



Talent versus Formal Education in Kenyan Music Production: A Critical Analysis of Value Perception among Industry Stakeholders

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Abstract

Kenya's music production industry represents a negotiation between indigenous musical heritage and contemporary global influences, creating unique challenges for talent development and educational preparation. This study examines the perceived dichotomy between natural musical proclivities and formalised educational frameworks among industry stakeholders. The investigation aims to: (1) examine perceived complementarity or opposition between talent and education; (2) analyse differential valorisation of formal versus informal knowledge acquisition; and (3) explore implications for pedagogical frameworks. Drawing upon Bourdieu's Cultural Capital Theory and Gagné's Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent, this phenomenological study employed semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with 27 participants representing diverse industry stakeholders. Findings reveal multifaceted conceptualisations wherein talent and education function interdependently rather than adversarially, with three emergent dimensions: talent-education dynamics, industry flexibility requirements, and technical proficiency development. The synergistic potential between innate and acquired competencies remains sub-optimally actualised due to curricular deficiencies in cultural literacy and contextual application. This investigation contributes to vocational arts education by proposing a pedagogical framework that dialectically integrates cultural contextualisation with technical proficiency, with practical implications for curriculum development and industry-education collaborative frameworks.

Introduction

The tension between innate talent and formal education is particularly significant in music production, an industry characterised by rapid technological evolution and cultural hybridisation. In Kenya's dynamic music landscape, this dichotomy presents compelling investigation opportunities due to complex negotiations between indigenous musical heritage, contemporary global influences, and market demands. Kenya's music production sector, at the intersection of tradition and modernity, requires a critical examination of how talent and education are conceptualised and operationalised.

This investigation conceptualises talent and education as interrelated dimensions of professional competency that interact dynamically within sociocultural contexts. Bourdieu's (1986) cultural capital framework, with its embodied, objectified, and institutionalised forms, provides a theoretical



apparatus for interrogating how different knowledge acquisition modalities are legitimised within Kenya's music production field. Gagné's (2004) Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT) provides a psychological framework for understanding the developmental processes through which natural abilities are transformed into systematically developed skills.

Previous investigations into music production education have predominantly focused on Western contexts, with limited empirical examination of challenges and opportunities in Kenya's cultural landscape. Kidula (2012) examined Kenyan music evolution within globalised contexts, while Akuno (2012) critiqued dominant Western paradigms in formal music education. However, the intersection of talent and education within music production remains under-theorised in the Kenyan context. Mochere (2022) identified significant curricular gaps in Kenyan universities regarding local music production techniques but did not address the talent-education dialectic.

This article critically analyses stakeholder perspectives on the talent versus education dichotomy within Kenya's music production industry through phenomenological investigation. This investigation problematises conventional conceptualisations regarding talent or education primacy, illuminating instead their dynamic interaction within Kenya's evolving music production landscape. The findings have implications for curriculum development, industry-education partnerships, and the conceptualisation of talent development within culturally diverse contexts. Therefore, this investigation addresses two primary questions:

1. How do Kenyan music production stakeholders conceptualise the relationship between natural abilities and formal education in their professional development trajectories?
2. What specific forms of cultural capital are most highly valorised within Kenya's music production field, and how does this valorisation influence educational priorities?

Literature Review

This section critically examines the scholarly discourse surrounding the dialectical relationship between innate talent and formalised educational structures within the domain of music production, with particular emphasis on the Kenyan context. For analytical precision, this study distinguishes between "innate talent" (natural proclivities and predispositions) and "embodied knowledge acquisition" (the internalisation of cultural practices through sustained engagement). While these concepts overlap, embodied knowledge acquisition encompasses learned cultural competencies that may initially appear as "natural" talent but are actually cultivated through immersive cultural participation. The literature reveals epistemological tensions between embodied knowledge acquisition and institutionalised pedagogical frameworks, necessitating a multidimensional analytical approach that transcends simplistic binary oppositions. By interrogating the ontological foundations of talent development alongside the sociocultural construction of educational legitimacy, this review establishes a theoretical framework for understanding how different modalities of knowledge and skill acquisition are valorised within specific production contexts.

Theoretical Conceptualisations of Talent and Education

The scholarly discourse on musical talent exhibits significant epistemological divergence. Kirnarskaya's (2009) research re-conceptualises talent as a multidimensional construct comprising cognitive, psychomotor, and affective components that engage with pedagogical interventions. This framework transcends reductionist paradigms, positioning talent as immutable, instead articulating a developmental trajectory where intrinsic proclivities function as substrates for systematically cultivated expertise (McPherson & Williamson, 2015). Unlike Kirnarskaya's performance-based focus,



this investigation examines how creative, technical, and cultural competencies interact within the context of production practice.

Hallam (2006) problematises the concept of talent through a social constructivist lens, positing that talent attribution reflects culturally embedded systems rather than universal taxonomies. Her analyses demonstrate that talent constitutes legitimisation of context-specific capabilities within distinct sociocultural contexts. This perspective aligns with Bourdieu's (1986) cultural capital framework, wherein embodied capital—dispositions cultivated through sustained cultural engagement—functions as operationalised talent facilitating navigation within specific production fields. This study advances Hallam's framework by investigating talent attribution within Kenya's postcolonial music production landscape, emphasising cultural embeddedness over essentialist conceptualisations.

Gagné's (2004) Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent provides a theoretical architecture for analysing the transformation of natural abilities into systematically developed competencies. This model delineates interactions between intrapersonal catalysts and environmental mediators, acknowledging the interdependence of constitutional predispositions and environmental affordances. Elliott's (1995) Praxial orientation, privileging contextual knowledge over abstracted theoretical acquisition, demonstrates that musical understanding emerges through engagement with situated production contexts rather than decontextualised skill acquisition.

Empirical Investigations of Talent and Education in Music Production

Empirical investigations into talent and education in music production remain limited, particularly in non-Western contexts. Herbst and Albrecht's (2017) study of professional studio musicians in Germany identified success attributes including technical virtuosity, theoretical knowledge, and interpersonal capabilities. Their findings challenge simplistic conceptions of talent by demonstrating that successful musicians integrate multiple knowledge forms through hybridised learning pathways that combine formal education with experiential acquisition. Industry professionals valued stylistic versatility and improvisational capabilities that develop outside traditional frameworks. Pras and Guastavino's (2011) study of recording professionals in North America and Europe revealed friction between traditional educational frameworks and industry expectations. While formal education imparts foundational technical knowledge, industry professionals emphasised experiential learning and mentorship as essential for developing contextual judgement necessary for production work. This aligns with Vaiman et al.'s (2017) framework, which highlights contextually sensitive talent development strategies, particularly relevant for culturally diverse settings such as Kenya.

Burnard et al. (2015) conducted cross-cultural investigations of musical creativity, identifying creative practices that emerged outside formal educational structures. Their research highlighted the inadequacies of traditional pedagogical methods in fostering the varied creativity demanded by contemporary production. Particularly relevant to Kenya, their findings illustrated how practitioners amalgamate indigenous musical practices with global production techniques through informal learning pathways, a hybridisation that formal education systems typically neglect. Thompson and McIntyre's (2013) ethnographic investigation of professional recording studios demonstrated limitations of purely technical production education approaches. Their research revealed that successful producers develop “adaptive expertise”, the capacity to navigate complex production scenarios through contextualised judgement rather than rigid technical application. This expertise develops through sustained engagement with production contexts, not decontextualised instruction alone.



Indigenous Knowledge and Formal Education

Limited scholarly literature addressing Kenyan music production reveals significant epistemological tensions between indigenous knowledge systems and Western educational paradigms. Kidula's (2012) ethnomusicological research documents complex negotiations between local musical traditions and global production practices, highlighting how successful producers synthesise these knowledge forms through informal learning pathways rather than formal education. Her findings emphasise the cultural specificity of production practices and question the universal applicability of Western educational models. Akuno's (2012) examination of music teacher education in Kenya identified significant pedagogical limitations, particularly inadequate incorporation of indigenous musical knowledge. Her investigations demonstrate how Western-derived curricula marginalise local musical traditions, creating disjunctions between formal education and the cultural contexts in which graduates operate. This aligns with postcolonial critiques of educational systems privileging Western epistemologies over indigenous knowledge forms (Mignolo, 2011).

These concerns find empirical validation in Mochere's (2022) analysis of music production curricula in Kenyan universities. Her findings reveal significant gaps between curricular content and industry demands, particularly regarding the incorporation of local musical elements and production techniques. Mochere documents how universities prioritise Western technical knowledge over indigenous musical understanding, creating graduates with technical proficiency but limited cultural fluency—a phenomenon aligning with Bourdieu's framework regarding field-specific valuation of cultural capital. Wanjala and Kebaya's (2016) investigation of popular music evolution in Kenya documents how successful producers navigate between indigenous musical traditions and global production techniques through informal learning pathways, aligning with Green's (2002) theoretical framework, which emphasises immersive engagement with production contexts.

Pedagogical Implications and Curricular Development

The literature addressing pedagogical implications reveals challenges in developing curricula that effectively integrate theoretical knowledge with practical application in culturally responsive ways. This analysis identifies two interconnected tensions: the academia-industry divide, concerning institutional versus professional contexts, and the talent-education dialectic, pertaining to different modalities of competency development.

The disconnect between formal education and industry practice necessitates integrated approaches that bridge theoretical knowledge with practical application. Draper and Hitchcock's (2006) investigation of work-integrated learning in music technology education demonstrated that structured industry placements provided critical contextual knowledge unattainable through classroom instruction alone. This framework becomes particularly relevant when considering how such placements might incorporate indigenous musical knowledge alongside technical skill development within Kenya's postcolonial context. Bielmeier's (2021) research proposes systematic alignment with industry expectations through project-based learning and adaptive assessment methodologies. His findings document how successful programmes transcend binary opposition between technical instruction and creative development by fostering dynamic interplay between foundational knowledge and innovative application. However, his Western-derived framework requires substantial modification to address Kenya's distinctive cultural landscape.



This modification finds theoretical support in Burnard's (2012) research on musical creativities, which emphasises fostering multiple creativities through varied pedagogical strategies rather than standardised approaches that constrain creative development. Such perspectives prove particularly relevant to Kenyan music production education, where successful practice demands integration of diverse creative modalities. Zagorski-Thomas's (2014) framework for the musicology of record production extends this thinking by offering a comprehensive model that emphasises the sociocultural embeddedness of production practices. His work challenges universal technical approaches that are divorced from specific cultural contexts, aligning with postcolonial critiques that advocate for production pedagogies that systematically integrate indigenous musical knowledge with global production techniques. In this view, Kenya's Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) framework offers both opportunities and limitations for addressing these epistemological tensions. Established under the Kenya National Qualifications Framework, RPL enables "identification, assessment and certification of knowledge, skills and attitudes regardless of how, when or where learning occurred" (KNQF, 2018). However, current RPL implementation reveals significant constraints that mirror broader challenges in legitimising indigenous knowledge within formal structures, as focus on quantifiable technical competencies often excludes culturally embedded creative practices characterising indigenous musical traditions.

Theoretical Gaps and Research Opportunities

Critical examination of extant literature reveals significant theoretical gaps regarding the talent-education dialectic in music production, particularly within non-Western contexts. While substantial theoretical development exists regarding musical talent generally (Kirnarskaya, 2009; Hallam, 2006), limited attention addresses specific manifestations of talent within music production contexts. The complex integration of technical, aesthetic, and cultural knowledge required for successful production warrants more nuanced theoretical conceptualisation than currently exists. The sociocultural construction of production expertise within specific cultural contexts remains under-theorised, with limited empirical investigation of how different knowledge forms are legitimised within particular production communities. Bourdieu's cultural capital framework offers a promising theoretical apparatus but requires systematic application to music production contexts through detailed ethnographic investigation. Examining the intersections of indigenous musical knowledge and global production techniques presents a significant research opportunity, particularly in postcolonial settings such as Kenya. While general critiques of educational colonisation exist (Mignolo, 2011), a detailed investigation of the specific mechanisms through which these dynamics manifest in music production education remains limited, representing a potential contribution to both production pedagogy and broader decolonial educational theory.

Further research opportunity lies in investigating how successful producers with diverse educational backgrounds developed their careers. Longitudinal investigations tracing expertise acquisition through varied learning pathways would provide valuable insights for creating flexible and responsive educational approaches that accommodate diverse talent development processes.

Theoretical Framework

This study synthesises Gagné's (2004) Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT) with Bourdieu's (1986) cultural capital theory, enabling multidimensional analysis of how music production competencies develop within Kenya's distinctive sociocultural terrain.



The DMGT framework conceptualises the transformation of natural abilities into systematically developed competencies through catalytic processes. Gagné delineates six ability domains: intellectual, creative, social, perceptual, muscular, and motor control, serving as foundational material for talent development, transformed through intrapersonal factors (motivation, volition) and environmental influences (milieu, provisions, events). However, DMGT requires contextual augmentation for Kenya's complex postcolonial landscape. Bourdieu's cultural capital theory provides this dimension by elucidating how different forms of knowledge are legitimised within specific cultural production fields. His tripartite conceptualisation, embodied capital (internalised dispositions), objectified capital (material artefacts), and institutionalised capital (formal credentials), offers analytical precision for examining knowledge modality negotiations within Kenya's music production field. This integrated framework enables investigation of how producers navigate between indigenous musical knowledge (often acquired informally) and formalised Western production techniques (typically institutionalised), transcending simplistic talent-education binaries and conceptualising dynamic interactions within specific sociocultural contexts.

Methodology

This phenomenological investigation employed purposive sampling supplemented by snowball techniques to recruit 27 participants representing diverse industry perspectives: eight music production graduates, seven established producers, six musicians, and six auxiliary industry professionals based in Nairobi County, Kenya's primary centre for music production and education.

Data collection employed two primary methods: semi-structured interviews with participants to explore their lived experiences of talent-education dynamics, and two 120-minute focus group discussions with nine participants each (three graduates, three musicians, and three producers) using scenario-based prompts to facilitate collective meaning-making around talent-education tensions. The semi-structured interview protocol consisted of 12 open-ended questions organised around three thematic domains: perceptions of talent versus education in professional development, experiences of industry expectations regarding technical and cultural competencies, and perceived gaps between educational preparation and professional demands. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis, data analysis progressed from familiarisation through initial coding (48 preliminary codes), theme development, and refinement through axial coding to establish concept relationships. This process resulted in three primary thematic categories: Talent-Education Dynamics, Industry Flexibility, and technical proficiency. The analysis incorporated both semantic and latent interpretation levels, employing inductive reasoning from empirical evidence and deductive application of theoretical frameworks, particularly Bourdieu's cultural capital theory and Gagné's DMGT model.

The dual focus groups provided interactional data revealing how participants collectively constructed meaning around talent-education dynamics, while individual interviews captured personal narratives and diverse experiential perspectives. Data saturation was achieved when no new themes emerged across both data sources. Member checking with participants validated the thematic interpretations, while methodological triangulation between focus groups and interviews enhanced the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings.

Results

The analysis of interviews and two focus group discussions revealed three interrelated thematic dimensions characterising stakeholder perspectives on the talent-education relationship in Kenya's music production industry: Talent-Education Dynamics, Industry Flexibility, and technical



proficiency. Furthermore, the focus group discussions generated data through collective dialogue, where participants built upon each other's experiences to co-construct meaning around the tensions between talent and education. When participants shared observations about educational limitations, others immediately connected these to their own experiences, creating a dialogical space where shared concerns emerged organically through resonant storytelling and mutual recognition of experiential patterns.

Table 1: Thematic Analysis of Talent-Education Dynamics in Kenya's Music Industry

Main Theme	Sub-Theme	Key Findings	Supporting Evidence
Talent-Education Dynamics	Complementary Roles	Talent and education are interdependent; formal training enhances innate talent.	"Talent is a plus... but with information, you're better" (Tito Bendihuru). Aligns with Gagné's model (2004) and Ericsson's deliberate practice theory (1993).
	Epistemological Tension	Structured education vs. creative fluidity creates friction.	"Academic approaches feel removed from the creative process" (Wisdom Furaha). Resonates with Burnard's (2012) critique of rigid educational frameworks.
	Talent Superiority in Affective Expression	Talent-driven music resonates emotionally with audiences.	"Music goes with feeling" (Phyl-The-Kangogo). Reflects Bourdieu's (1986) embodied cultural capital.
	Synergistic Potential	Integration of talent + education maximises professional success.	"Talent plus formal education can go far" (Sy Adogo). Aligns with Bourdieu's institutionalised cultural capital.
Industry Flexibility	Rigidity in Formal Education	Formally trained producers struggle with innovation.	"Educated producers stick to formulas" (Olus Manas). Matches Brown's (2007) findings on rigidity in creative industries.
	Openness of Autodidactic Practitioners	Self-taught producers embrace experimentation.	"No rules to break" (Samuel Kyama). Reflects Green's (2002) informal learning theory.
	Equilibrium Between Structure & Adaptability	Balance of formal knowledge and flexibility drives success.	"Choose between street knowledge and formal knowledge" (Mark Murimi). Aligns with Elliott's (1995) Praxial Music Education.
Technical Proficiency	Technical Knowledge Necessity	Formal education provides foundational technical skills.	"Without information, operating machines is difficult" (Sy Adogo). Supports Théberge's (2012) emphasis on technical expertise.
	Versatility Through Education	Education enables adaptability across genres.	"Educated producers play multiple instruments" (Eugene Otieno). Matches Thompson & McIntyre's (2013) "adaptive expertise."
	Limitations in Contextual Application	Education lacks cultural relevance to Kenyan genres.	"Theory is classical, but industry isn't" (Emmanuel Barasa). Highlights need for "field-specific" knowledge (Thompson & McIntyre, 2013).

Discussion

The empirical findings problematise binary conceptualisations of talent versus education, suggesting instead a more nuanced understanding of their dynamic interaction within Kenya's music production industry. This reconceptualisation has significant implications for music production education and professional development.



Beyond Binary Opposition: Toward an Integrated Theoretical Model

Stakeholders describe talent and education as intertwined, each vital for different aspects of music production. Sy Adogo, a musician, explained, “Talent plus formal education can really go so far”, highlighting how natural creativity starts a career, but technical training ensures longevity. In FGD 1, Sy Adogo shared a story of a talented producer who couldn’t operate studio equipment, leading participants to agree, “Passion leads to the best places, but knowledge takes you farther”. This view wasn’t universal. Wisdom Furaha, a graduate producer, argued in FGD 2, “Education kills the spark if it’s too rigid”, while a graduate, Emmanuel Barasa, countered, “Theory provides scaffolding for creativity” (FGD 2, August 2024). Conversely, Phyl-The-Kangogo emphasised talent’s emotional role, saying, “Music goes with feeling... especially contemporary pop”, suggesting it connects with audiences in ways education alone can’t.

These perspectives align with Gagné’s (2004) model, where natural abilities like musical intuition become skills through training. Bourdieu’s (1986) cultural capital shows why degrees (institutionalised capital) can overshadow cultural know-how (embodied capital), as seen in Emmanuel Barasa’s defence of theory. Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development, where learning happens with guidance, supports FGD 1’s idea to “blend street knowledge with formal training”. The challenge is clear: talent without technical skills fails, as Sy Adogo noted about producers struggling with machines. But education can make producers rigid, as Olus Manas observed, “[Most] educated producers stick to what they’ve learned”. This points to a need for a balanced model.

Nevertheless, this consensus masks epistemological disagreements about the nature of musical knowledge itself. Emmanuel Barasa’s defence of theory as “scaffolding for creativity” reflects what Bourdieu would term the legitimisation of institutionalised cultural capital. At the same time, Wisdom Furaha’s concern that “education kills the spark” reveals resistance to formal knowledge structures. This tension suggests that the talent-education debate is actually about competing definitions of legitimate musical knowledge within Kenya’s postcolonial context.

Cultural Literacy Deficiencies in Formal Education

A significant concern is that formal education often fails to teach the cultural knowledge needed to create music that resonates with Kenyan audiences. Barnabus Yuka, a graduate, shared, “Formal education left me very limited in terms of knowing what the culture wants right now”, describing his struggle to produce locally relevant tracks. Samuel Kyama, a producer, echoed this in FGD 1: “Many graduates simply don’t have a deep understanding of Kenyan sound. They might know the popular stuff, but when it comes to really understanding the cultural significance of different music genres, that’s where things get hard”. FGD 1 participants added, “It’s about our roots, not just Western chords” (August 2024). Melvin Mathenge, another graduate producer, noted, “Graduates have solid technical skills, but many of us lack that local industry knowledge”, pointing to a gap in training.

This cultural knowledge deficit reveals the systematic devaluation of embodied cultural capital within formal educational structures. When Samuel Kyama notes that graduates “don’t have a deep understanding of Kenyan sound,” he’s identifying more than curricular gaps—he’s exposing how institutional frameworks privilege codified Western musical knowledge over indigenous epistemologies. The fact that Melvin Mathenge can achieve technical proficiency while remaining culturally disconnected demonstrates Bourdieu’s concept of field misrecognition, where formal



credentials mask fundamental incompetence in the actual cultural field of practice. Connell and Gibson (2003) further argue that music production involves translating cultural meanings into sound, which graduates like Barnabus Yuka struggle with. Wisdom Furaha reinforced this, saying, “Academic approaches feel removed from the creative process”. However, informal learning has its own flaws. Sy Adogo observed in FGD 1, “If [producers] don’t have the [technical] information, it’s kind of difficult to even operate machines around them”, showing self-taught producers lack structure. On the other hand, Melvin Mathenge “blamed the curricula”, indicating no single solution. Mochere’s (2022) findings on university gaps support this, but adding a cultural focus requires resources, leaving open questions about implementation.

Fostering Adaptive Creativity in Educational Contexts

Formal education’s strict formalities often limit the flexibility needed to experiment with new ideas. Olus Manas, a musician, said, “Educated producers are rigid... they stick to what they’ve learned”, frustrated by formulaic approaches. In FGD 2, Samuel Kyama praised self-taught producers: “They have no rules to break”, but Eugene Otieno, a producer, warned, “That freedom brings chaos without basics”. This exchange reveals competing conceptions of creative constraint and freedom. Olus Manas’s frustration with “educated producers sticking to formulas” reflects what Burnard et al. (2015) identify as the standardisation problem in creative education – where pedagogical structures intended to build competency actually constrain creative exploration. However, Eugene Otieno’s warning about “chaos without basics” suggests a more complex relationship where technical knowledge enables rather than constrains creativity. The challenge lies in determining which “basics” are genuinely foundational versus which are culturally imposed restrictions that limit creative expression. Moreover, a failed project discussed in FGD 1 showed educated producers sticking to formulas, with some valuing reliability, while others, like Wisdom Furaha, saw it as a “creativity killer”. Mark Murimi proposed, “I prefer a professional approach first, balancing adaptability with structure”, echoed by FGD 1’s call to “start with street knowledge, then formalise”.

Burnard et al.’s (2015) work on diverse creativities suggests that education must allow experimentation, such as blending non-Kenyan styles of music with Kenyan musical elements. Green’s (2002) informal learning model, emphasising peer learning, aligns with FGD 2’s mentorship idea to “blend the best of both”. Similarly, Thompson and McIntyre’s (2013) concept of “adaptive expertise” emphasises flexible judgement, which Kenyan curricula often lack due to a Western focus. The challenge lies in fostering creativity without compromising technical skills, but limited faculty training complicates this, highlighting a need for pilot studies to test new methods.

Industry-Education Integration

The disconnect between formal education and industry practice underscores the need for greater practical industry engagement within educational programmes. Work-integrated learning, as advocated by Draper and Hitchcock (2006), offers students opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge in professional contexts, thereby developing the practical skills and industry awareness necessary for professional success. Bielmeier’s (2021) research on aligning audio production curricula with industry needs suggests that project-based learning approaches, industry partnerships, and continuous curriculum review are essential for ensuring educational relevance. Such approaches would enable music production students to develop not only technical proficiency but also the practical industry knowledge necessary for navigating Kenya’s complex music production landscape.

Furthermore, the data indicate that education should not be conceptualised as limited to formal institutions but rather as a continuous process extending throughout professional careers. As one



established producer noted, he would “go back to school [to] learn how other people mix their songs and mastering” (Ihaji, as cited in Kiragu, 2022). This perspective aligns with contemporary theories of lifelong learning and professional development, suggesting that the talent-education relationship should be conceptualised as an ongoing dialectical process rather than a sequential one.

Conclusion

This analysis of talent versus formal education in Kenya's music production industry reveals a complex interplay that transcends simplistic binary oppositions. Rather than competing paradigms, talent and education emerge as complementary forces interacting dynamically within specific industry contexts. Natural ability provides a foundation for creative intuition and emotional connection, while formal education supplies technical frameworks and theoretical knowledge necessary for professional production.

The findings suggest that the perceived tension between talent and education primarily stems from limitations in current educational approaches, particularly inadequate attention to cultural literacy, creative flexibility, and practical industry applications. These deficiencies create a disconnect between the technical proficiency developed through formal education and the cultural fluency required for making music that resonates with Kenyan audiences. The suggestion is that there is a necessity for integrated approaches to music production education that combine technical training with cultural literacy, structured methodological frameworks with exploratory creative strategies, and theoretical knowledge with practical industry application. Such approaches would better prepare graduates to navigate the complex intersection of traditional musical heritage and contemporary global influences characterising Kenya's dynamic music production landscape. Future research should investigate specific pedagogical strategies for cultivating cultural literacy and adaptive creativity within formal music production education, examine developmental trajectories of successful producers with diverse educational backgrounds, and explore how educational institutions might more effectively engage with industry stakeholders to ensure curricular relevance. Through such investigations, scholars and educators can contribute to the development of more holistic, contextually responsive approaches to music production education.

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