study expanded its scope by including auxiliary industry influencers who operate in distribution and promotion roles. This decision was informed by the need to capture the complex dynamics of the Kenyan music industry, where digital platforms, media, and deejays have a significant impact on the visibility and success of local artists. Deejays were included because of their critical role in shaping popular music trends and audience preferences. In Kenya, deejays are often seen as gatekeepers of the music industry, with the power to influence which tracks gain popularity and receive airplay. Hudson (2006) notes that deejays have historically been key players in the dissemination of music and in establishing connections between artists and audiences. By including deejays in the study, I was able to explore how their decisions reflect or diverge from the formal training that music production graduates receive. Media representatives were another crucial addition to the participant pool. Specifically, the General Manager of Urban Radio provided insights into how the media promotes local talent and the challenges associated with airplay for emerging artists. Media outlets, particularly radio, remain one of the primary avenues for promoting new music in Kenya.

As Frith (2002) argues, media plays a pivotal role in the music industry by shaping public perceptions of artists and influencing the commercial success of certain music genres. The inclusion of media perspectives helped to contextualize the industry realities that music producers and graduates face when trying to market their music. Finally, the study engaged with key representatives from digital music platforms—including the Licensing and Partnerships Manager at Mdundo and the Content Operations Executive at Boomplay Kenya.

These platforms are integral to the digital distribution of music in Kenya, offering insights into the evolving relationship between music production and digital consumption. The

rise of streaming platforms has transformed the music industry globally, including in Kenya, where artists increasingly rely on these platforms to reach audiences both locally and internationally. By involving executives from these platforms, the study addressed how formal music production education prepares graduates to navigate the digital landscape. Morris and Powers (2015) emphasize the importance of understanding the digital aspects of the music industry, particularly how new technologies impact the production, promotion, and distribution of music.

The inclusion of these diverse voices ensured that the study captured a holistic view of the Kenyan music production industry. By involving stakeholders from multiple sectors—music creation, production, distribution, and promotion—the study was able to identify intersecting challenges and opportunities across the entire music ecosystem. This multi-faceted approach aligns with Guba and Lincoln's (1994) argument that in qualitative research, a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon often requires exploring it from multiple perspectives.

It is important to note that in conducting this study made a deliberate effort to achieve a gender balance in the selection of participants. From the outset it prioritized inclusivity, aiming to capture the perspectives of both male and female stakeholders within the music production industry (see appendix III). As the study progressed, it became evident that the majority of available participants—particularly in the roles of music producers and deejays—were male. This gender disparity reflects broader industry trends, where male professionals are more prominently represented in technical and production roles, a phenomenon also noted by Bennett (2012) in similar research contexts. While the study actively sought out female participants in a bid to achieve gender neutrality, including music production graduates and musicians, their representation in certain areas of the industry was limited. Despite this, the study remained committed to ensuring that the

data collected was unbiased and reflective of the actual gender dynamics within the industry. Given the tight timelines for data collection and the need to adhere to the study's schedule, pragmatic decision was made to proceed with the available participants. The insights gathered, though predominantly from male professionals, were analysed with sensitivity to gender dynamics, ensuring that the findings do not reflect any inherent bias. Ultimately, the study offers a balanced view of the experiences and challenges faced in the industry, recognizing the gendered nature of certain roles while maintaining objectivity in its conclusions. Hence, by incorporating this diversity of stakeholders, the study was able to generate insights into the alignment between formal music production education and the practical demands of the industry. The data collected from these various sources ensured that the findings reflect a broad spectrum of perspectives, which is essential for understanding the evolving landscape of music production in Kenya.

3.5 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

3.5.1 Sampling Procedure

To elucidate the lived experiences of key stakeholders within the Kenyan music production industry, this study employed a synthesis of purposive and snowball sampling methodologies, facilitating a comprehensive capture of stakeholder perspectives. Purposive sampling allowed me to intentionally select individuals with specific knowledge and experience relevant to the industry, ensuring that the data collected would be rich and informative (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This targeted approach is essential in qualitative research, as it focuses on gathering insights from those who are most familiar with the phenomena being studied (Patton, 2002). However, to further enhance the diversity of perspectives, I integrated snowball sampling, which is particularly effective for reaching hard-to-access populations (Scribbr, 2022). This method enabled existing participants to refer others within their networks, facilitating

access to a broader range of stakeholders who may not be easily identifiable through traditional sampling methods (Dragan, 2013). By combining these two strategies, I was able to create a comprehensive sample that reflects both specialized knowledge and varied experiences within the music industry. This approach not only enriched the data but also provided a more nuanced understanding of how formal education aligns with industry demands.

The initial phase of the sampling process involved purposive sampling, where participants were carefully selected based on their relevance to the study's objectives. This method allowed me to focus on individuals who could offer valuable insights into the alignment between formal music production education and the practical demands of the industry. Participants were chosen for their unique perspectives, such as recent music production graduates who had completed formal programs within the last five years, experienced producers with over a decade of professional expertise, and musicians who had established themselves in the industry with at least five years of active performance or song writing experience.

Additionally, the study sought input from key figures in the local music public, including those who had a deep understanding of current music trends, deejays, content executives, and media professionals who influence music distribution and consumption. As the study progressed, snowball sampling became a crucial tool for expanding the participant pool. This method proved particularly useful for reaching industry members who were less accessible or harder to identify, yet whose contributions were invaluable. Through the recommendations of initial participants, the study was able to connect with additional individuals whose involvement enriched the research. Naderifar et al. (2017) emphasize that snowball sampling allows researchers to access hidden populations or key stakeholders who may otherwise be overlooked. This approach not only broadened

the scope of the study but also ensured that a wider array of voices from the industry were represented. Combining purposive and snowball sampling provided a balance between strategic selection and organic participant expansion, allowing the study to remain focused while being flexible enough to respond to the complexities of the music production field in Nairobi. By adhering to the guidelines for phenomenological studies set forth by Creswell (1998), this study ensured that each participant group had enough representation to provide rich, detailed accounts of their experiences. This approach was essential for capturing the varied perspectives within the industry, ensuring the findings were both meaningful and contextually grounded.

3.5.2 Sample Size

The initial target sample size for this study was established at 20 participants, selected from a wider population of key stakeholders in Kenya's music production industry. This estimated population included individuals actively involved in the sector, including music production graduates, local music producers, musicians, and other influential figures. Accurately determining exact population numbers of music producers, musicians and auxiliary music production professionals was challenging due to the informal and dynamic nature of the industry. Consequently, this study relied on estimates derived from data provided by industry associations and networks within Nairobi's music production landscape. As noted by Simpson et al. (1996), populations characterized by high mobility, such as students and transient workers, pose significant challenges for accurate population estimates due to their fluctuating presence in specific locations.

As data collection progressed, it became clear that additional participants were necessary to achieve data saturation—the point at which no new themes or insights were emerging from the interviews. In qualitative research, data saturation is the critical marker that determines when the sample size is sufficient, rather than relying on a fixed number of

participants. As the study continued, the participant pool naturally expanded to 27 participants, which allowed for a more thorough exploration of the research topic. This adaptive approach reflected the inherent flexibility in qualitative research, where the emphasis is placed on depth of understanding rather than adhering strictly to predefined numbers. Sim et al. (2018) and Fusch and Ness (2015) both highlight the importance of adjusting the sample size in response to emerging data, ensuring that the research remains comprehensive and reflective of the lived realities of participants. While Creswell's (1998) guideline of 5-25 participants for phenomenological research was initially considered, the final sample size was ultimately determined by the saturation point. This flexibility not only enabled a more in-depth investigation but also ensured that the data collected was rich, nuanced, and capable of providing meaningful insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by various stakeholders in the Kenyan music production industry. By allowing the sample size to expand in response to the emerging themes, the study remained adaptive to the dynamic nature of the research environment, ensuring that no valuable insights were overlooked.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

Congruent with the research objectives and the phenomenological paradigm underpinning this investigation, two principal data collection instruments were devised: a semi-structured interview protocol and a focus group discussion framework. These instruments were designed to elicit rich, detailed insights into the experiences and perspectives of music production graduates and industry stakeholders in Kenya. By utilizing these tools, the study was able to capture both individual narratives and collective viewpoints, offering a comprehensive exploration of the research topic.

3.6.1 Semi-Structured Interview Guide

The semi-structured interview guide served as the primary instrument for data collection. This tool was meticulously developed based on the study's objectives, as well as an extensive review of the relevant literature on music production education and industry demands. The guide was structured around a series of open-ended questions, designed to prompt deep reflection from participants about their lived experiences within the music production sector. This approach allowed for a detailed exploration of individual perspectives, while also providing the flexibility to adapt the conversation based on the participants' responses. The use of semi- structured interviews was particularly well-suited to the phenomenological design of the study, which seeks to understand the essence of participants' lived experiences. Semi-structured interviews offered a balance between consistency across interviews and the flexibility needed to explore the unique insights of each participant (Kallio, et al. 2016). This method enabled the study to maintain a consistent line of inquiry across all interviews, while also allowing for deviations when participants introduced new and valuable perspectives. The flexibility of this approach was especially important in a study focusing on music production, where participants' experiences and expertise varied widely based on their backgrounds and professional trajectories.

Each interview was conducted in an open and conversational manner, encouraging participants to share their personal stories and professional journeys. The semi-structured format allowed me to probe further into certain areas of interest as they arose during the conversation, offering opportunities to uncover deeper layers of meaning. As Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasize, the richness of data collected through semi-structured interviews lies in the ability to capture both planned and emergent themes, creating space for unexpected insights that may not have been anticipated during the design phase. The

questions included in the guide were carefully crafted to cover a range of topics, including participants' educational experiences, challenges faced in the transition to professional practice, and perceptions of industry demands. However, the open-ended nature of the questions ensured that participants were not confined to specific answers, fostering a dynamic interaction that allowed them to express themselves freely. Brinkmann (2014) highlights that semi-structured interviews are particularly effective in qualitative research when the goal is to explore complex, context-specific issues, making this approach ideal for understanding the intersection of education and industry practices in Kenyan music production.

3.6.2 Focus Group Discussion Guide

To complement the insights gained from individual interviews, a focus group discussion guide was developed. This guide was designed to facilitate dynamic group interactions among participants from each of the key stakeholder categories, including graduates, educators, and industry professionals. Focus group discussions were included as they provide a unique opportunity to capture collective perspectives and explore how participants' views might shift or evolve through interaction with others. As Kitzinger (1995) suggests, focus groups are particularly useful for exploring group dynamics and understanding how opinions are shaped through social interaction, making them ideal for this study's exploration of the music production industry. The focus group discussion guide was structured around open-ended questions and prompts, aimed at stimulating discussion and encouraging participants to build on one another's contributions. This allowed for the generation of new insights that may not have surfaced in one-on-one interviews. The group setting was particularly valuable for understanding the interplay between different stakeholders within the music production industry—graduates, for example, were able to hear directly from employers about the skills they sought, while

industry professionals gained insights into the challenges graduates faced upon entering the workforce. Focus group discussions were especially helpful in exploring shared experiences within the music industry, where collaboration and interaction between different professionals are key to success. As Morgan (1996) notes, focus groups are an effective method for capturing collective narratives and identifying patterns of consensus or dissent within a group. In this study, the discussions provided valuable insights into the diverse viewpoints of participants, including how educators, graduates, and industry leaders viewed the alignment between educational curricula and the practical demands of the music production field.

The group dynamic fostered by the focus group discussions also allowed for the exploration of new themes that emerged through participant interaction. This is a critical advantage of focus groups, as participants often reveal ideas or opinions in response to others that they may not have shared in an individual interview setting. The ability to capture these interactive dialogues offered a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities within the Kenyan music production industry. Barbour (2007) suggests that focus groups are particularly effective in situations where researchers are interested in the synergy of collective thought, and this proved true in the context of this study. By employing both semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, this study was able to collect a rich, multifaceted dataset. The semi-structured interview guide allowed for an in- depth exploration of individual experiences, while the focus group discussion guide facilitated dynamic group interactions, providing insights into the collective perspectives of key stakeholders in the music production industry. Together, these instruments provided a comprehensive foundation for understanding the challenges and opportunities faced by music production graduates in Kenya, as well as the broader relationship between formal education and industry

demands. This combination of data collection methods, grounded in scholarly best practices, ensured the reliability and depth of the findings, contributing to a nuanced and well- rounded analysis of the research questions.

3.6.3 Document Analysis Protocol

To deepen the understanding of the dynamics between music production education and industry practices in Kenya, I employed comprehensive document analysis. Document analysis, as Bowen (2009) explains, is a valuable method for systematically reviewing both printed and electronic documents to extract meaningful insights. This approach provided crucial context and enhanced the triangulation of data collected from interviews and focus group discussions, enabling a more robust exploration of the study's key themes. The document analysis protocol used during the selection process ensured that only the most relevant and credible documents were included in the study, focusing on sources that directly contributed to understanding how formal education aligns with the evolving demands of the music production industry. These documents encompassed industry reports, online media coverage that contained interviews with local music producers, and also tertiary institution curricula, among others. I specifically sought documents that provided both macro-level perspectives on industry trends and micro-level insights from key stakeholders actively shaping the sector.

The process began with an initial review of each document, and carefully skimmed the content to assess its relevance to the research objectives. O'Leary (2014) underscores that this preliminary step is critical in qualitative research, allowing the researcher to identify materials that merit deeper analysis. Once documents were deemed relevant, they were subjected to a more detailed, focused reading, which allowed for a thorough examination of the information they contained. This reading process involved engaging deeply with the text, identifying key ideas, patterns, and themes that aligned with the research focus.

To facilitate the extraction of relevant data, this study applied a coding scheme that mirrored the one used in the analysis of interview and focus group data. By using a consistent coding framework across all data sources, it became possible to identify overlapping themes and corroborate findings. Bowen (2009) argues that such consistency in the coding process allows for the effective triangulation of data, ensuring that themes identified in one source are cross-verified by other sources. The coding process was not merely about categorizing information but also involved a reflective engagement with the content, paying close attention to the context in which the data was presented.

One of the key benefits of document analysis is its ability to offer a broader contextual perspective. For instance, the industry reports reviewed in this study, such as the PwC Kenya Entertainment and Media Outlook (2021), provided critical insights into the technological advancements transforming the music industry, as well as the socio-economic challenges that continue to impact both production and distribution processes. These reports were instrumental in contextualizing the interview data, which highlighted the gap between the technological skills taught in educational institutions and those demanded by the rapidly evolving industry. In addition to formal industry reports, media coverage and interviews with industry professionals available through platforms like YouTube were analysed. Interviews with local music producers offered first-hand accounts of the challenges they face. The insights from these media sources helped illustrate the lived realities of industry professionals, reinforcing the issues raised in interviews with music production graduates. As Coffey and Atkinson (1996) suggest, qualitative research benefits immensely from analysing how real-world actors, such as producers and industry veterans, articulate their experiences, offering valuable perspectives that align or contrast with other data sources. Moreover, the analysis of

tertiary institution curricula from key institutions in Kenya, including Kenyatta University, Kabarak University and Music Inn, revealed significant gaps in the training offered to music production students. The curriculum analysis showed a heavy emphasis on theoretical knowledge, with limited practical training in the latest music production technologies. This finding closely mirrored concerns raised by graduates in interviews, who felt that their formal education had left them underprepared for the technological demands of the industry. The curriculum documents, therefore, provided a concrete basis for understanding the educational system's shortcomings, while also highlighting potential areas for reform. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) note that such document-based insights are critical in understanding how formal education systems are structured and how these structures either support or hinder students' professional development.

Throughout the document review process, the study maintained a reflective approach, constantly comparing insights from documents with those gathered from interviews and focus groups. This cross-referencing allowed for the identification of both convergences and divergences across the data sources. This kind of triangulation was essential in building a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between education, technology, and industry demands. Beyond thematic alignment, the document analysis also illuminated the broader socio-cultural factors shaping music production in Kenya. For example, many media articles and opinion pieces analysed spoke to the influence of local cultural traditions on music production practices. These documents offered insights into how cultural identity and heritage play a role in shaping not only the music produced but also the pathways through which musicians and producers navigate the industry. This cultural context, when juxtaposed with the technical and economic challenges identified through other data sources, painted a more holistic picture of the industry's landscape.

The systematic review of documents in this study provided invaluable contextual insights that complemented and enriched the primary data collected through interviews and focus groups. By examining a range of sources, from industry reports to media interviews and academic curricula, the document analysis not only triangulated the findings but also offered a more comprehensive understanding of the educational and professional landscape of music production in Kenya. This process, supported by scholarly guidance, ensured that the study's conclusions were both credible and deeply informed by a variety of perspectives.

3.6.4 Researcher Journal

A researcher journal was maintained throughout the data collection process to record observations, reflections, and methodological decisions. The journal included prompts for self- reflection and bias checking. The journal served as a tool that enhanced reflexivity, which is crucial in phenomenological research (Ortlipp, 2008). It allowed the researcher to acknowledge and bracket personal biases, enhancing the trustworthiness of the study. These instruments were designed to work in concert, providing multiple perspectives on the research questions and allowing for data triangulation. The combination of these tools facilitated the comprehensive exploration of the competency of music production graduates in meeting the demands of the local Kenyan music industry.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

The research proposal was first submitted to the Kabarak University Research Ethics Committee (KUREC) for approval. Thereafter, a research permit was obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). I then began the process of participant recruitment. Potential participants were identified through social media platforms and industry contacts, representing the diverse

stakeholder groups within Nairobi's music production scene. Initial contact was made via phone calls and social media direct messages, (WhatsApp, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram), during which an introduction of the study and its objectives, were made. The research an emohasis on the voluntary nature of involvement and the right to withdraw at any stage was made. For those expressing interest, interviews were scheduled at times and locations of their choice, prioritizing participant comfort and convenience.

Prior to each interview and focus group, written informed consent was obtained, reiterating the study's purpose, confidentiality measures, and the option to withdraw. With acquired consent, sessions were audio-recorded to ensure accurate data capture. Interviews and focus groups were conducted in private settings to foster open dialogue. To complement these primary data collection methods, I conducted online research of industry reports, academic literature, and media coverage. Additionally, I analysed relevant audio-visual materials, such as music portfolios, to gain further insights into graduate competencies.

3.7. 1 Trustworthiness of the Study

Ensuring the trustworthiness of this qualitative study was paramount to establishing its rigor and validity. To achieve this, I employed a comprehensive approach based on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These criteria were carefully addressed through various strategies throughout the research process. Traditional quantitative concepts of validity and reliability were not employed in this study; as phenomenological research examines lived experiences that cannot be measured through statistical means or replicated exactly. Instead, trustworthiness criteria better suited the interpretive nature of investigating stakeholder perspectives in music production education.

Credibility, which refers to the confidence in the truth of the findings, was established through multiple methods. First, the study employed triangulation by using diverse data collection techniques including semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. This methodological triangulation allowed for the cross-verification of data from multiple sources, enhancing the robustness of the findings. For instance, insights gained from individual interviews with music production graduates were corroborated with perspectives shared in focus group discussions with industry professionals, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Moreover, this research implemented member checking to ensure the accuracy of data interpretation. After transcribing interviews and focus group discussions, summaries were shared with participants, allowing them to verify the accuracy of their statements and my interpretations. This process not only enhanced the credibility of the data but also empowered participants by giving them an opportunity to clarify or expand on their initial responses.

Transferability was addressed by providing descriptions of the research context, participants, and findings. A detailed description of the unique characteristics of the Kenyan music production industry and education system was done. This gave readers an opportunity to assess the applicability of the findings to other contexts. As Stahl and King (2020) note, "transfer is only possible when a thick description provides a rich enough portrayal of circumstance for application to others' situations" (p. 27). This included in-depth descriptions of the curriculum in music production programs, the structure of the local music industry, and the specific challenges faced by graduates entering the field. Dependability, which relates to the consistency and repeatability of the findings, was ensured through several measures. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that dependability can be established through an inquiry audit, where an external researcher reviews the

research process and product to evaluate accuracy. The researcher kept a detailed audit trail documenting all research activities, decisions, and reflections throughout the study. This included raw data, field notes, and coding schemes. Aiming to establish that the findings are shaped by the participants rather than researcher bias or motivation, confirmability was addressed through reflexivity. In addition, the researcher kept a reflexive journal throughout the research process, documenting personal reflections, potential biases, and decisions made during data collection and analysis. This practice helped me to examine my role as a researcher and how my background as a music producer and educator might influence the research process.

The study remained aware of my position as a researcher and its potential impact on the study. By consistently applying these strategies, it aimed to produce a trustworthy study that accurately represents the experiences and perspectives of music production graduates and industry stakeholders in Kenya. As Stahl and King (2020) emphasize, "Qualitative research needs researchers' values and passion as engagement with research. But it is also necessary for researchers to monitor the influence of their values and passions" (p. 28). This rigorous approach to trustworthiness strengthens the validity of the findings and their potential contribution to understanding the relationship between music production education and industry demands in the Kenyan context.

3.8 Data Analysis and Presentation

This investigation employed a multidimensional analytical approach, integrating thematic analysis with elements of narrative inquiry to scrutinize the rich qualitative data corpus derived from semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. These methodologies allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the complex experiences and perspectives of music production graduates and industry stakeholders in

Kenya. The analysis was designed in multiple stages, ensuring a rigorous and nuanced understanding of the dataset.

The analysis process began with a two-step transcription approach, combining both programed with manual methodologies. Initially, the study implemented automated transcription using Google Colaboratory and Python-based machine learning algorithms. The automated transcription process described by Xie et al. (2019) involved a two-step approach that enhanced efficiency in handling large volumes of audio data. Initially, the automated transcription tools utilized advanced algorithms to convert speech into text, generating a preliminary draft that served as a foundation for further refinement. Recognizing the limitations of automated systems, particularly in their inability to capture linguistic subtleties, the study used to review Audacity software the manual review.

This phase was critical in refining the transcripts, focusing on elements such as pauses, intonations, and emphases that automated tools may have missed. Stelma and Cameron (2007) emphasize that human interpretation in transcription is essential, as it allows the researcher to capture the contextual and cultural nuances that are often lost in machine- driven processes. Where necessary, translation was applied, not only to convert language but also to ensure that culturally specific references and idiomatic expressions were accurately conveyed without losing their meaning, as suggested by Van Nes et al. (2010).

Following transcription, the analysis proceeded to coding, a central phase of the thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Initially, I employed open coding to uncover the main themes emerging from the interviews and focus group discussions. This process involved a close, iterative reading of the transcripts, identifying key

concepts, and labelling recurring patterns within the dataset. As Dawadi (2020) emphasizes, this process of revisiting the data multiple times was vital to fully immerse myself in the dataset and ensure that all relevant points were captured. Subsequently, the study utilised axial coding, which involved refining and reorganizing the initial open codes to identify relationships between themes. Axial coding, as explained by Strauss and Corbin (1998), allowed me to connect categories and subcategories, thus moving beyond merely identifying patterns to understanding how these patterns relate to the study's research questions. During this phase, some codes were merged, while others were discarded, with a focus on retaining the most salient categories that aligned with the objectives of the study. To ensure analytical rigor, the then incorporated the constant comparative method, as introduced by Glaser and Strauss' (1967) seminal work. This method involved continuously comparing new data against previously coded data to ensure consistency and to refine the evolving themes. By maintaining an iterative approach to coding, a framework for understanding the participants' experiences within the music production sector was developed. The final phase of the thematic analysis involved development of a structured presentation of themes and subthemes. As recommended by Dawadi (2020), the study created thematic maps to visualize the relationships between themes, subthemes, and their connections to the research questions. These maps provided a visual guide to the overarching narrative of the study, helping to organize the data into a coherent structure.

In addition to thematic analysis, elements of narrative analysis were employed to capture the storied nature of the participants' experiences. Riessman (2008) notes that narrative analysis is particularly effective in understanding how individuals construct meaning from their experiences through storytelling. By incorporating narrative elements, the study focused on the chronology and context of participants' accounts, as well as the use

of metaphors and linguistic devices that conveyed deeper insights into their professional journeys. This integration of narrative analysis was particularly valuable in understanding the complex cultural factors that influence music production in Kenya. The approach allowed for a richer interpretation of how participants' stories reflected broader themes of professional identity, cultural tension, and adaptation to industry demands. The themes that emerged from this analysis provided a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex interplay between formal education, practical skills, and industry demands within the Kenyan music production sector. These themes illuminated critical issues facing music production graduates, offering insights into the multifaceted challenges and opportunities within the industry.

At the core of these findings was the concept of practical preparedness, which emerged as a fundamental concern for both graduates and industry professionals. This theme explored the readiness of graduates to meet the immediate demands of the music production industry, highlighting a noticeable gap between the theoretical knowledge acquired in formal education and the practical skills required in real-world scenarios. Closely related to practical preparedness was the importance of genre-specific knowledge. The analysis revealed that understanding various musical genres, particularly those prevalent in the Kenyan music scene, was crucial for success in the industry. This theme underscored the necessity for graduates to be well-versed in both local and global musical styles, as this knowledge directly impacts their ability to produce relevant and marketable music. The relevance of local music knowledge emerged as another critical theme, emphasizing the significance of understanding Kenya's rich musical heritage and its application in contemporary music production. This theme highlighted an interesting tension between global influences and local musical traditions, reflecting the broader cultural dynamics at play in the Kenyan music industry. Consequently, the fusion of

local and contemporary elements surfaced as an exciting trend in the Kenyan music scene. This theme investigated the growing practice of blending traditional Kenyan musical elements with contemporary global styles, revealing both the challenges and opportunities this fusion presents for music producers. In addition, the evolution of the Kenyan 'sound' emerged as an overarching theme, tracing the development of a distinctive musical identity in the contemporary scene. This theme explored how this evolving 'sound' influences production techniques and market expectations, reflecting the dynamic nature of the Kenyan music industry.

Intertwined with these themes was the ongoing debate about talent versus education, a dynamic that permeated many discussions with industry stakeholders. This theme explored the relative importance of innate talent versus formal education in the music production industry, revealing diverse perspectives on the balance between natural abilities and acquired skills. The analysis also highlighted the need for industry flexibility, focusing on the adaptability required in the rapidly evolving music landscape. This theme emphasized the importance of graduates being versatile and responsive to changing market demands and technological advancements, a skill set that often extended beyond formal education. Technical proficiency emerged as a crucial theme, addressing the level of technical skills graduates possess, particularly in relation to modern music production technologies. This theme explored the alignment and misalignment between the technical education provided by institutions and current industry standards, revealing areas where educational programs might need to evolve. Together, these interconnected themes provided a nuanced understanding of the Kenyan music production landscape, revealing the complex relationships between educational institutions, industry expectations, and the cultural context in which music is produced. The analysis of these themes offered valuable insights into the challenges faced by music

production graduates and pointed towards potential areas for improvement in music production education and industry practices.

Each of these themes was further broken down into subthemes, providing a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing the professional trajectories of music production graduates in Kenya. This comprehensive approach to data analysis, combining both thematic and narrative analysis, ensured that the richness and complexity of the data were fully explored. The use of multiple coding strategies, visualization tools, and reflexive practices provided a solid foundation for addressing the research questions. The insights gained through this analysis contribute to the broader discourse on vocational education and industry alignment in the Kenyan music production sector, offering pathways for future policy and curriculum development.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

In the execution of this investigation, scrupulous attention was devoted to maintaining rigorous ethical standards, with paramount consideration given to participant welfare, data integrity, and societal impact. The ethical framework drew heavily on the guidelines set forth by the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013) and the Belmont Report (1979), which emphasize the principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. These foundational principles provided the groundwork for every phase of the research process. As discussed in the Data collection section, this study underwent a comprehensive ethical review by KUREC. This oversight ensured that the research design, methodology, and ethical safeguards adhered to stringent standards of human subject protection, aligning with the directives of NACOSTI, Kenya's national ethics board, as mandated by the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Republic of Kenya, 2013). NACOSTI's role in regulating and assuring quality in scientific research, as outlined in Section 6 (1)(f) of the Act, includes the accreditation of research institutes

and approval of all scientific research in Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 2013). This ethical review process was crucial for ensuring that research is not only methodologically sound but also ethically responsible, particularly in addressing potential risks to participants and society. As emphasized by Ochieng' Odero (2021), such ethical considerations were vital in maintaining the integrity of research.

Drawing from the work of Iphofen (2011) and Babbie (2016), the informed consent process was central to ensuring that participants made informed decisions about their involvement. A comprehensive, written consent document outlined the study's objectives, procedures, and the scope of participant involvement. Participants were informed of any potential risks and benefits associated with their participation, ensuring that they could fully evaluate their decision to partake. Crucially, participants retained the right to withdraw from the study at any point, a safeguard that reinforces participant autonomy, in line with Christians' (2005) advocacy for ensuring the voluntary nature of research participation. This right to withdraw was reiterated throughout the research process, ensuring that participants remained in control of their involvement at all times, and minimizing potential power imbalances between researcher and participant, as emphasized by Hammersley and Traianou (2012).

Building on the principle of non-maleficence, a thorough risk-benefit analysis was conducted to mitigate potential harm to participants in the study assessing the competency of music production graduates from Kenyan tertiary institutions. The framework established by Cohen et al. (2018) emphasizes the necessity of identifying and evaluating psychological, social, and professional risks associated with participation. This involved recognizing potential emotional distress that graduates might experience when reflecting on their educational experiences or career challenges in the music industry. Furthermore, social risks included the possibility of stigmatization or negative

perceptions from peers and industry professionals regarding their competencies, which could impact their professional relationships and opportunities. The analysis also considered professional risks, such as the potential for negative feedback from producers and musicians that could affect the graduates' self-esteem and future career prospects.\

In addition to identifying these risks, Cohen et al. advocate for implementing strategies to minimize them, such as providing support resources and ensuring confidentiality, depending on the participants' preferences, throughout the research process. This comprehensive assessment not only safeguarded participant well-being but also enhanced the validity of the findings by encouraging honest and open responses. Key strategies also included offering breaks during interviews, as recommended by Mertens (2020), who advocates for minimizing psychological fatigue in qualitative research. In addition to minimizing potential harm, the study emphasized transparency in articulating the potential benefits of participation. In line with Harrison and Sale (2020), participants were made aware that their contributions could foster academic advancements, influence industry practices, and provide opportunities for professional self-reflection.

Ensuring confidentiality and protecting participant privacy were paramount in this research. Building on the framework proposed by Kaiser (2009), an anonymization protocol was employed, which included assigning pseudonyms and removing personally identifiable information from transcripts. Notably, 23 of the 27 participants expressed their willingness to use their real identities, reflecting a high level of trust in the research process. However, to maintain ethical standards and safeguard the remaining participants' privacy, the anonymization measures were strictly adhered to throughout the study. Furthermore, data were securely stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act of 2019, which establishes comprehensive guidelines to guarantee participants' data privacy rights in Kenya. This legislation mandates that personal data must be processed

lawfully, fairly, and transparently, ensuring that participants are informed about how their data will be used (Kenya Law, 2019). Additionally, the Act emphasizes the importance of implementing appropriate security measures to protect personal data from unauthorized access and breaches. By adhering to these regulations, the study not only complied with national standards but also reinforced the commitment to ethical research practices and participant confidentiality. Raw data were then encrypted and stored on password-protected devices, with physical backups kept in secure locations. Following the suggestions of Tracy (2013), only the researcher had access to identifiable information, ensuring both ethical handling and compliance with international data protection standards.

Ensuring the validity of the collected data was a critical ethical consideration in this research. To enhance the credibility of the findings, a triangulation approach was employed, as recommended by Flick (2018). This method involved integrating multiple data sources and techniques, including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, YouTube videos, and industry reports. By utilizing these diverse methods, the study not only captured a comprehensive array of perspectives regarding the competency of music production graduates from Kenyan tertiary institutions but also facilitated a richer understanding of participants' experiences and viewpoints.

The process began with conducting interviews with graduates, music producers, and musicians to gather first-hand insights into their perceptions and experiences within the local music industry. Complementing these interviews, focus group discussions provided a platform for dynamic interactions among participants, allowing for the exploration of collective views and shared experiences. Additionally, analysing YouTube videos related to local music production offered visual context and real-world examples that further informed the research. Industry reports were also reviewed to provide a broader

understanding of market trends and professional standards within the music sector. This methodological rigor not only minimized potential researcher bias but also ensured that the data accurately reflected the diverse views and experiences of participants. By embracing a strong program of triangulation, as outlined by Flick (2018), contradictory or complementary findings across different data sources can be explored to gain deeper insights into the phenomenon under study. Ultimately, this comprehensive approach reinforces the ethical commitment to producing reliable and valid research outcomes while enhancing participant representation in the findings.

Out of the 27 participants, 24 were successfully engaged in this process, as they were available within the study's timeline. To facilitate their participation, efforts were made to share their recorded audio files and transcripts, allowing them to easily verify their contributions. Unfortunately, three participants were unavailable due to scheduling conflicts, but follow-up communications were initiated to encourage their involvement in future validation efforts. This practice is supported by Lincoln and Guba (1985) seminal work and is considered a gold standard for ensuring that participants' perspectives are represented accurately and authentically.

Beyond immediate ethical concerns, the study engaged in ethical reflexivity, an ongoing reflection on how the research might impact participants and society at large. Hammersley and Traianou (2012) emphasize the importance of considering both direct and indirect benefits of research, and this study adhered to these principles by involving participants in discussions about how their contributions could affect broader academic and professional communities. Participants were informed that their insights could shape industry practices and contribute to the scholarly understanding of the research topic, fostering social change in line with Bourke (2014), who highlights the societal responsibilities of researchers in generating knowledge that can have broader societal

impacts. Upon completion of the study, debriefing sessions were conducted, providing participants with preliminary insights into the research findings and offering an opportunity to provide feedback. As suggested by Wiles (2012), these debriefing sessions allowed participants to reflect on their experiences and to ensure that any lingering concerns were addressed, a key element in maintaining ethical integrity post-data collection. Additionally, follow-up communication with participants regarding the outcomes of the research was planned, as recommended by Berg (2014). This ongoing engagement guaranteed that participants remain informed of the study's broader implications and have a continued voice in shaping the dissemination of research findings. Throughout the research process, the principle of ethical reflexivity was embraced. This entailed continuous reflection on emerging ethical dilemmas and adapting protocols as necessary.

This chapter has outlined the methodological framework employed to investigate music production graduate competency in Kenya. Through an interpretivism philosophical stance and qualitative phenomenological approach, the study captured lived experiences of 27 participants across various industry sectors through purposive and snowball sampling. Data collection combined semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. The study's trustworthiness was established using Lincoln and Guba's criteria, while data analysis integrated thematic and narrative approaches. Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the research process. The following chapter presents the analysis of themes and subthemes that emerged, exploring graduate competencies in relation to Kenya's music industry demands.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines and presents interview data using a thematic approach, structured through several phases. The first phase involved reviewing and transcribing the data in two steps, with translation applied where necessary. Subsequently, open coding methodology was implemented to elucidate the primary themes emergent from the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. These themes were further refined through axial coding, which focused on the connections between the identified themes, the research topic, and the study's objectives. During this process, some codes were reorganized and some discarded, while the most relevant categories were retained. The subsequent section will outline and analyse the themes and subthemes that emerged from the coding process, aligned with the study's objectives.

4.2 Graduate Preparedness for the Kenyan Music Industry

The first objective of the study was to discover the perceived level of preparedness of Kenyan graduates to produce music on demand from the Kenyan local music industry. Table 1 below gives a summary of the themes and sub-themes that were derived from the study. This will be followed with the discussion of the results.

Table 1

Graduate Preparedness for the Kenyan Music Industry

Theme	Sub-Themes	Examples of Participants' Words
Practical Preparedness	Theory-Practice Gap	*"My level of preparedness, when I left school, it was quite a bit low, because I feel like as much as I was versatile, I was very limited in terms of like, just knowing what the culture wants, like right now, the music culture right now."*
	Flexibility vs. Structure	*"Mostly music theory was based on the classical side... But now when you are out here, you don't interact with the classical pieces* *"My advantage comes when I get to choose between street knowledge I gained before school and informal knowledge"* *"So, as I told you, the current music scene isn't really discussed that much in the system."*
Genre-Specific Knowledge	Local Music Trends	*"So right now I mostly hear Arbantone. Arbantone is the genre that's popular in Kenya right now. So yeah, that's what I can say is original from Kenya."* *"I would say there's a tie between Arbantone and Gengetone"*
	Contemporary Production Techniques	*"I like Kenyan music, to be very honest. And Boomplay has made me, has given me a very good opportunity because one of the things we focus here in Kenya is making sure we play KE."* *"I would say number one, it's usually the beat. It has to be very catchy. The song has to be catchy... definitely the demand will always influence other producers to create something similar."*

4.2.1 Practical Preparedness

For the theme practical preparedness, which is defined in this context as the level of readiness of graduates to meet the immediate demands of the music production industry,

many graduates feel underprepared for the realities of the industry despite their formal education. The presumption that formal education furnishes graduates with comprehensive preparation engenders a disjunction with industry realities, which necessitate specific, often localized knowledge and competencies.

Consequently, the clash often leads to feelings of anxiety and inadequacy among new graduates as they enter the workforce. Almi et al. (2011) explore a similar phenomenon within the context of software engineering, highlighting a significant gap between industry requirements and the readiness of graduates. Their study underscores that despite formal education, graduates frequently lack the specific, industry-relevant skills needed to meet real-world demands. Almi et al. (2011) argue that this discrepancy stems from a misalignment between the educational curriculum and the actual needs of the industry, emphasizing that graduates often enter the workforce with a broad theoretical knowledge but insufficient practical skills.

This gap is attributed to the industry's increasing demand for highly specialized skills and the evolving nature of job roles, which educational programs may not fully address. As well, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) 2013 report on Entertainment and Media Outlook in Kenya also hints at the industry's demand for practical skills and adaptability, stating, *"To harness this growth and compete effectively in the future, Entertainment and Media companies of all types must evaluate their competitive advantages and seize their positions in the evolving ecosystem with the connected consumer at its core"* (PwC, 2013, p. 21). This report emphasizes the need for entertainment and media companies to adapt to a rapidly changing industry landscape. It underscores the importance of understanding and catering to the connected consumer, suggesting that success hinges on companies' ability to identify and leverage their unique strengths in this evolving ecosystem. This insight implies that professionals in the field must possess not only

technical skills but also the ability to analyse market trends, consumer behaviour, and emerging technologies to remain competitive. The emphasis on adaptability and understanding consumer needs in the broader entertainment and media industry directly relates to the challenges faced in specific sectors, such as music production. Just as companies must evolve to meet the demands of connected consumers, music producers must stay attuned to cultural trends and preferences.

This parallel is evident in the experience shared by Barnabus Yuka, a graduate who expressed the he *"feel[s] [...] very limited in [...] knowing what the culture wants [...] right now."* (personal communication, July 15, 2024). This confirms that graduates may encounter challenges if their education does not adequately prepare them for the specific, localized demands of the industry. According to Mochere (2022), universities offer skills such as recording, mixing, and editing however, there is a noticeable gap where local music elements and its key production techniques. Ian Akhuyo, a graduate confirms that in as much as they touched on indigenous music, the current local music industry was not discussed [in depth]. Hence, just as Almi et al. (2011) highlighted the need for software engineering graduates to bridge the gap between their education and industry requirements, music production graduates must also be equipped with both broad and localized knowledge to effectively feel prepared and adequate to meet industry expectations.

Cultural knowledge encompasses a broader spectrum beyond mere musical elements, encompassing multifaceted cultural competencies. These competencies encompass a deep understanding of local cultural norms, values, traditions, and linguistic nuances, as well as the ability to navigate and interpret current cultural trends, social dynamics, and audience preferences. They enable music producers and artists to create content that resonates deeply with local audiences, effectively blending traditional elements with

contemporary styles to produce culturally responsive music. Music production graduates such as Barnabus Yuka expressed concerns about their ability to create such culturally resonant music, feeling that their education focused more on technical skills such as sound engineering, mixing, and recording techniques rather than cultural understanding in local music production. As Adedeji (2010) argues in his thesis on the influence of Yorùbá culture on Nigerian popular music, contemporary artists must be able to appropriate their cultural roots and linguistic heritage to negotiate their musical identities and create unique hybrid styles. In the Kenyan context, this knowledge involves understanding the distinctions between local music genres, their cultural references, and awareness of local audience preferences and consumption patterns. However, music production graduates in Kenya go through their formal education system without adequate exposure to these aspects.

This suggests that their inadequate exposure to these aspects of cultural competencies during formal education contributes to graduates feeling underprepared for the local music industry. For instance, Barnabus Yuka noted that his, *" level of preparedness, when [he] left school, […] was quite low, because I feel like as much as I was versatile, I was very limited in terms of […] knowing what the culture wants … right now."* (personal communication, July 16th, 2024). This sentiment highlights an evident theory-practice gap between formal education and local industry demands. The cavity is attributed to the lack of emphasis on the industry-related cultural knowledge formal music production education creates. Upon further clarification, Barnabus Yuka mentioned that he felt inadequate in understanding and producing the current popular local genres, particularly in grasping the nuances of Afro Fusion genres, such as Afro Neo Benga. This specific inadequacy underscores disconnect between the formal education curriculum and the rapidly evolving landscape of Kenyan popular music. Yuka's experience highlights how

the specific knowledge and skills valued in the field of Kenyan music production may differ significantly from the cultural capital emphasized in formal educational settings. Moreover, this gap reflects emphasis on the importance of cultural context in learning, suggesting that the educational system may not be sufficiently incorporating the current cultural elements of Kenyan music into its curriculum, thus leaving graduates like Yuka feeling unprepared for the immediate demands of the industry. Adding onto that, Ian Akhuyo, another music production graduate, explains that during his 4-year study *"the current music scene [wasn't] really discussed that much in the system",* indicating that tertiary education institutions are not adequately preparing students for the realities of the local music industry.

These realities can be properly faced by graduates when they are exposed to relevant cultural competencies. Anderton et al. (2013) emphasize that music is culture, and industries are formed from aspects of cultural engagement, implying that a deep understanding of cultural context is essential for the success and growth of local music production industries. Moreover, the phrase *"just knowing what the culture wants ... right now." a*s stated by Barnabus Yuka points to the prominence of cultural literacy in the local music production industry - an aspect that is not sufficiently addressed in the formal education program. In this context, cultural literacy connotes the ability to understand and engage with the local music traditions, norms, and historical backgrounds of Kenyan culture, which are essential for effective communication and participation within the social practices of the community.

This understanding allows graduates to create music that resonates with the audience's values and preferences, thereby enhancing the relevance and impact of their work. By recognizing the interplay between culture and social practice, producers can better connect with their audiences and contribute meaningfully to the local music scene.

Bourdieu (1986) describes this relationship, between culture and social practice, as a field where cultural capital plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's ability to navigate and succeed within that field. In music production, graduates who possess cultural literacy can leverage their understanding of local traditions and social dynamics to create music that not only appeals to current tastes but also honours the rich cultural heritage of their community. Correspondingly, Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory supports this by emphasizing the importance of cultural and social contexts in the learning process. According to Akpan et al. (2020), Vygotsky advocates for an educational framework that is interconnected with the cultural realities of the industry, suggesting that graduates should be educated not only in technical skills but also in the cultural narratives that inform their work. This alignment with Vygotsky's theory underscores the necessity for educational systems to foster cultural literacy.

Consequently, as music production graduates in Kenya lack cultural literacy, they face challenges when it comes to applying the gained knowledge to the local music industry. The music production graduate, Emmanuel Barasa, (personal communication, July 19, 2024) mentions that while studying music production the theory *"was based on the classical side... but now when you are out here, you don't interact with classical pieces."* The response indicates disconnect between formal music production education and the current local music industry. This suggests that, in practical settings—such as local music production—musicians and producers are not engaging with classical music as much. Instead, they may be focusing on genres and styles that are more relevant to their cultural context and audience preferences. It is important to note that classical music theory forms a significant part of formal music education in Kenya. In light of this, it can be stated that the difficulty in applying gained knowledge to current industry trends is additional evidence of the gap between formal education and industry realities. Adedeji

(2010), and Anderson (2020), when advocating for the incorporation of local musical traditions and contemporary practices into music education, emphasize that traditional music curricula often prioritize classical music theory, which may not align with the contemporary musical landscape. This focus can limit students' exposure to genres and styles that are more relevant to their cultural context, leading to a gap in their ability to engage effectively with their environment.

In order for graduates to survive in this environment, they must adapt and demonstrate flexibility in applying their knowledge. Bourdieu's conceptualization of cultural capital posits that while formal education imparts essential technical proficiencies, it may inadequately equip graduates with the requisite culturally-specific knowledge and industry acumen necessary for professional success. This process involves acquiring additional forms of cultural capital—such as understanding local music trends, audience preferences, and industry dynamics—that are not always covered in traditional education. For instance, Mark Murimi, a music production graduate, described his experiences navigating this balance as follows: *My advantage comes when I can choose which one works best between street knowledge and formal knowledge."* (personal communication, July 18, 2024).

In this case, Mark Murimi recognizes that formal education provides one type of cultural capital, while "street knowledge" - likely referring to practical, hands-on experience and understanding of current industry trends - provides another. It is important to note that Mark Murimi was introduced to music production before enrolling to study the course formally. Thus, his ability to choose between these forms of knowledge as needed represents a significant advantage in navigating the complex landscape of the Kenyan music industry. This contrast between "street knowledge" and "formal knowledge" suggests that while formal education provides a foundation, it may not fully equip

graduates with the practical knowledge required to succeed in the rapidly evolving music industry. In line with Vygotsky's Social Constructivism, McCoy and Brown (2023) further emphasize the importance of contextual and experiential learning, arguing that knowledge is most effectively acquired through active engagement with one's environment. On this note, Ihaji, a local music producer stresses the necessity of continuous learning, noting, *"Always make sure you learn every single day because you can never know everything; even me, till today I research for stuff [while] [learning] from others"* (Wahu Kiragu, YouTube Video, 2022, 56:17). Ihaji's quote underscores the importance of lifelong social learning and humility in the music production industry, emphasizing that even experienced professionals continually seek new knowledge and learn from others. Graduates therefore need exposure beyond formal education, as it suggests that the learning process in this field is ongoing and extends far beyond the classroom. By embracing this mind set of continuous social learning, graduates can bridge the gap between their theoretical knowledge and the ever-changing practical demands of the industry.

This section has dealt with the theme of practical preparedness of graduates, as demonstrated through the discussions of Adedeji (2010), Anderson (2020), and McCoy and Brown (2023), in relation to Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, Vygotsky's Social Constructivism, and the study's results. In the next section, this study discusses the genre-specific knowledge theme based on the finding.

4.2.2 Genre-Specific Knowledge

Genre-specific knowledge encompasses the comprehensive understanding of distinct musical styles, their intrinsic characteristics, and the specialized techniques employed in their creation and production. This theme explores graduates' experiences and perceptions regarding the nature of the local music industry and their challenges in

staying attuned to current trends and market demands. Music production graduates express anxiety about their lack of genre-specific knowledge, feeling unprepared to meet current trends and market demands in the local music industry because they noticed that *"the current music scene [wasn't] discussed..."* as expressed by Ian Akhuyo, a music production graduate. He further clarifies that what they studied mostly hinged on western music theory and music production techniques encompassed in units such as audio engineering, studio compositional techniques and elements of acoustics. Ian Akhuyo further explains that during these classes, the course convenors kept on referring to western pop music for illustrations and examples. According to the graduate, the *"current music scene"* refers to the contemporary landscape of popular music in Kenya, which is characterized by a diverse array of genres and a dynamic fusion of traditional and modern elements (Njugi, 2024). *Arbantone*, an example of this genre, fuses the Kenyan Hip-hop beat and dancehall style, is characterized by its use of sampled melodies from classic Kenyan popular music, catchy beats and relatable lyrics.

These elements are skilfully blended using contemporary production techniques to create a sound that maintains a connection to the country's musical heritage. The importance of contemporary production techniques, particularly in creating catchy beats, is highlighted by Agnes Opondo, the licencing and partnerships manager at Mdundo Kenya. She says, *"...I would say number one, it's usually the beat. It has to be very catchy. The song has to be catchy… definitely the demand will always influence other producers to create something similar."* The emphasis is on the need for music production education to incorporate understanding of local market preferences in relation to Kenya's cultural heritage. Therefore, this understanding of genre-specific knowledge and its relevance in the local music industry by graduates is significant. The genre-specific knowledge determines the ability of graduate to transition successfully from

academic settings to professional environments where they are required to produce 'likeable' music (see Baniya and Weech, 2019). The relationship between academic settings and professional environment gives birth to evolving networks within the music industry. Evolving networks are interconnected relationships between various musical genres, their cultural influences, and market trends that continuously shape the production and reception of music.

These networks manifest in the emergence of new genres like *Arbantone,* mentioned above. Arbantone's *"rise to popularity",* as noted by John Wema, illustrates how genres emerge from the relationship formed while blending traditional Kenyan musical elements and contemporary production techniques, a reflection of the cultural and social interactions within the music industry. The emergence of such genres call attention to the need for music producers to remain attuned to the shifting landscape of musical styles and audience preferences, (see Baniya and Weech, 2019, in their discussion of evolving networks). The evolution is not isolated. It influences and is influenced by various factors within the music industry ecosystem such as distribution channels, production styles and education in general. *"We spent a lot of time studying Western classical music theory and production techniques. Don't get me wrong, that knowledge is valuable, but it doesn't always directly apply to producing gengetone",* is a suggestive statement that while foundational knowledge provided in formal education has value, it may not fully equip graduates with the specific skills and cultural understanding necessary to produce popular local genres effectively (John Wema, personal communication, July 16th, 2024). Adding onto that, Bill Odidi, as reported in Al Jazeera, observes, *"Kenyans lost their musical traditions and with that, their chances of entering the mainstream."* (Onwuamaegbu, 2024, March 2). These observations from industry professionals highlight the complex interplay between formal music education and the practical

demands of producing popular local genres. The statement about Western classical music theory suggests a misalignment between academic curricula and the skills required for creating genres like gengetone, while Odidi's comment points to a broader issue of cultural disconnection in Kenyan music. Furthermore, The PwC report (2013) supports this, noting that *"Kenyan music has historically struggled to establish a unique sound that resonates both locally and internationally"* (PwC, 2013, p. 66). Together, these perspectives underscore the critical importance of preserving and integrating local musical traditions into both education and professional practice.

This situation reveals a significant gap in the current music education system, where the focus on Western techniques may inadvertently be side-lining crucial local knowledge and skills. Indeed, the need for genre-specific knowledge and skills in producing local music genres represents a unique form of cultural capital in the Kenyan music industry. This expertise, which combines technical proficiency with a deep understanding of local musical traditions and current trends, is highly valued in the industry but often underrepresented in music production education curricula. Hence, the emergence and evolution of Arbantone can be seen as both a reflection of changing cultural capital within the Kenyan music industry and a product of social learning processes among producers, artists, audiences and the broader music community. Baniya and Weech (2019) exemplify this product as a representation of the complex, interconnected relationships between various industry stakeholders, including producers, artists, audiences and the broader music community.

Therefore, graduates must develop the ability to recognize and interpret the subtle shifts in these evolving networks. It includes the understanding of how the rise of a new genre like Arbantone might influence production techniques, audience expectations, and even marketing strategies. As John Wema confirms, *"right now I mostly listen to Arbantone.*

Arbantone is the genre that's popular in Kenya right now….” The popularity of a musical genre and the rapid evolution of musical trends in the Kenyan music scene is underscored by the emphasis in the phrase *“right now”*. It suggests the need for graduates to be constantly aware of, respond and adopt to market preferences. This adaptability is essential as it enables graduates to produce music that is resonating with local audiences while also appealing to broader markets.

The importance of genre-specific knowledge in achieving this relevance is highlighted by Scruton (1996). The knowledge allows graduates to create works that connect with audiences on a cultural level, reflecting local tastes while also having a potential broader appeal. By developing a deep understanding of genre dynamics, graduates enhance their cultural capital, allowing them to produce music that is not only technically proficient but also highly preferred, culturally significant and commercially successful in the dynamic landscape of Kenya's music industry. The success in the contemporary music industry is not solely defined by artistic merit but also by the ability to engage with market trends and audience preferences (López-Íñiguez and Bennett, 2020). This understanding is crucial for producing music that resonates with listeners and stands out in a competitive market. This discussion paves the way to discuss my second objective - Evaluating Theoretical and Practical Knowledge in Kenyan Local Music Production.

4.3 Evaluating Theoretical and Practical Knowledge in Kenyan Local Music Production

The second objective of the study was to understand the perspectives of Kenyan local music producers on the applicability of theoretical and practical knowledge gained in tertiary institutions to the Kenyan local music production industry. Table 2 below gives a summary of the themes and sub-themes that were derived from the study.

Table 2

Evaluating Theoretical and Practical Knowledge in Kenyan Local Music Production

Theme	Sub-Themes	Examples of Participants' Words
Relevance of local music knowledge in formal education considering local industry demands	Cultural Understanding	*"For me, it starts with really understanding the traditional elements. Before I even think about mixing genres, I spend time studying the traditional music."* *"Many graduates simply don't have a deep understanding of Kenyan sound...or vibe. They might know the popular stuff, but when it comes to really understanding the beat, - that's where things get tough*
	Local Music Heritage	*"But in the first session with a client, he completely fell apart. The artist wanted to record some adlibs, but my assistant couldn't set up the session quickly enough. The artist got frustrated, and I had to step in."*
Application of theoretical knowledge in cultural fusion	Genre Blending	*"Maybe we could have courses that focus on fusion - not just teaching different genres, but actually challenging students to blend them in innovative ways."* *"Now, the student knew how to set up a mic and record in theory, but he had never worked with an Orutu before. He tried to mic it like he would a violin, which didn't capture the unique timbre of the instrument. He also struggled to mix it into the track because he wasn't familiar with its frequency range and how it should sit in a mix."*
	Innovative Fusion	*"Best producers are those who use their skills to enhance the natural flow of the song."* *"So we had to take note and we had also to revise our strategy around the same."*
Evolution of Kenyan 'Sound'	Emergence of 'Sound'	*"He predominantly always just sang in Luo and always had this sound that had a bit of hip-hop and it had a bit of lingala and had a bit of acoustic."*
	Modernization in Production	*"when the Orutu player started improvising, the student didn't know how to direct the session or which parts to keep for the final track. He was so focused on getting a 'clean' recording that he missed the soul of the performance."* *"On one hand, these graduates come with solid technical skills. They know software, they know music theory, all that. But on the other hand, many of them lack that local industry knowledge."* *"They should use their technical skills to elevate our local sounds rather than simply imitating international trends.*

4.3.1 Relevance of local music Knowledge in Formal Education considering Local Industry Demands

The theme of balancing theoretical and practical knowledge emerges as a critical factor in evaluating the how well tertiary institutions prepare students for the Kenyan local music production industry. Theoretical knowledge encompasses the foundational concepts and principles that inform the practice of music production, such as, music theory, sound design principles, and the technical aspects of audio equipment and software. Institutions like Kenyatta University focus on training in recording techniques and sound engineering, critical components that support effective music production (Kenyatta University website, retrieved September 26, 2024). Practical knowledge, on the other hand, involves hands-on skills and techniques necessary for executing these concepts within the Kenyan music production industry. Students gain experience in creating, mixing, and mastering music tracks, allowing them to apply their theoretical understanding into practice (Music Inn, retrieved September 26, 2024). This duality is crucial in a Kenyan educational context, integrating both aspects into the curricula prepares students for the competitive music industry. Programs that balance these two forms of knowledge foster a comprehensive skill set that enables graduates to meet both the artistic and technical demands of music production.

As discussed in the previous theme, practical preparedness of Kenyan music production graduates is determined by their knowledge on local music genres and their overall readiness to meet the immediate demands of the industry. Industry professionals emphasize the importance of local music knowledge, often noting the gaps in graduates such as *"A deep understanding of Kenyan sound"* (Samuel Kyama, personal communication, August 20, 2024). Afro-fusion music producer Samuel Kyama, explains that while graduates *"might know the popular stuff [in music production], but when it*

comes to really understanding the cultural significance of different music genres, that's where things get hard". This gaps reflects a discrepancy between surface-level knowledge of popular music and a deeper, culturally-informed understanding of various Kenyan genres. Kyama's observation implies that competency in the Kenyan music production industry requires more than just familiarity with popular trends, it demands profound understanding of the cultural roots and meanings behind different music genres. For instance, the article "From Benga to Gengetone: A History of Kenyan Music" illustrates how genres like Benga and Gengetone, are deeply rooted in the cultural narratives and social contexts of their respective communities. Benga music, which emerged in the 1960s, fuses traditional Luo rhythms with modern instrumentation, reflecting the socio-political landscape of post-independence Kenya (Wakilisha, 2020). This genre serves as a storytelling medium addressing social issues and celebrating cultural identity, thereby capturing the lived experiences of a community. The ability to create music that resonates on this level requires a producer to possess not only technical expertise but also a deep understanding of local cultural contexts, linguistic nuances, and social dynamics. However, the study found that many Kenyan music production graduates feel inadequately prepared to produce music of this nature, despite their formal education. Afro Pop producer SoFresh, echoes this concern. He states,

> *"...the student knew how to set up a mic and record in theory, but he had never worked with an Orutu before (see appendix XIII). He tried to mic it like he would a violin, which didn't capture the [timbre] of the instrument. He also struggled to mix it into the track because he wasn't familiar with its frequency range and how it should sit in a mix." (Personal communication, September 27, 2024)*

SoFresh highlights a critical lack of hands-on experience with local instruments among Kenyan music graduates, pointing out that theoretical knowledge alone is insufficient for successful adaptation to the industry. Graduates often struggle with incorporating

instruments like the *Orutu,* demonstrating disconnect between their education and the practical, technical demands of traditional Kenyan music. This gap between formal education and practical industry demands is not unique to Kenya. Globally, scholars like López-Íñiguez and Bennett (2020) argue that formal music education often tends to prioritise theory over practical experience, leaving graduates ill-prepared for real-world challenge. They argue that, while theoretical frameworks provide essential foundations for understanding music, practical experience is crucial for developing the skills necessary to navigate the complexities of the industry. López-Íñiguez and Bennett's (2020) analysis of various music education programs highlights a trend of reduced students' engagement in hands-on practice, which in turn diminishes their ability to apply theoretical concepts in authentic musical contexts. Although their study does not specifically focus on Kenyan music production education, it provides valuable insights into the broader global challenges faced in music education, providing insights relevant to the Kenyan context.

The evident divide between music production education in Kenya and the local music production industry is distinct, given the cultural diversity and rapidly shifting trends in the music industry. For graduates, the challenge lies not only in mastering technical skills, but also being adaptable enough to navigate industry-specific cultural contexts. Although they may possess technical skills and familiarity with popular trends, many often lack the deeper cultural understanding necessary to produce music that is locally relevant. This lack of cultural understanding often leads to a disconnection between the music they produce and the preferences of the local audience, undermining the cultural relevance and appeal of their work. Roberts (1992) insists, that the relationship between global and local culture in music production often results in a tension between preserving cultural identity and adapting to international market demands. Thus without a deep

understanding of local genres and their cultural significance, music producers find it difficult to effectively engage their intended audiences.

Producing music that appeals to the local market "*starts with [..]understanding the traditional elements [...] before one even thinks about mixing genres [and] spend time studying the traditional music.*" (Samuel Kyama, personal communication, August 20, 2024). This means that a foundational knowledge of traditional music is essential for any producer aiming to create sounds that authentically reflect Kenya's rich cultural heritage. However, in tertiary music production curricula, elements of traditional Kenyan music— such as indigenous instruments like the *nyatiti* (see appendix XII), African rhythms, and local languages—are often underrepresented. Ian Akhuyo, a music production graduate noted that they "*barely touched on African rhythms... [they] just skimmed over them*", reflecting a significant gap in how traditional music is incorporated into formal education (personal communication, FGD, July 23, 2024). This gap is further evidenced by a comparison of technical skills in the university curricula. According to Mochere (2022), university X and university Y offer varying levels of technical training in music production.

While universities provide skills such as recording, mixing, and editing, there is a noticeable lack of emphasis on local music elements and key production techniques needed for effective music production are not adequately addressed. Consequently, graduates from these institutions in Nairobi often enter the industry without the practical and cultural tools required to produce music that resonates with local audiences. Without these tools, music production graduates risk missing the cultural nuances that could make their work relevant to the local listener. Connell and Gibson (2003) explain that without situating music within the cultural and spatial contexts of its production, it risks losing relevance to its intended audience. Their work emphasizes the importance of

understanding the socio-cultural dynamics that shape musical expression, arguing that music is not created in a vacuum but is deeply intertwined with the cultural narratives and historical contexts of its community. Connell and Gibson (2003) assert that music serves as a reflection of societal values, beliefs, and experiences, which are essential for producers to grasp in order to create authentic works that resonate with listeners. The authors define authentic works as those that genuinely reflect the cultural contexts and lived experiences of the communities from which they emerge. Correspondingly, an article by Red Giant Media Agency (RGMA) on the role of music production in preserving cultural heritage highlights how music production can document traditional music and showcase diverse ethnic sounds (RGMA, 2024). The article articulates that music serves as a cultural identifier, with folk songs and traditional rhythms telling stories of the communities they represent.

However, the scarcity of cultural knowledge further hinders music production graduates' abilities to tap into culturally relevant expressions that resonate with Kenyan listeners. Understanding local traditions is invaluable in music production because it provides a deep familiarity with the cultural practices, values, and meanings that enrich the production process. By acquiring this knowledge, producers ensure that their creations reflect relevant cultural expressions and preserve heritage elements within their work. This basis in traditional practices helps maintain the integrity of the music while navigating modern influences, as it fosters an appreciation and application of cultural elements in contemporary contexts. As a result, music production graduates who engage with traditional musical forms are better equipped to fully grasp the intricacies and significance of these elements traditional, enabling them to create more authentic and impactful music.

4.3.2 Application of Theoretical Knowledge in Cultural Fusion

Fusion in Kenyan music production refers to the process of integrating traditional Kenyan music with global musical forms and modern production techniques. This synthesis not only enhances theoretical knowledge by providing a framework for understanding the interplay between cultural preservation and innovation, but also enriches practical knowledge through hands-on experience in blending diverse musical styles. The emphasis lies on maintaining cultural identity while appealing to global audiences. According to Gangesh (2022), combining local and contemporary elements in music production is not merely a technical exercise but a culturally significant practice that reflects broader societal changes and a nation's ongoing negotiation with modernity. In this way, music production graduates in Kenya must develop an understanding of both their cultural heritage and global musical trends, enabling them to successfully navigate the process of blending local musical traditions with modern production techniques. RGMA report observes that *"there will be a stronger emphasis on incorporating traditional Kenyan sounds and instruments into modern music, allowing artists to create a unique Kenyan sound that celebrates cultural heritage."* This growing industry trend reinforces the necessity for music production graduates to have a deep understanding of local music elements, which can be creatively integrated into modern productions. However, as one of the established music producers noted, music production graduates often lack the *"local knowledge"* necessary to work with artists who fuse different styles of music with local genres. Melvin Mathenge, a Gengetone producer states that;

> *"… in the first session with a client, [the graduate] completely fell apart. The artist wanted to record some adlibs, but the graduate couldn't set up the session quickly enough. The artist got frustrated, and I had to step in."* *(personal communication, August 14, 2024)*

According to Melvin Mathenge, there is a deficiency in music production graduates'

ability to work with artists who blend diverse musical styles with local genres. This lack of *"local knowledge"* highlights a gap between formal education and the practical demands of Kenya's evolving music scene. The example provided by Mathenge, illustrates the real-world consequences of this knowledge gap-where a graduate's inability to efficiently set up a recording session led to artist frustration and potential loss of professional credibility. This scenario reveals the importance of quick thinking and adaptability in real-world studio environments, skills that appear to be underdeveloped in recent graduates. Bourdieu's notion of field-specific cultural capital further illuminates this issue, suggesting that formal education system may not be equipping students with the specific forms of knowledge and skills valued in the Kenyan music production industry.

This theoretical perspective highlights the need for a more integrated approach to music production education that bridges the gap between academic knowledge and industry-specific practices. The need for producer intervention implies that current educational programs may not be adequately preparing students for the fast-paced, high-pressure situations common in professional music production. Furthermore, this incident suggests that bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application is crucial for graduates to succeed in Kenya's dynamic and fusion-oriented music industry.

The popularity of local music in Kenya, shaped by the fusion-oriented industry, is evident in the emergence and widespread appeal of hybrid genres. As songwriter Tito Bendihuru explains, *"I mostly do Afro-neo benga [...] a mixture of traditional benga sounds and contemporary music"* (personal communication, July 17, 2024), emphasizing the relationship between traditional Kenyan musical elements and contemporary global influences. The term *"Afro-neo benga"* represents a contemporary interpretation of the traditional benga genre, where *"Afro-"* signifies the African cultural roots and influences,

"neo-" indicates the innovative approach to music, and *"benga"* refers to the specific Kenyan musical style known for its rhythmic guitar work and a vibrant, danceable character. *Afro-neo benga* exemplifies the integration of traditional Kenyan benga music with contemporary influences, illustrating how local sounds can evolve and adapt through exposure to global musical trends. This fusion represents the exchange and influence between different musical genres and cultures, reflecting the bidirectional flow of musical styles (Železa, 2010). It is important to note that the fusion process is deeply embedded in the historical and ongoing cultural interactions between Kenya and its diaspora communities worldwide. For instance, local artists *singing "in Luo [with a blend] of hip- hop and [...] Lingala"* (Eugene Otieno, personal communication, August 20, 2024) showcasing creative dialogue between traditional musical heritage and contemporary global influences.

This fusion requires music production graduates to act as cultural mediators, integrating diverse musical elements while preserving the integrity of local musical traditions. Ian Kiptoo, a local music enthusiast notes that, *"when [he] listen to a pop song that has [...] incorporated traditional elements, it resonates with [him] on a deeper level."* (personal communication, FGD, August 23, 2024). Kiptoo's statement underscores the profound impact that culturally-rooted music can have on listeners, particularly when traditional elements are skilfully woven into contemporary pop structures. It suggests a significant appetite among music listeners that acknowledges and celebrates cultural heritage while engaging with global pop sensibilities. This affirms the value of the cultural mediation skills that music production graduates are expected to develop.

Music production education in Kenya has fallen short in equipping students with the necessary skills to meet industry expectations, thus leaving graduates feeling *"limited in [...] knowing what the culture wants, [...] right now."* (Barnabus Yuka, personal

communication, July 15, 2024). Music production programs should aim to foster a deep understanding of local musical traditions while developing advanced technical skills in students. Graduates are expected to "*use their technical skills to elevate local sounds rather than simply imitating international trends. For example, taking a popular local and giving it a unique twist using their advanced production knowledge.*" (Eugene Otieno, personal communication, August 20, 2024). Similarly, Dj Dronz notes that, *"best producers are those who use their skills to enhance the natural flow of the song".* (personal communication, FGD, August 23, 2024). This perspective aligns with Eugene Otieno's view that it is vital for graduates to use their acquired technical skills to innovate within the context of local musical traditions rather than replicating international trends.

This approach suggests that music production education should not only produce graduates who are just technically proficient, but also cultivate culturally aware graduates capable of contributing to the evolution of local music scenes. The idea of "elevating local sounds" implies a respect for cultural heritage while pushing boundaries through advanced production techniques. DJ Dronz's quote complements this perspective by highlighting the delicate balance between technical skill and musical intuition. His statement that *"best producers"* enhance the *"natural flow of the song"* suggests that technical expertise should serve the music, not dominate it. This viewpoint emphasizes the importance of developing a nuanced understanding of musicality alongside technical proficiency. Ultimately, graduates must be more than just technicians; they need to be cultural interpreters and innovators.

This dual responsibility requires a deep understanding of local musical traditions, coupled with the ability to apply advanced production techniques in ways that respect and enhance these traditions. The emphasis on enhancing *"natural flow"* points to the need

for education that fosters both creativity and cultural sensitivity alongside technical skills. It implies that music production courses should not only teach the latest software and equipment but also cultivate an appreciation for local musical forms and the ability to work within and expand upon these traditions. Consequently, successful music production in Kenya requires a dynamic synthesis of local cultural knowledge and global technical expertise.

In a study of East African artisans, Swigert-Gacheru (2011) discussed these *Juakali* artisans' ability to adapt global influences while maintaining their cultural identity, particularly in the face of economic challenges. While Swigert-Gacheru's study looked into *JuaKali* artisans, its insights are relevant to Kenyan music producers, who face similar challenges in maintaining their cultural identity amid global influences. Just as *Juakali*. Just as Juakali artisans blend local artistic techniques with global art forms, Kenyan music producers skilfully incorporate indigenous instruments, rhythms, and melodies into modern genres, preserving cultural identity. Additionally, by collaborating with international artists, producers infuse local styles with trending global ones thus promoting Kenyan music culture on the international stage. This is akin to what artisans do, blending local artistic techniques with global art forms such as contemporary sculpting in order to attract a wider audience while promoting Kenyan culture.

Reflecting on the music scene in Kenya, it becomes clear that graduates have experienced an education that does not adequately prepare them for the relationship between cultural identity and global influences. Indeed, tertiary institutions should *"have courses that focus on fusion - not just teaching different genres, but actually challenging students to blend them in innovative ways [with local styles]"* while maintaining their cultural identity (Melvin Mathenge). Such an approach would enable graduates to fully gain all the different forms of cultural capital (see Bourdieu's Cultural Capital Theory).

These include embodied cultural capital, which refers to the internalized knowledge and understanding of Kenyan musical traditions, rhythms, and cultural nuances; objectified cultural capital, which encompasses the ability to effectively utilize both traditional instruments and modern production equipment; and institutionalized cultural capital, represented by their formal qualifications in music production. Moreover, by mastering the fusion of local and global elements, graduates would acquire a symbolic capital within the music industry. This would position them as cultural mediators capable of bridging traditional Kenyan music with contemporary global trends. Such multifaceted cultural capital would enable graduates to navigate the complex landscape of the music industry, create innovative and authentic Kenyan music, and potentially influence the evolution of both local and global music scenes.

As Munro (2021) asserts, it is important to ground musical creations in local realities and experiences while simultaneously engaging with global musical trends and production techniques. This grounding, as Munro explains, provides an understanding of how cultural literacy can be integrated with global musical elements. Therefore, tertiary institutions should also focus on developing graduates' ability to create music that is deeply rooted in Kenyan cultural narratives, while ensuring they possess the technical competence and global appeal necessary to make their music resonate on a global stage. This approach would enhance graduates' capital and their capacity to contribute meaningfully to both local and international music scenes.

This section looked into the synthesis of local and contemporary musical elements in relation to evaluating both theoretical and practical knowledge in Kenyan local music production. This discussion paves the way for exploring the evolution of Kenyan sound from the perspectives of music producers, focusing on how the theoretical and practical knowledge acquired by graduates shapes their approach to music production.

4.3.3 Adapting Academic Skills to the Evolving Kenyan Sound

To analyse the adaption of academic skills to the evolving Kenyan music landscape from the perspective of music producers, the term 'Kenyan sound' should be understood as the distinctive musical identity that captures the nature of Kenya's cultural expression and resonates with a broader audience over time. The evolution of this sonic identity reflects a complex interplay between theoretical erudition—encompassing comprehension of musical genres, cultural contexts, and production methodologies—and practical proficiency, which entails experiential learning in music creation and performance.

As Kenyan music producers blend traditional elements—such as indigenous instruments and rhythms—with contemporary genres like Afro Neo Benga and Arbantone, they not only preserve cultural heritage but also innovate to meet the demands of a global audience, thereby enhancing both their artistic expression and technical proficiency (Wanjala & Kebaya, 2010; Red Giant, 2024). This form of music plays a significant role in connecting the past with the present, by serving as a living archive that preserves cultural memories while reflecting contemporary societal changes (Masolo 2000). Therefore, the evolution of 'Kenyan sound' is a continuous transformation and adaptation of musical identity that reflects the developing socio-cultural, political and economic landscape of the Kenyan nation. This development is characterized by the process of incorporating diverse linguistic and cultural musical expressions while adopting new genre trends and their production techniques. The Kenyan musical sound, however, cannot be easily defined by alone. Established music producers *were producing music"* which listeners *"couldn't really put [their] fingers on what that sound was,"* (Eugene Otieno, personal communication, August 20, 2024). The audience are grappling with a hybrid sound, blending diverse influences in such a way that it defied clear

categorization. This uncertainty reflects the transitional phase in Kenyan music production, where the fusion of local and global elements created a distinctive yet unfamiliar sound, leaving listeners with a sense of something new and unique, but difficult to define within the traditional genres boundaries. This process illustrates that the 'Kenyan sound' is not a static representation of cultural heritage, but rather a fluid and evolving construct that continually adapts to changing social, political, and technological landscapes (Maina wa Mũtonya, 2014).

Understanding the fluidity nature of popular music, music production education should equip students with the skills to successfully adapt and navigate the local music industry. However, the current situation in music production education, exhibits negligence to prepare music production students for the expectations of the industry causing graduates to use their skills not *"to elevate […] local sounds"* but to "[*imitate] international trends"* (Eugene Otieno, personal communication, August 20, 2024). According to Otieno, graduates come out of school with a strong understanding of Western pop production techniques but struggle to apply these skills to our local genres. They can replicate international hits perfectly but they cannot create something that sounds distinctly Kenyan. This observation underscores a fundamental misalignment between music production education and the needs of the Kenyan music industry, where an emphasis on Western production techniques undermines the development of skills relevant to local music traditions. The producer's comment reveals a concerning trend where graduates' technical proficiency is divorced from the cultural context, resulting to music that lacks authenticity and fails to resonate with local audiences. Adding onto that Melvin Mathenge notes that, *"these graduates come with solid technical skills. They know software, they know music theory all that, but on the other hand, many of them lack that local industry knowledge."* (personal communication, August 24, 2024). According

to Mathenge, while graduates possess a strong foundation in technical aspects of music production-demonstrating proficiency in industry- standard software and a solid grasp of music theory - their lack of local industry knowledge hinders their ability to understand audience preferences, navigate the Kenyan music scene, and collaborate effectively with local artists. This gap in practical, context-specific knowledge often results to disconnect between the graduates' technical capabilities and their ability to contribute to the evolution of the Kenyan sound. This situation echoes the findings of Bartleet et al. (2019), who examined the relationship between music education and industry needs across several countries.

The authors found that while many music programs excel in teaching technical skills, they often fall short in providing students with the practical industry knowledge and cultural competencies needed to thrive in local music scenes. Importantly, Bartleet et al. suggest that bridging this gap is crucial not only for the success of graduates but also for the sustainable development and innovation within local music ecosystems. This disconnect between technical skills and local industry knowledge reveals a potential blind spot in music production curricula, where emphasis on universal technical skills may overshadow the importance of market-specific knowledge and cultural competence. Melvin Mathenge's observation suggests that success in the Kenyan music industry requires a delicate balance between global technical standards and local cultural fluency. This highlights the need for educational programs to bridge this gap.

This situation points to a broader challenge in music education: the need to prepare graduates not just as technicians but also as culturally aware professionals capable of navigating the unique landscape of their local music industries while remaining globally competitive. This challenge reflects a trend in music education that lacks emphasis on local musical traditions and cultural contexts (Maina wa Mũtonya, 2013). He argues that

a more culturally grounded approach to music production education could foster innovation that respects and builds upon local musical heritage. Graduates, therefore, need to be aware of transitional phases in music and adapt to emerging sounds, synchronizing with the fluidity of the music industry while still maintaining their cultural identity. As Eugene Otieno emphasised, *"So we had to take note and we had also to revise our strategy around the same"* (personal communication, August 20 2024). This statement highlights the importance of music production graduates adapting to new and emerging sounds, thus contributing to the ongoing evolution in Kenyan music. Congruently, an industry report by *The Business Now* states that Spotify has unveiled the first Global Impact List in Kenya, recognizing the top 15 tracks from Kenya with the biggest global impact on Spotify over the first half of 2024. The list recognises Kenyan tracks that have had the most listens from outside Kenya in the first half of 2024, and were released between January 1 and June 30. The list is dominated by Arbantone tracks, a genre that is fast gaining popularity, especially amongst Gen Z in Kenya. Other key genres include Afro-fusion and RnB (see appendix X).

This Spotify report reveals a significant shift in the global reception of Kenyan music, particularly highlighting the rise of Arbantone and its appeal to younger audiences. The dominance of this genre, alongside Afro-fusion and RnB, in the Global Impact List suggests a growing international appetite for Kenyan music that blends traditional elements with contemporary styles. This trend indicates that Kenyan artists and producers who skilfully blend cultural fusion are gaining traction on the global stage. The recognition of these tracks on an international platform like Spotify demonstrates the potential for Kenyan music to resonate with audiences beyond national borders offering a unique opportunity for Kenyan music production graduates to capitalize and create music that has both local and international appeal. Furthermore, the popularity of

Arbantone among Gen Z points to a generational shift in musical preferences, emphasizing the need for music producers to stay attuned to emerging trends and evolving audience tastes. This success story underscores the value of innovation and experimentation in music production, particularly in fusing traditional and modern elements to create fresh, appealing sounds.

The global impact of these Kenyan tracks also has implications for the music production education sector, suggesting a need for curricula that not only cover technical production skills but also emphasize cultural literacy, trend analysis, and global market understanding. It highlights the importance of equipping aspiring producers with the skills to create music that is globally competitive while retaining its cultural authenticity. This development in the Kenyan music scene aligns with the earlier observations about the importance of bridging traditional and contemporary elements in music production. It provides concrete evidence of the success that can be achieved when producers effectively act as cultural mediators, creating music that resonates both locally and globally. Certainly, adaptability in music production education is important, reaffirming the need for producers to respond to the evolving music landscape.

The industry's expectation for adaptability in the face of evolving sound is clear. *"[The industry] need[s] graduates who can use their skills to elevate local sounds, not just imitate international trends. Too often, we see new producers falling back on copying what's popular globally instead of innovating within our own musical traditions."* as Eugene Otieno, (personal communication, August 20, 2024) accentuates. This observation underscores the challenge in the application of theoretical knowledge to the practical realities of the industry. By revising strategies to align with industry realities, established producers demonstrate a capacity for innovation that is essential for staying relevant in the market. This adaptability should be a core component of music

production education, ensuring that graduates not only possess technical skills but also the ability to anticipate and respond to changes in musical trends while maintaining a strong connection to their cultural roots. Wanjala and Kebaya (2016) emphasize that music production education should be fluid and dynamic, reflecting the constant changes within the industry. They argue that a rigid formal education system fails to prepare students for the realities of a rapidly evolving market, where trends and technologies shift frequently. By integrating aspects of adaptability into formal music education, music production education can better equip students to innovate and stay relevant, as emphasized in the evolving Kenyan sound. This adaptive approach ensures that emerging producers are well-prepared to navigate the complex interplay between traditional Kenyan sounds and contemporary global trends, fostering both innovation and cultural relevance.

Consequently, when music production education incorporates adaptability, it enhances students' embodied cultural capital by equipping them with the skills to interpret and blend diverse musical influences. This form of cultural capital allows students to develop a deep, intuitive understanding of various musical traditions and practices, enabling them to create innovative and culturally resonant music. As they internalize these diverse influences, students are empowered to experiment with new sounds, pushing the boundaries of existing genres while maintaining a connection to their cultural roots. This leads into the third objective of the study, examining the role of talent and education in local music production.

4.4 Talent vs. Education in Local Music Production

The third objective of the study was to explore views of musicians on whether talent or education is the most valuable asset in music production. Table 3 below gives a summary of the themes and sub-themes that were derived from the study.

Table 3

Summary of the Themes and Sub-Themes that were derived from the Study on Talents vs Education in Local Music Production

Theme	Sub-Themes	Examples of Participants' Words
Talent vs. Education Dynamics	• Complementary Roles:	• *"Talent is a plus... but sometimes when you have information you are better,"* • *"Passion can lead you to the best of the places but you also when you have knowledge you can go a bigger mileage,"* • *"From my experience in most cases talent beats formal education because in most cases music goes with a feeling,"*
	• Talent Superiority:	• *"...inherent musical ability is important perhaps because an authentic touch is what gives the art its signature,"* • *Music goes with a feeling especially contemporary pop music. It's all about a feeling,"* • *"Talent plus the formal education can really go so far,"*
Industry Flexibility	• Rigidity in Formal Education	• *"There's a way they are rigid in their way of thinking; whatever they've learned formally, they stick to it, so if a new artist comes into the studio and they're trying to try out-new ideas which are not formal in the sense, they may be a little bit rigid to adjust."*
	• Openness of Self-Taught Producers	• *"When you're taught the 'right' way to do things, it can sometimes limit your creativity."* • *"Producers who are not formally trained are very open to new ideas. The creativity, the idea of creativity and imagination, goes a long way."*
	• Balancing Structure	• *"I think my lack of formal training has also been a blessing in some ways. When you're taught the 'right' way to do things, it can sometimes limit your creativity. Me? I had no rules to break because I didn't know the rules in the first place!"* • *"I prefer collaborating with a 'professional approach first,' which indicates that while adaptability is crucial, it should be balanced with professionalism and structure."*
Technical Proficiency	• Technical Knowledge Necessity	• *"If you don't have the information then it's kind of difficult to even operate machines around you."* • *"School mostly gave us knowledge on how to do most things but there are things that come with experience."* • *"We have composition and all many other stuffs. Sound engineering will help you know how to operate a few equipment that you are also taught in school."*
	• Versatility Through Education	• *"Educated producers have a broader skill set including the ability to play multiple instruments and understand various aspects of music."* • *"At every step... I was given every new skill to tackle a different problem that could be in the music industry."*

4.4.1 Talent and Education Dynamics

The relationship between talent and formal education is critical in the music industry, particularly in music production. This relationship typically presents itself in two paths: producers who invest in formal education to develop their skills, and those who primarily depend on talent and learn through hands-on experience in the industry. This theme explores how talent and acquired knowledge interact to shape the capabilities and success of music producers. According to Kirnarskaya (2009), musical success depends on an interaction between innate musical talents and acquired technical skills. While talent provides the creative and intuitive foundation for musical expression, it is the systematic cultivation of technical knowledge—through education, practice, and experience—that enables producers to translate their ideas into professional outputs. When Tito Bendihuru, an Afro Neo Benga musician, says, *"talent is a plus ... but sometimes when you have information you are better,"* he recognizes not only the value of natural talent but also an emphasis of the key role of acquired knowledge (personal communication, July 17, 2024). His sentiment is further asserted by Sy Adogo, an Afro Soul musician who states that *"talent can lead you to the best of the places but also when you have knowledge you can go [far]."* (personal communication, July 17, 2024). Indeed, while innate ability provides the foundation for production skills, formal education or acquired information enhances one's capabilities, leading to superior outcomes in music production. In this context, the concept of talent development, as presented by Gagné (2004) in his Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT), views natural abilities as characteristics that systematically develop through learning and practice. Additionally, Ericsson et al. (1993) assert that experts' instrumental music performance is primarily the result of extended "deliberate practice" rather than talent alone. This strengthens the notion that intentional practice, often provided by the structured nature in

formal education, is vital in achieving expertise, even when innate abilities provide a foundation for artistic growth.

However, the structured nature can sometimes limit development of creative intuition. Wisdom Furaha, a music production graduate expressed that "*the academic approach [is] very[...] structured [and]it feels a bit removed from the creative, intuitive process.*" (personal communication, July 24, 2024). Furaha observes the tension between structured formal education and the inherently fluid nature of creativity in music production. By describing the academic approach as *"very structured"* and *"removed from the creative, intuitive process,"* he implies that rigid curricula may stifle spontaneity and personal expression, which are essential for artistic growth. This reflects a broader concern among music students that an overemphasis on technical skills and theoretical frameworks can lead to disconnect from the emotional and instinctual aspects of music-making. Moreover, the graduate's acknowledgement of feeling distanced from the creative process indicates a struggle to reconcile learned techniques with the organic, often unpredictable nature of artistic expression. This disconnect may result in lack of confidence in their creative abilities, as students might feel pressured to conform to established methods rather than explore their unique musical identities. Samuel Kyama, an Afro-fusion music producer, notes that his *"lack of formal training has been a blessing in some ways"* because *"when [students] are taught the 'right' way to do things, it can sometimes limit [their] creativity"* (personal communication, August 20, 2024). While formal education provides technical knowledge and skills, it may fail to fully nurture the creative, spontaneous elements that are equally important in music production. For this reason, Kenyan music production education programs should focus on providing comprehensive, hands-on training that enable students to engage in intentional practice while cultivating their creative intuition and artistic vision.

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The ideal environment for nurturing talent is one that is highly contextualized and responsive to specific organizational, cultural, and industrial needs (Vaiman et al. 2017). Effective talent management strategies, therefore, should be tailored to the unique characteristics of the environment in which they are implemented. In the context of music production education, this would involve creating an environment that fosters creativity, encourages experimentation, and provides access to industry-standard tools and technologies. Additionally, such an environment should prioritize practical, hands-on learning, where students can engage in real-world projects, collaborate with professionals, and receive mentorship from experienced producers (Akpan et al. 2020). However, Olus Manas, an Afro-pop musician in Kenya observed that *"if a new artist comes into the studio and they're trying to try out new ideas which are not formal in the sense, [formally educated producers] may be a little bit rigid to adjust"*, (personal communication, July 15, 2024). Manas points out that formally educated producers may adhere strictly to structured methodologies, making it challenging to accommodate unconventional or experimental ideas from new artists. He observes that formal education can sometimes stifle creativity, limiting the collaborative potential in the studio environment. Sawyer (2012) asserts that overly structured learning can hinder the spontaneous and innovative thinking necessary for artistic exploration and growth. Sawyer's study argues that in fields like music, where innovation often emerges from spontaneous experimentation, rigid educational frameworks can hinder artistic growth. This highlights the need for educational approaches that strike a balance between structured framework and creative freedom, allowing producers to adapt more easily to unconventional ideas in real- world studio settings.

This observed disjunction between formal pedagogical approaches and the requisite flexibility in music production is frequently rooted in the asymmetry between technical

proficiency and the intuitive creativity that catalyses artistic innovation. While formal education provides a strong foundation in theory and technique, it may inadvertently overlook the emotional essence that the music industry values. As Burnard (2012) affirms, creativity in music production often arises from a combination of acquired knowledge, talent, and the ability to experiment, adapt, and respond to the unpredictable nature of the artistic process. Producers bound by formalized knowledge may therefore struggle to capture the spontaneous, genuine expression that resonates with audiences. Certainly, a balance between technical skill and creative freedom is necessary for producers to create music that not only adheres to industry standards but also possesses a unique, personal *"signature"* as put by Phyl-The-Kangogo, an Afro-neo Benga musician. (personal communication, July 17, 2024).

This signature, according to Phyl-The-Kangogo, is often rooted in a musician's *"inherent musical ability"* and is what gives the music its *"genuine touch and emotional depth"*. Kangogo insists that technical expertise alone cannot compensate for the instinctual qualities that gives local music its identity, emphasizing the irreplaceable value of a musician's natural talent. In the Kenyan music production scene, *"genuine touch"* likely refers to the concept of artistic identity, which develops through a complex interaction of inborn predispositions, acquired skills, and environmental influences. Furthermore, his emphasis on *"inherent ability"* and its role in creating a unique artistic *"signature"* underscores the importance of maintaining talent and creative freedom within educational environments. The primacy of natural talent is further recognized by Phyl-The-Kangogo who states that *"in most cases talent beats formal education because in […] music goes with a feeling, especially contemporary pop music"* (personal communication, July 17, 2024). The musician proposes that the intuitive, emotional aspects of music creation often supersede formally acquired knowledge in music

production. The *"feeling"* in music production refers to the aspects of emotional genuineness, creativity, and intuitive understanding (Hargreaves, 2002). While music production education in Kenya develops skill, it does not actively develop these emotional and intuitive aspects in students. As a result, music production graduates in Kenya often lack the "genuine touch" in their music.

This discussion leads to the next theme of industry flexibility.

4.4.2 Industry Flexibility

As discussed above, while formal education provides essential technical skills, and inborn talent provides the foundation for musical expression, musicians prefer a creative balance between the two., Successful producers are able to adapt their approaches to meet the demands of both technical mastery and artistic innovation. This adaptability allows them to navigate the structured frameworks of formal training while embracing the fluid, intuitive nature of music creation. Therefore, in examining industry adaptability—defined as the capacity to navigate and flourish within a perpetually evolving musical milieu—this discourse focuses on the efficacy of formal education in equipping producers with requisite tools for flexibility and innovation, compared to the potential benefits of autodidactic approaches in fostering greater adaptability and creative acumen. (Burnard et al., 2015; Green, 2002). While formal education has been acknowledged for providing a structured foundation, it is often the exploratory approach that fosters the adaptability and innovation needed to thrive in the ever-evolving music industry (Burnard et al. 2015).

The evolving nature of the music industry therefore necessitates flexibility in both the skills of music producers and the educational frameworks that nurture these skills. The PwC report (2013) acknowledges that "The changes in the entertainment and media

sector in Kenya are profoundly affecting stakeholders" (PwC, 2013, p. 21). This shift illustrates how graduates must be equipped to respond to various industry stakeholders, further emphasizing the need for practical, industry-relevant experience alongside formal education.

Considering that education is intended to prepare students for the realities of the industry, formal education frameworks should therefore reflect the evolving nature of the industry (Hora, 2020). Nonetheless, Kenyan musicians express concerns over the perceived inflexibility that formal education can impose on music production students. For example, when it comes to music production, Olus Manas stated that, *"[graduates] stick to a specific formula for whichever genre they work on, not putting into perspective that every idea is welcome."* (personal communication, July 15, 2024). This statement suggests that formal education may instil certain norms and values that become internalized, making it difficult for graduates to deviate from. Manas' critique points to a common challenge faced by music graduates transitioning into the professional industry-the tendency to over-rely on the techniques learned in formal education, at the expense of developing a more adaptive, experimental approach to music production. The over-dependence on academic formulas and norms hinders graduates' ability to keep pace with the rapidly evolving nature of the local music scene (Brown, 2007). In music production, such norms can translate into inflexible adherence to technical rules and methodologies, restricting the innovation and experimentation necessary for creative breakthroughs. Bennett (2016) affirms that, in creative industries, the ability to adapt to rapidly changing technological and stylistic trends is vital for career sustainability. She emphasizes that education in creative fields should foster not only technical skills, but also the capacity for lifelong learning and adaptability to help graduates navigate the ever-evolving landscape of their chosen industry. While formal education in Kenya

provides a sense of *"confidence and assurance"* for graduates, as Mark Murimi puts forward, it can also create a mindset where producers feel constrained by the *"right way of doing things",* (personal communication, July 18, 2024). This inflexibility may restrict the producer's ability to quickly adapt to new styles, genres, or techniques emerging in the music industry, as expressed by Samuel Kyama (personal communication, August 20, 2024).

In contrast to formally educated producers, informally educated producers are often viewed as more flexible and *"very open to new ideas."* Olus Manas, further remarks that a *"[musician] can stay in the studio and try out as many ideas as possible, new drum patterns, new melodies, even open to the idea of merging different genres to make a new [style].* This *"openness"* (personal communication, July 15, 2024), as put forward by the musician, stems from the lack of formal boundaries and rules that govern their creative processes, allowing for a freer exploration of new sounds, techniques, and genres. Additionally, this perspective stresses a key advantage of informally educated producers: their willingness to experiment and push creative boundaries. Their lack of formal training may actually foster innovation, as they are not constrained by traditional rules or established practices in music production. This openness to experimentation can lead to the creation of unique sounds and novel genre fusions, potentially driving the evolution of music styles. Adding onto that, Samuel Kyama, elucidates that their lack of formal training meant that he *"had no rules to break because [he] didn't know the rules in the first place"* (personal communication, August 20, 2024). The perceived creative freedom that comes with informal music allows producers to approach music production without preconceived notions or constraints, leading to more innovative outcomes.

The absence of rules point toward a lack of ingrained conventions that might otherwise restrict creative expression. Informally educated producers, often driven by notice of their

talent in the craft, are evidently unrestricted by the rigid structures of formal education and may be more likely to break conventional rules and explore uncharted territories in music production. Green (2002) explains that informal learning in music is characterized by several key features that contribute to openness and flexibility. These features include choice and autonomy, peer and group learning, and a holistic approach. These characteristics collectively contribute to the development of musicians who are more adaptable, creative, and open to experimentation. However, Green also acknowledges the value of formal education and suggests that an ideal approach would integrate aspects of both formal and informal learning approaches. Hence, *"[talent] can lead you to the best of [...] places but also when you have knowledge, you can go [far]."* (Tito Bendihuru, personal communication, July 17, 2024). The musician illuminates that this balanced approach could potentially cultivate producers who possess both technical proficiency and the openness to innovation that characterizes informal learning. Incorporating the characteristics of informal learning into formal education programs could foster the development of more flexible and innovative producers.

This idea captures the essence of Praxial Music Education where the blending of practical, real- world experiences with a solid foundation of theoretical knowledge creates a more holistic approach to music production (Elliott 1995). From this point of view, formal education provides the foundation for students to build upon their creativity. It offers technical knowledge and fundamental frameworks that guide the creative process, but it should not confine innovation. Effective music education should balance conceptual understanding with hands-on application, fostering what they term "musical understanding" - a comprehensive grasp of music that encompasses both thinking and doing. Moreover, Burnard's (2012) research on musical creativities further supports this approach, highlighting the need for educational environments that nurture diverse forms

of musical creativity while providing the technical skills necessary for their expression.

Therefore, music producers who can strike this balance are often the most successful. They can navigate between the worlds of formal structure and creative freedom, ensuring that their work is not only technically proficient but also innovative and responsive to contemporary trends. They understand when to adhere to the established norms of music production and when to break away from them in the pursuit of something new and original. Ultimately, the ideal approach may lie in a combination where producers leverage the strengths of formal education while maintaining the flexibility and openness that come with a more exploratory approach to learning. In the next section, I will delve into the theme of technical proficiency in local music production.

4.4.3 Technical Proficiency

Technical proficiency in music production, as previously delineated, encompasses the specialized competencies, erudition, and expertise requisite for the creation, recording, mixing, and mastering of music that both embodies and resonates with local audience predilections. These skills, knowledge, and expertise specifically involve proficiency areas such as; recording techniques and technologies, mixing and mastering processes, digital audio workstations (DAWs) and music production software, sound design and synthesis. As the lines between the roles of producer, engineer, composer, and performer are blurred, the demand for individuals with a well-rounded understanding of audio production has grown exponentially (Zhang et al., 2023). The modern music industry requires professionals who can adapt to rapidly changing technologies and workflows while maintaining a high level of creativity and technical expertise. This trend is reflected in the evolving nature of music industry education programs, which increasingly emphasize multidisciplinary learning and the development of transferable skills. As noted in the document, it is important for students interested in music

production and management to become multidisciplinary learners (Zhang et al., 2023).

It is evident that formal education provides adequate learning pathways to operating equipment and understanding versatile technical and theoretical foundations. Sy Adogo, an Afro Soul Musician, recognizes that *"if [producers] don't have the information then it's kind of difficult to even operate machines around them",* (personal communication, July 17, 2024). The musician's use of the word *"information"* points to the possibility that formal education provides not just hands-on skills, but also the underlying knowledge and context necessary to understand and effectively use production equipment. Without this information, producers struggle to effectively utilize the tools at their disposal. Furthermore, graduates *"[are] given new skills to tackle a different problem that could be in the music industry,"* (Emmanuel Barasa). This respondent clarifies how students are taught to view technical proficiency as a problem-solving toolkit in the realities of the industry. The toolkit of technical skills and knowledge provides graduates with a foundation for resourcefulness in the music industry, allowing them to adapt to various roles and challenges within the field. Similarly, Ihaji, an established music producer underscores in an interview that he *"would go back to school [to] learn how other people mix their songs and mastering"* (Wahu Kiragu, 2022, 58:45) The statement reflects a profound appreciation for continuous learning and the value of formal education, even for established professionals in the music industry. It underscores the belief that structured learning environments can offer unique insights into diverse techniques and approaches, particularly in specialized areas like mixing and mastering.

The willingness of an established producer to return to school to add more technical skill demonstrates the perceived value of structured learning in enhancing one's craft and staying current in a rapidly evolving industry. This attitude affirms that formal education provides a toolkit of technical skills and knowledge that serves as a foundation for

resourcefulness in the music industry. Indeed, the versatility fostered by formal education emerges as a significant advantage in the dynamic field of music production, enabling graduates to adapt to various roles and challenges they may encounter. Versatility, as fostered by formal education, appears to be a significant advantage in the music production field. Eugene Otieno, a local music producer affirms that *"educated producers have a broader skill set including the ability to play multiple instruments and understand various aspects of music."* (personal communication, August 20th, 2024). The ability to play multiple instruments suggests that educated producers have a more comprehensive understanding of music, which can enhance their production capabilities across various genres. Moreover, the reference to understanding *"various aspects of music"* entails that formal education provides a holistic view of music theory, history, and cultural contexts, enabling producers to approach their work with greater depth and versatility. This breadth of knowledge and skills likely allows educated producers to familiarize themselves easily to different musical styles, collaborate effectively with a wide range of artists, and potentially innovate by drawing from a broader palette of musical influences and techniques (Thompson 2023).

However, effective music production involves more than just operating equipment; it requires the ability to make industry informed decisions in complex, often unpredictable environments (Thompson & McIntyre's 2013). Upon further probing, Emmanuel Barasa expressed that he doesn't focus much on production anymore because, *"currently, [he is] teaching music in nursery school in order to [survive]"*. This statement reveals a significant career shift from music production to music education, likely driven by economic necessity.

The shift highlights the complex realities of the music production industry, as discussed by Thompson and McIntyre (2013). Their research emphasizes that successful music

production requires not just technical skills, but also the ability to navigate unpredictable industry environments and make informed decisions. Emmanuel Barasa's move to teaching music in nursery school suggests that the economic stability of the education sector may be more appealing than the uncertainties of music production. This transition also points to the potential disconnect between the acquisition of technical skills and the ability to effectively monetize those skills in the local music production industry. This further indicates that even though adequate technical skills were provided, a crucial aspect lacked, thus forcing the graduate to seek other means for survival. As noted by Théberge (2012), the role of the music producer has evolved to include significant technical expertise, often blurring the lines between creative and technical roles. Considering that formal education plays an essential role in providing technical foundation, there appears to be a missing element within the system. This missing element appears to be the practical knowledge of how to navigate the local music industry, as discussed in previous sections. Théberge's (2012) analysis of the relationship between music technology and cultural production provides insight into this gap. He argues that while formal education often focuses on technical skills, it may not adequately address the complex socio-economic realities of the music industry, particularly in local contexts, which are crucial for sustaining a career in music production.

Furthermore, Respondent 1, another graduate, expressed that while in school, he was given enough technical skills to the point that he *"[felt] versatile, but [also] limited in knowing what the [industry preferred]"*. While graduates may gain a broad range of technical abilities making them feel *"versatile,"* they often lack the specific knowledge of industry trends, audience preferences, and market demands that are crucial for success in the Kenyan music scene. This lack of practical knowledge about navigating the music

industry reflects a broader issue in African music education, where the focus often leans more towards theoretical and technical mastery rather than industry readiness. As Akuno (2012) argues, music education in many African countries tends to prioritize Western classical traditions and technical proficiency, often at the expense of preparing students for the realities of local and global music industries. This acknowledges the role of formal education in providing a foundational knowledge base, while recognising the limitations of classroom learning. Graduates must not only understand the technical aspects of their equipment but also develop critical thinking and decision-making skills to navigate the creative and practical challenges that arise during the local music production process. According to Thompson and McIntyre's (2013) study, *Rethinking Creative Practice in Record Production and Studio Recording Education: Addressing the Field*, it is fundamental for music producers to have a comprehensive skill set that combines technical expertise with creative problem-solving abilities in the context of music production education. Therefore, technical proficiency should be viewed not as an end in itself, but as a means to realize creative visions and overcome practical challenges in the local music production process.

This chapter presented an analysis of the key findings. Through thematic analysis, three primary areas emerged: graduate preparedness, knowledge applicability, and the talent-education dynamic. The findings revealed that while graduates possess strong technical skills from formal education, they often lack the cultural competencies and industry-specific knowledge needed for success in Kenya's music industry. The analysis showed a significant gap between academic training and practical industry demands, particularly in understanding and producing contemporary local genres. Producers emphasized the importance of balancing technical proficiency with cultural literacy, while musicians stressed on the need for both natural talent and formal education in successful music

production. These insights suggest that music production education in Kenya requires reorientation to better integrate cultural elements with technical training. The findings presented here form the basis for the conclusions and recommendations that follow in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is organised to synthesize the research findings, elucidate conclusions from the analysis, offer recommendations for diverse stakeholders, and delineate potential areas for further scholarly inquiry. It weaves together the threads of analysis from the preceding chapters to present a cohesive understanding of the complex interplay between formal music education and industry realities in Kenya.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

This study examined the competencies of music production graduates in relation to the demands of the Kenyan music industry, guided by three key objectives. The findings for each objective are summarized as follows:

5.2.1 Perceived Level of Preparedness of Kenyan Graduates

Graduates consistently reported a perceived inadequacy in their preparedness to meet the practical challenges in Kenya's music industry. Despite their formal education, there was a notable gap between the technical skills acquired in academic settings and the cultural competencies required by the industry. Graduates expressed concerns over limited exposure to contemporary local music trends and production techniques during their studies. The predominant focus on classical music theory in their educational paradigm, rendered graduates insufficiently equipped to navigate a market that requires a synthesis of contemporary production methodologies with indigenous Kenyan musical elements. This disconnect between the academic training and industry expectations underscores a need for better alignment of educational outcomes with the realities of the local music scene.

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5.2.2 Applicability of Theoretical and Practical Knowledge

Local producers emphasized the importance of blending traditional Kenyan music with contemporary production techniques. Although the technical foundations imparted through formal education were recognized as intrinsically valuable, they were deemed inadequate in addressing the industry's pragmatic requirements, particularly within the context of indigenous musical genres. The emergence of a unique 'Kenyan sound,' which incorporates both traditional and modern influences, was recognised as a key development. Producers underscored the need for this evolution to be better integrated in the curriculum, suggesting that formal education should focus more on teaching the application of technical skills within the framework of local music production, rather than focusing on theory alone.

5.2.3 Views on Talent versus Education

Diverse perspectives emerged concerning the importance of innate aptitude juxtaposed with formal pedagogical training in attaining success in music production. Some participants argued that talent is essential, especially in producing music that emotionally connects with audiences while others felt that education is equally important for developing a broader skill set and achieving technical proficiency. A common perspective was that a combination of both talent and education is ideal. Education enhances natural abilities, providing structure, technical skills, and a deeper understanding of production techniques. The synergy enables producers to create music that resonates on multiple levels.

5.3 Conclusions

The findings of this study bring out critical areas where music production education in Kenya falls short in preparing graduates for the demands of the local industry. Although

formal education provides a solid technical foundation, it inadequately addresses the practical and cultural competencies needed for them to thrive in the Kenyan music landscape. A deeper integration of local music trends, cultural elements, and practical industry experience is essential to closing this gap.

First, the perceived level of preparedness among graduates highlights the limitations of current academic programs in equipping students with the necessary tools to succeed in the local market. Second, the applicability of theoretical and practical knowledge emerged as a central concern as local music producers emphasized the importance of the unique 'Kenyan sound,' which blends traditional elements with contemporary techniques. For education to be effective, it must not only provide technical training but also integrate lessons on how to innovate within the cultural framework of Kenyan music production. Third, the discussion around talent versus education revealed that a balance of both is ideal for success in the industry. While natural talent allows for emotional resonance in music, formal education refines and broadens a producer's skill set, providing both structure and technical proficiency.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the above conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

5.4.1 Recommendations for Policy

Educational institutions should review and update their music production curricula to give a balance to both technical skills and the rich cultural heritage of Kenyan music. This would require in-depth studies of traditional Kenyan instruments, rhythms, and folklore, as well as contemporary local genres like Afro Neo Benga, and others.

Programs should go beyond theoretical instruction to adopt more hands-on, project-based approaches. This could involve tasks such as producing music for real clients, working

with local artists, and addressing industry challenges under simulated conditions.

Institutions should establish and strengthen links with local industry professionals by inviting them for guest lectures, workshops, and collaborative ibitiatives. These professionals can provide students with current industry insights, share lived experiences, and provide networking opportunities.

Fostering interdisciplinary projects within the institution, such as collaborations between music production, technology, and cultural studies departments, to encourage innovation. Such collaborations would allow students the freedom to experiment with different genres, explore the intersection of local music and global trends, and develop new production techniques that fuse of traditional and modern sounds.

Music industry professionals should work closely with educational institutions to provide insights on current industry needs, market trends, and in-demand skills. By participating in curriculum development, they can help shape a more industry-relevant education for future graduates, ensuring alignment between formal training and market expectations.

Seasoned industry professionals should consider mentoring up-and-coming producers. Mentorship programs can create a practical bridge between academic learning and the real-world demands of the music business. By working with experienced professionals, emerging producers can gain the confidence, skills, and connections necessary to succeed.

Music industry professionals should collaborate with educators to design course materials and assessment criteria that reflect the realities of the local music market. Incorporating industry-relevant assignments, practical case studies, and realistic project expectations will help ensure that graduates are well prepared for the specific challenges they will face in their careers.

While still in school, students should actively seek exposure in the local music industry through internships, freelancing, or assisting established producers. This experience will give them a practical understanding of industry operations and provide them with opportunities to apply their academic knowledge in real-life contexts.

Graduates should go beyond the scope of their formal education to deepen their knwledge of Kenyan musical traditions and emerging local genres. This cultural awareness is important for producing music that resonates with the local audiences and will give graduates a competitive edge in the market.

Graduates should build a portfolio that showcases their technical proficiency and cultural understanding, and highlights their ability to produce music that blends traditional Kenyan elements with modern production techniques, their versatility and relevance to the local industry.

The music industry is ever-evolving, and graduates need to stay ahead with new technologies, production techniques, and trends. Engaging in continuous learning through online courses, workshops, and maintaining industry contact will ensure that they remain competitive and adaptable in the fast-paced world of music production.

Policymakers should develop incentives that encourage stronger collaborations between educational institutions and the music industry. This could include tax breaks, grants, or subsidies for companies that support student internships, offer mentorship programs, or contribute to curriculum development.

Government bodies should allocate resources to support research on Kenyan music traditions and their applications in contemporary contexts. This research would build a body of knowledge that educators, industry professionals, and students could draw upon to develop a distinctly Kenyan style in music production.

5.4.2 Recommendations for Further Research

A longitudinal study tracking the careers of music production graduates would provide valuable data on how their education influences their success, in their personal development and broader life outcomes. Insights from such a study would help evaluate the effectiveness of current educational programs and identify areas for improvement.

A detailed analysis of successful self-taught producers in Kenya to shed light on the role of informal learning in the music industry. Understanding how these producers acquire their skills and navigate the industry could inform educational reforms and highlight alternative learning pathways.

A comparative study examining how music production education aligns with industry needs across different African countries could reveal the best practices. This research would help identify successful models from other regions that could be adapted for Kenya.

Research into the economic impact of Kenya's emerging music production scene would help quantify its value to the broader cultural industry. The findings would be used to drive policy changes and resource allocation to support the growth of the local music industry.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Informed Consent Form

Title of Study: Competency of music production graduates from Kenyan tertiary institutions to produce local Kenyan music: perspectives of graduates, producers, music producers and musicians

Researcher: Bichanga Brian

Study Description

If you are willing to participate, you will be interviewed once or twice. The initial interview session will last approximately 60-90 minutes. If necessary, a follow-up interview of about 30 minutes may be conducted. The interviews will be recorded and guarded closely during and after the research. The recordings will only be accessed by the researcher and authorized team members.

If you decide to participate, the study will identify you by your real name or stage name. However, if you prefer, you may choose to be identified by a pseudonym to protect your identity. The choice of identification method is entirely up to you. You are allowed to skip any question that you may not be willing to answer. Also, you can opt out of the interview at any time if you feel uncomfortable.

While this study does not offer direct personal benefits or monetary compensation, your participation is invaluable. By sharing your experiences and insights, you will assist in improving music production education and bridging the gap between academic training and industry requirements in Kenya. There are no financial costs associated with your participation. However, we acknowledge and appreciate the time you'll dedicate to the interview process.

Consent

I have comprehensively read the consent form or/the information has been comprehensively read to me by the researcher. I have understood what the study is about and all the questions and concerns that I had have been responded to in a clear and concise. The study benefits and foreseeable risks have been explained to me. I totally understand that my decision to participate in this study is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw at any point during the study. I freely consent to participate in this study.

Signing this form does not in any way imply that I have given up the rights am entitled to as a participant

- I agree to participate in this research;   YES_____. NO____.
- I agree to provide my contact details for follow-up   YES_____. NO____.

Participant's Name; _ _____
Participant's Signature/Thumb print _____
Date _____
Contact Information
If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

Researcher: Brian
Bichanga Contact:
+254710651182
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Appendix II: Interview Guides

INTERVIEW GUIDES FOR MUSIC PRODUCTION GRADUATES

To discover the perceived level of preparedness of Kenyan graduates to produce music on demand from the Kenyan local music industry

a. Briefly describe your educational background in music production and your current role or experience in the industry.

    b. Can you share a memorable or defining moment from your journey as a music producer that highlighted the strengths or limitations of your educational training?

Probing Questions

Preparedness for Industry Demands
1. How would you describe your overall level of preparedness to produce music that aligns with the demands and preferences of the Kenyan local music industry?
2. In what specific areas did your education effectively prepare you, and in what areas did you feel underprepared?
3. What adjustments or additional training did you need to undertake to bridge the gap between your academic knowledge and the practical demands of the industry?

Competencies and Skill Development
1. What specific skills or competencies did your education focus on developing, and how relevant were they to the local music production landscape?
2. In what ways were Kenyan musical traditions, rhythms, and cultural elements incorporated into your curriculum?
3. How did your education address the need to balance artistic expression with consumer preferences and market demands?

Ongoing Challenges and Adaptability
1. What ongoing challenges do you face in producing music that resonates with Kenyan audiences while maintaining your artistic vision?
2. How have you adapted your approach and skills to cater to the evolving trends and consumer preferences in the Kenyan music industry?
3. In your opinion, what improvements or adjustments could be made to music production curricula to better align with industry needs?

Is there anything else you would like to add regarding your educational experience and its relevance to your professional practice as a music producer in Kenya?

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MUSIC PRODUCERS

To understand the perspectives of Kenyan local music producers on the applicability of theoretical and practical knowledge gained in tertiary institutions to the Kenyan local music production industry

a) **Briefly describe your role and experience as a music producer in the Kenyan industry.**

b) **Can you share a pivotal moment or experience that shaped your approach as a music producer in Kenya, particularly in relation to working with graduates or incorporating local musical elements?**

Probing Questions

Evaluation of Graduate Competencies

1. How would you assess the competencies and preparedness of recent music production graduates in meeting the demands of the Kenyan local music industry?
2. In what specific areas do you perceive strengths or weaknesses in the skills and knowledge of graduates?
3. What gaps or deficiencies have you observed in graduates' ability to incorporate Kenyan musical traditions, rhythms, and cultural elements into their productions?

Relevance of Academic Training

1. From your perspective, how well do the theoretical and practical knowledge gained in tertiary institutions align with the realities of the Kenyan local music production industry?
2. In what ways could the curricula be improved or modified to better equip graduates for the local industry demands?
3. How do you incorporate feedback from industry stakeholders or consumers into your own production process and artistic decisions?

Collaboration and Knowledge Exchange

1. How do you collaborate or interact with music production educators and institutions in Kenya?
2. In what ways could this collaboration be strengthened or enhanced to bridge the gap between academia and industry?
3. What initiatives or platforms could be established to facilitate knowledge exchange and ongoing professional development for music producers in Kenya?

Is there anything else you would like to add regarding the competency of Kenyan music production graduates or the alignment between education and industry needs in the local music production landscape?

To explore views of musicians on whether talent or education is the most valuable asset in music production

a. **Briefly describe your background as a musician and your experience in the Kenyan music industry.**
b. **Can you share a story or experience that shaped your perspective on the importance of talent versus education in the field of music production?**

Probing Questions

Talent versus Education
1. In your opinion, which is more crucial for success in music production – natural talent or formal education?
2. Can you provide examples of successful music producers who relied primarily on their innate talent or those who heavily depended on their academic training?
3. How do you perceive the balance between technical skills acquired through education and creative expression nurtured by natural talent?

Role of Education in Music Production
1. What are your views on the current state of music production education in Kenya?
2. In what ways do you believe formal education can contribute to the development of music producers, beyond just technical skills?
3. Are there any specific areas or aspects of music production where you believe education plays an indispensable role?

Role of Talent in Music Production
1. How important is natural talent or inherent musical ability in the field of music production?
2. Can you share examples of successful music producers who excelled primarily due to their raw talent and creativity?
3. In what ways can natural talent compensate for a lack of formal education, or vice versa?

Collaboration and Knowledge Exchange
1. How do you collaborate or interact with music producers, both those with formal education and those who are self-taught?
2. In what ways can musicians and music producers learn from each other and exchange knowledge, regardless of their educational backgrounds?
3. What role could musicians play in shaping or influencing music production curricula to better align with industry needs?

Is there anything else you would like to add regarding the relative importance of talent versus education in the field of music production, particularly in the Kenyan context?

Appendix V: Focus Group Discussion Guide

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

a)   What are your general thoughts on the current state of locally produced music in Kenya?

<u>Probing Questions</u>

Perceptions of Locally Produced Music:
1. When you listen to locally produced music, what aspects or elements do you find appealing or unappealing?
2. How important is it for locally produced music to incorporate Kenyan musical traditions, rhythms, and cultural elements?
3. Can you share examples of locally produced music that you believe successfully blends traditional and modern elements, or examples where this integration falls short?

Consumer Preferences and Market Demands:
1. What factors or criteria do you consider when evaluating the potential success or appeal of locally produced music?
2. How do consumer preferences and market demands influence the type of music produced in Kenya?
3. In what ways could locally-produced music better cater to your preferences while maintaining artistic integrity?

Perceptions of Tertiary-Educated Music Producers:
1. In your experience, how does the music produced by tertiary-educated music producers in Kenya differ from other locally produced music?
2. What are your perceptions of the quality, cultural relevance, and appeal of music produced by tertiary-educated music producers?
3. Can you provide examples of music produced by tertiary-educated producers that you found particularly appealing or unappealing, and why?

Feedback and Collaboration:
1. How do you currently provide feedback or express your preferences to music producers in Kenya?
2. In what ways could music listeners/consumers play a role in shaping or influencing music production curricula to better align with industry needs and consumer preferences?
3. What platforms or initiatives could be established to facilitate dialogue and knowledge exchange between music producers and music listeners/consumers?

Is there anything else you would like to add regarding your perceptions, preferences, or expectations of locally produced music, particularly by tertiary-educated music producers?

Do you have any final thoughts or suggestions for improving the music production landscape in Kenya to better cater to the needs and preferences of music listeners/consumers?

Appendix VI: Spotify Unveils Kenya's Top 15 Tracks with Global Impact for 2024

**Appendix VII:** The Nyatiti and the Orutu

Figure above shows the *nyatiti*, a traditional eight stringed instrument central to the Luo people of Kenya. The *nyatiti* is classified as a bowl lute made from materials such as animal gut or synthetic alternatives. It is resonating body is often covered with animal skin, which enhances its unique sound. This instrument plays a crucial role in Luo music, serving both as a solo, and accompanying instrument during various cultural ceremonies and social gatherings (Hartenberger, 2021). The *nyatiti* is musically known for its unique tuning systems and fingerpicking techniques that create intricate melodies and harmonies.

Figure above shows the *Orutu*, a traditional single-stringed instrument from the Luo community in Kenya, primarily played with a bow made out of sisal (Omolo-Ongati, 2006). The instrument consists of a resonating body, traditionally covered with monitor lizard skin, and a single string made from materials ranging from animal tendons to modern adaptations options like bicycle brake cables. The *Orutu* is played using a bow crafted from flexible materials such as bamboo or sisal fibres, and the player uses their fingers to produce intricate rhythms and melodies, often mimicking human vocalizations (Hartenberger, 2021).

Appendix VIII: Map of Nairobi County
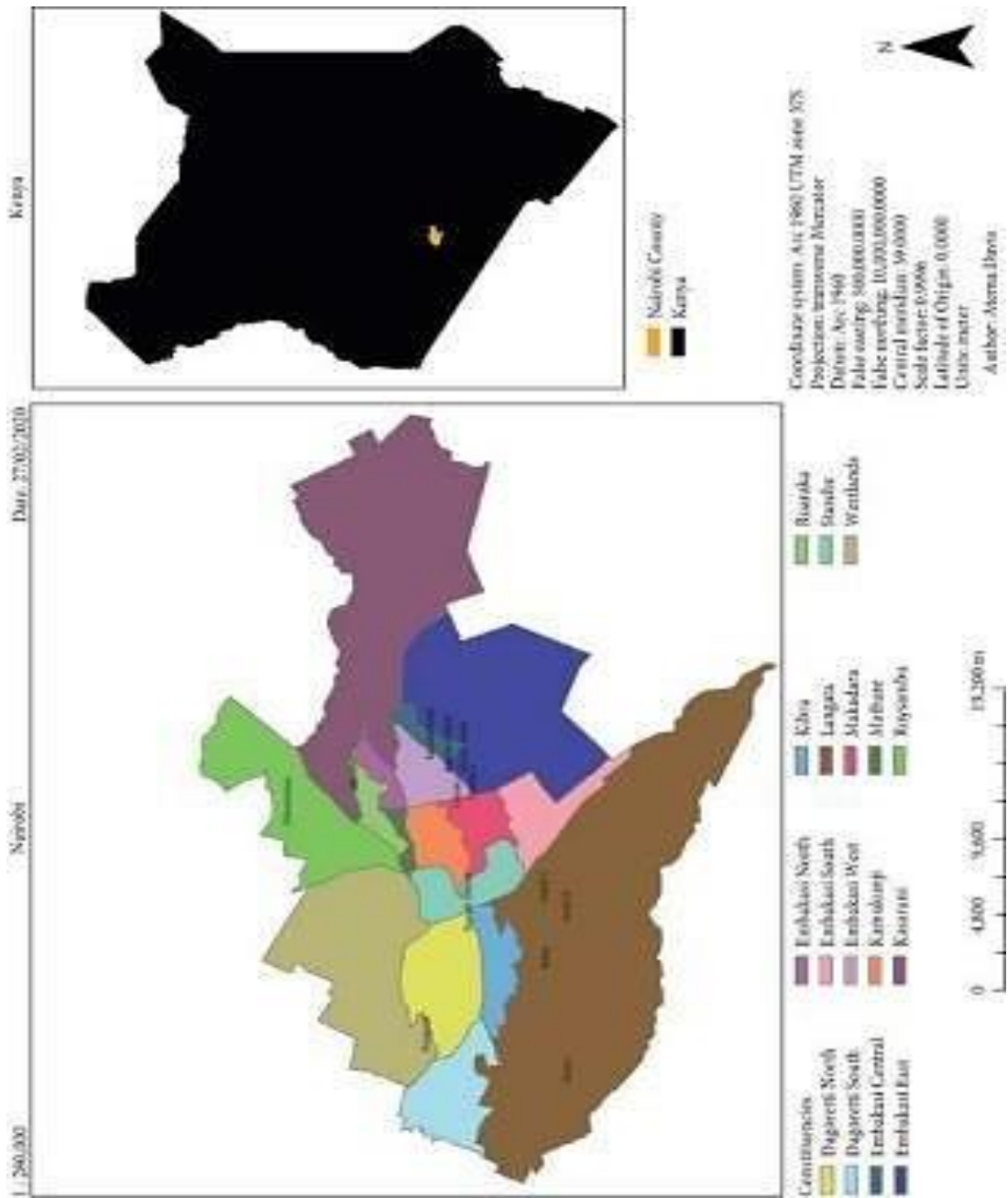
Appendix IX: KUREC Approval Letter

KABARAK UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Private Bag - 20157	Tel: 254-51-343234/5
KABARAK, KENYA	Fax: 254-051-343529
Email: kurec@kabarak.ac.ke	www.kabarak.ac.ke

OUR REF: KABU01/KUREC/001/01/11/24   Date: 19th June, 2024

Brian Bichanga Nyandieka
Reg No: GME/M/0801/05/21
Kabarak University,

Dear Brian,

RE: COMPETENCY OF MUSIC PRODUCTION GRADUATES FROM KENYAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS TO PRODUCE LOCAL KENYAN MUSIC: PERSPECTIVES OF GRADUATES, INSTRUCTORS, MUSIC PRODUCERS AND KENYAN LOCAL MUSIC PUBLIC

This is to inform you that *KUREC* has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is *KUREC-011124*. The approval period is **19/06/2024 – 19/06/ 2025**.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements:

i.   All researchers shall obtain an introduction letter to NACOSTI from the relevant head of institutions (Institute of postgraduate, School dean or Directorate of research)

ii. The researcher shall further obtain a RESEARCH PERMIT from NACOSTI before commencement of data collection & submit a copy of the permit to **KUREC.**

iii. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA Material Transfer Agreement) will be used

iv. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by *KUREC*:

v.   Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to *KUREC* within 72 hours of notification;

vi. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risk(s) or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to *KUREC* within 72 hours;

vii. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions and submit a copy of the permit to KUREC;

viii. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal and;

ix. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to *KUREC*

Sincerely,

Prof. Jackson Kitetu PhD.
KUREC-Chairman
Cc   Vice Chancellor
        DVC-Academic & Research
        Registrar-Academic & Research
        Director-Research Innovation & Outreach
        Institute of Post Graduate Studies

As members of Kabarak University family, we purpose at all times and in all places, to set apart in one's heart, Jesus as Lord.
(1 Peter 3:15)
Kabarak University is ISO 9001:2015 Certified

Appendix X: NACOSTI Research Permit

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: **835327**

Date of Issue: **11/July/2024**

RESEARCH LICENSE

This is to Certify that Mr.. **Brian Bichanga Nyandieka** of Kabarak University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Nairobi on the topic: COMPETENCY OF MUSIC PRODUCTION GRADUATES FROM TERTIARY INSTITUITIONS TO PRODUCE LOCAL MUSIC:PERSPECTIVES OF GRADUATES, INSTRUCTORS, PRODUCERS AND THE KENYAN LOCAL MUSIC PUBLIC for the period ending : **11/July/2025.**

License No: **NACOSTI/P/24/37539**

835327

Applicant Identification Number

Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Verification QR Code

NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document,
Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.

See overleaf for conditions

Appendix XI: Evidence of Conference Participation

KABARAK UNIVERSITY

Certificate of Participation

Awarded to

Brian Bichanga.

for successfully participating in the Kabarak University
International Research Conference on Refocusing Music and
other Performing Arts for Sustainable Development 2022 on 6th -
7th October 2022 and presented a paper entitled *"Interface between
Music Technology, Music Pedagogy and Music Industry: Views of Music
Teachers and Music Producers in Nakuru County, Kenya."*

Conference Theme

Refocusing Music and Other
Performing Arts for Sustainable Development

Prof. Mellitus Wanyama
Dean, School of Music and
Performing Arts

Dr. Miriam Muga
Ag. Director Research, Innovation
and Outreach

Kabarak University Moral Code
As members of Kabarak University family, we purpose at all times and in all places, to set apart in one's heart, Jesus as Lord.

(1 Peter 3:15)

Kabarak University is ISO 9001:2015 Certified

Appendix X: List of Publication

Beyond the Studio: Tertiary Music Production Graduates in Kenya Pursuing Non-Production Roles

Brian Bichanga Nyandieka
Kabarak University, Kenya

Abstract
This study investigates the reasons behind music production graduates in Kenya moving away from production roles, with a focus on gaps in education and challenges in cultural competency. Through a qualitative research design employing semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with recent graduates in Nairobi County, the study utilizes Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory to analyse how graduates transform their educational experiences into professional capabilities. The findings reveal a significant theory-practice gap characterized by the dominance of Western musical paradigms in formal education, which creates substantial barriers for graduates engaging with local music production contexts. Additionally, the research identifies critical cultural competency challenges stemming from limited exposure to indigenous musical traditions during formal training. These challenges manifest in graduates' inability to produce commercially viable music that resonates with local audiences, often leading to career transitions into music education roles. The study demonstrates how the current educational framework creates what is termed an "impeded transformative experience," where graduates struggle to convert their academic knowledge into viable industry practice. The research concludes that successful reform of music production education in Kenya requires a holistic approach that addresses both technical competency and cultural literacy, suggesting the need for curriculum reforms that balance Western production techniques with local musical traditions while maintaining global industry standards. This transformation is essential for improving graduate outcomes and ensuring the sustainable development of Kenya's music industry.

Introduction

The Kenyan music production industry has been experiencing a significant transition from informal apprenticeship models to formalised education systems. While providing standardised technical training, this shift has revealed critical gaps between academic preparation and industry requirements. Scholars have often been concerned with how music graduates navigate the complex transition, particularly in contexts where formalised education may not fully address the cultural and practical demands of the local industry. Mochere et al. (2020) highlight a significant challenge stemming from the misalignment between university music curricula and the dynamic requirements of the job market in Kenya, while Akuno (2000) emphasises that graduates require not only technical