

Music Education and Cultural Heritage: Creative Practices Integrating Music and Identity

Kakogianni Eleni

Directorate of Secondary Education of the Dodecanese, 4th High School of Rhodes City

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the multifaceted role of music education as a medium for transmitting intangible cultural heritage and cultivating students' cultural identities. Drawing on interdisciplinary scholarship from ethnomusicology, sociocultural learning theory, culturally responsive pedagogy, and heritage studies, it explores how traditional music, regional repertoires, and heritage-oriented educational practices can be meaningfully integrated into formal schooling.

Particular emphasis is placed on the Greek educational context, including the institutional role of Music Schools, school-based cultural programs, and commemorative musical practices, while also considering the broader relevance of these approaches for culturally diverse educational settings. Adopting a conceptual and literature-based analytical approach, the article examines how creative, experiential, and community-engaged music practices may foster cultural participation, identity formation, and critical musical awareness.

The discussion argues that music education, when grounded in reflective and culturally responsive pedagogy, can contribute not only to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage but also to the development of learners as active interpreters and co-constructors of cultural meaning. At the same time, the article highlights important practical and conceptual challenges, including teacher preparation, curriculum design, resource inequality, and the risk of presenting heritage through static or exclusionary cultural narratives. It concludes that heritage-based music education is most educationally meaningful when it supports inclusive, dialogic, and critically engaged forms of participation in culturally plural and changing societies.

Keywords: Music education, intangible cultural heritage, cultural identity, Greek schools, traditional music, experiential learning, intercultural pedagogy, creative expression, cultural sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

Music education holds a central place in the holistic development of students, encompassing not only artistic and cognitive dimensions but also ethical, emotional, and sociocultural growth. It constitutes a powerful medium through which values, traditions, and historical memory are transmitted, thereby shaping both personal and collective identity (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2019; Barrett, 2011). Numerous scholars argue that music is not simply a discipline of performance or appreciation, but a culturally situated practice that supports emotional intelligence, critical reflection, and intercultural understanding (Panksepp, 1995; Schippers, 2010).

Within this framework, cultural heritage is not a static body of knowledge but a dynamic and lived process, deeply embedded in community practices, language, and artistic expression, with music acting as a key vehicle for its intergenerational transmission (UNESCO, 2003; Small, 1998). The integration of musical heritage in education aligns with global priorities for sustainable development and the safeguarding of intangible cultural assets (UNESCO, 2016). When music education connects learners with local repertoires, traditional instruments, and stylistic diversity, it not only preserves cultural legacy but also enables students to navigate complex social realities with empathy and creativity.

Incorporating musical traditions and local cultural forms into the educational process promotes experiential learning and supports students in exploring the social meanings of music. Research in culturally responsive

pedagogy underscores that music drawn from students' cultural backgrounds enhances engagement and relevance, while also promoting equity and inclusion in pluralistic societies (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995). By engaging with culturally embedded repertoires, learners are invited to reflect critically on their roots, values, and affiliations, transforming the classroom into a space of identity negotiation and cultural literacy.

Moreover, international scholarship has increasingly emphasized the transformative role of music education in fostering student agency and promoting culturally sustaining teaching practices (Paris & Alim, 2017; Burnard & Dragovic, 2015). Music functions not only as a means of cultural preservation but also as a platform for self-expression, community building, and dialogic learning. In this view, creative music making, collaborative composition, and participatory performance enable learners to actively reinterpret cultural traditions and position themselves as contributors to cultural meaning. These approaches align with global trends in arts education that advocate for diversity, inclusion, and critical engagement with heritage.

In the Greek educational system, music education offers rich opportunities for students to engage with intangible cultural heritage, especially through the activities of Music Schools, cultural programs in secondary schools, and commemorative musical practices during national holidays. These educational settings exemplify how music can serve as a bridge between past and present, tradition and innovation, formal learning and community experience (Zervas, 2017; Institute of Educational Policy, 2021). They also highlight the pedagogical value of integrating music not only as a subject of study but as a lived cultural encounter.



Figure 1. Students of a public Music School in Greece, equipped with traditional instruments, assembled prior to a formal school event held at a regional monument of cultural heritage.

This article examines how creative teaching practices that incorporate music and cultural heritage contribute to the development of cultural identity and creative expression in education. Drawing on examples from Greek schools and international literature, it highlights the role of music education in cultivating reflective, culturally grounded, and socially engaged learners. In doing so, it contributes to the discourse on education for cultural sustainability and the role of the arts in twenty- first - century learning.



Figure 2. *Choral* instruction in a Greek lower secondary school classroom, conducted within the framework of the cultural program “Music of the World.” The activity fosters intercultural awareness through student engagement with vocal repertoires from diverse musical traditions, under the direction of a qualified music educator.

Although music education has increasingly been recognized as a valuable medium for cultural transmission and identity development, much of the existing discussion remains either broadly theoretical or strongly tied to specific national traditions without fully addressing pedagogical transferability across contexts. In particular, fewer studies bring together heritage-based music education, culturally responsive pedagogy, and the practical conditions that shape implementation in contemporary schools. Against this background, the present article offers a conceptual and literature-based examination of how music education can support cultural identity formation and the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, using the Greek educational context as a key point of reference while also considering wider implications for culturally diverse educational settings. In doing so, it seeks to contribute a more critically grounded and pedagogically relevant account of music education as a space of cultural participation, identity negotiation, and creative continuity.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Music, Heritage, and Cultural Identity

Music education plays a fundamental role in the construction and negotiation of cultural identity, particularly when embedded in pedagogical approaches that actively engage with cultural traditions. As Small (1998) argues through the concept of *musicking*, music is not merely an artistic product or aesthetic object but a lived, social, and performative practice that conveys collective memory, values, and intergenerational knowledge. From this perspective, music education becomes a dialogic and transformative cultural process in which students participate meaningfully in the reinterpretation and recontextualization of tradition.

Cultural identity, according to Hall (1990), is a dynamic construct that emerges through symbolic representations and shared practices, including language, ritual, and expressive forms such as music and dance. It is not fixed, but shaped by history, migration, and cultural exchange. Within educational environments, identity is formed through pedagogical interactions, aesthetic engagement, and critical reflection (Barrett, 2011). Music functions both as a symbolic system and as an affective medium through which individuals negotiate belonging, citizenship, and historical continuity (Volk, 2004; Lamont, 2002; Sotiropoulou-Zormpala, 2016).

This perspective is especially relevant to the study of intangible cultural heritage. The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) emphasizes the importance of education in preserving and revitalizing non-material cultural expressions. When implemented in culturally sensitive and community-based ways, music education becomes an important platform for sustaining oral traditions, local repertoires, and collective artistic practices (Schippers, 2010). In this sense, the relationship between music and heritage is not limited to preservation alone, but extends to the active negotiation of meaning, continuity, and cultural responsibility.

At the same time, heritage should not be understood as a static body of inherited content. Scholars in cultural and music education have repeatedly shown that traditions remain meaningful only when they are experienced, interpreted, and reworked within living social contexts (Barrett, 2011; Small, 1998). Music education therefore contributes not only to the transmission of cultural forms, but also to the shaping of learners as reflective participants in cultural life.

2.2 Sociocultural, Ethnomusicological, and Pedagogical Perspectives

Contemporary music education theory increasingly emphasizes music as a tool for intercultural understanding, identity exploration, and democratic participation. Regelski (2002) advocates for a praxis-oriented approach in which music pedagogy moves beyond technical proficiency and becomes socially responsive. This perspective invites learners to situate musical knowledge within historical and cultural contexts, fostering critical awareness and resisting the homogenizing effects often associated with globalization. Similarly, Burnard (2012) highlights the role of creativity as socially and culturally embedded, rather than as an isolated individual capacity.

Sociocultural theory provides an equally important lens for understanding musical learning. From this perspective, learning is not solely an individual cognitive process but a socially mediated activity shaped by tools, symbols, and cultural-historical contexts (Vygotsky, 1978; Engeström, 2001). Music classrooms may

therefore be understood as communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), where ensemble rehearsal, improvisation, listening, and composition enable learners to negotiate cultural knowledge and shape their expressive voice within a collective framework. Such environments support both continuity and transformation, as students encounter tradition not as passive recipients but as active participants in shared meaning-making.

Ethnomusicology further strengthens this position by emphasizing the importance of recognizing local ways of knowing and contextualizing music instruction within culturally responsive frameworks (Nettl, 2005; Shehan Campbell, 2004). Music is embedded in ritual, daily life, and communal practice; consequently, its pedagogy should honor these social and cultural functions rather than reduce music to decontextualized performance. When students actively study and perform music linked to cultural heritage, they engage in forms of participatory musical experience that foster cohesion, collective identity, and cultural agency (Turino, 2008). This perspective challenges Western-centered and performance-driven paradigms and supports more dialogic, inclusive, and culturally grounded approaches to music education.

In addition, culturally responsive and culturally sustaining pedagogies offer important educational implications for music teaching. Gay (2010) and Ladson-Billings (1995) argue that meaningful pedagogy must connect with learners' cultural references and lived experiences, while Paris and Alim (2017) emphasize the importance of sustaining, rather than merely acknowledging, the evolving practices of diverse communities. In music education, this means that heritage-based teaching should not simply display traditions, but create opportunities for students to interpret, question, and creatively engage with them in relation to their own identities and social worlds.

2.3 Music Education as Cultural Participation

Taken together, these perspectives suggest that music education should be understood not only as artistic instruction but also as a form of cultural participation. Students do not simply acquire musical knowledge; they engage in processes of interpretation, belonging, expression, and identity negotiation. In this sense, music education becomes a site where tradition and creativity intersect, and where learners are invited to participate in cultural continuity while also reshaping inherited forms through reflection and practice.

This view is particularly significant in relation to heritage-based education. If music is treated only as a fixed cultural artifact, pedagogy risks reproducing static and exclusionary narratives of tradition. By contrast, when learners are encouraged to perform, reinterpret, discuss, and critically engage with musical heritage, they become active participants in the co-construction of cultural meaning (Karlsen, 2012; Burnard, 2012). Music education thus emerges as a pedagogical space in which identity, memory, creativity, and community are brought into dialogue in ways that are educationally meaningful and socially responsive.

Such an understanding is especially useful for the present article, which examines how music education can mediate between cultural continuity and contemporary educational demands. It allows heritage to be approached not as a closed inheritance, but as a living and contested field of participation. In this way, music education can support both the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage and the cultivation of culturally aware, critically engaged, and socially participatory learners.

ANALYTICAL APPROACH AND SCOPE OF THE ARTICLE

This article adopts a conceptual and literature-based analytical approach. Rather than presenting primary empirical research, it synthesizes theoretical perspectives and selected scholarship from music education, ethnomusicology, cultural heritage studies, and sociocultural pedagogy in order to examine how music may function as a medium of cultural transmission and identity formation in educational settings. Particular attention is given to the Greek educational context, including Music Schools, school-based cultural initiatives, and commemorative musical practices, which are used as illustrative examples of heritage-oriented pedagogy.

The article does not aim to produce statistically generalizable findings. Instead, its purpose is interpretive and pedagogical: to identify key conceptual themes, examine educational applications, and discuss the practical conditions under which music education may support cultural sustainability, intercultural understanding, and

student agency. In this sense, the Greek case is approached not as an isolated national model, but as a context through which broader educational questions concerning music, heritage, identity, and educational participation can be explored.

This analytical orientation also acknowledges the limits of a literature-based discussion. The article does not claim to offer direct measurement of student identity formation or comparative evaluation across school systems. Rather, it seeks to contribute a critically grounded synthesis that connects theory, pedagogical practice, and cultural context. In doing so, it offers a framework for understanding how music education may support both the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage and the development of reflective, culturally engaged learners.

CREATIVE PRACTICES IN MUSIC EDUCATION

4.1 Heritage-Based Musical Creativity

Incorporating music into education as a medium of cultural expression requires pedagogically grounded and culturally responsive creative practices. Such practices enable students not only to access cultural traditions but also to reinterpret and reimagine them through personal and collective expression. In this framework, creativity is not detached from heritage; rather, it emerges through engagement with it, reinforcing the dynamic and evolving nature of cultural identity (Barrett, 2011; Bamford, 2006).

Creative engagement in music education includes a wide range of practices, such as performing traditional repertoires, playing local or indigenous instruments, composing music inspired by cultural themes, and participating in musical experiences rooted in community life. Experiential and embodied learning through singing, movement, improvisation, and musical storytelling allows students to encounter music as a living tradition that reflects social values, historical memory, and aesthetic worlds (Wiggins, 2015; Schippers, 2010). This approach aligns with constructivist and sociocultural theories of learning, which emphasize meaning-making through action, reflection, and dialogue (Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1998).

Such practices may include the revival of folk songs and dances, the oral transmission of local repertoires, and student-led composition inspired by cultural motifs. In music education, creativity and tradition function not as opposites but as mutually reinforcing processes that support both aesthetic development and identity formation.

4.2 Music Schools and Formal Heritage Education in Greece

In Greece, Music Schools provide a particularly rich example of how creative practices rooted in cultural heritage can be embedded within formal education. These institutions introduce students to a wide range of musical idioms, including Byzantine chant, regional folk traditions, and contemporary Greek compositions. At the same time, they cultivate familiarity with traditional instruments such as the lyra, laouto, klarino, and santouri (Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, 2023).

Within these settings, music is approached not as a static repertoire but as a dynamic and dialogic field in which students engage in composition, improvisation, and collaborative performance. Through such practices, learners are encouraged both to preserve and to reinterpret tradition, fostering cultural continuity alongside artistic innovation (Zervas, 2017). In this respect, Music Schools illustrate how formal education can serve as a space where cultural heritage is not only transmitted but actively reworked through creative participation.



Figure 3. Student presentations of handmade replicas of ancient Greek instruments during a music education activity focused on cultural heritage.

4.3 School Cultural Programs and Interdisciplinary Practice

Beyond specialized institutions, public junior high schools in Greece also implement interdisciplinary cultural programs that encourage students to explore heritage through artistic synthesis. Programs such as *The Music of the World*, supported through school-based cultural initiatives, invite students to create performances that integrate traditional music with elements of theatre, dance, and visual arts.

These projects often culminate in events involving the wider school community, particularly during national commemorations, and may include dramatized reenactments, traditional songs, and regional dances (Institute of Educational Policy, 2021). Such experiences encourage collaborative artistic expression and promote historical awareness through deep aesthetic engagement.

In this context, creativity becomes a dialogic process that links individual expression with collective memory and social participation. This is especially evident in settings where learners co-construct performances that narrate local stories, engage with regional traditions, or respond to broader cultural themes through musical and interdisciplinary forms.



Figure 4. Students engaged in a coordinated school performance, demonstrating embodied musical expression through synchronized movement. The activity reflects experiential learning within a culturally informed educational context.



Figure 5. Greek junior high school students participating in a cultural performance that integrates music, movement, and storytelling based on regional traditions. These interdisciplinary practices support identity work, collaborative creativity, and cultural continuity.

4.4 Digital and Hybrid Recontextualizations of Heritage

Digital technologies and media platforms have expanded the possibilities for creative practice in music education, particularly by connecting traditional music with contemporary forms of artistic production. Tools such as music editing software, digital storytelling, and collaborative online composition enable students to reinterpret heritage content in ways that resonate with their own aesthetic preferences and sociocultural realities (Partti & Westerlund, 2013).

These hybrid practices reflect a broader shift toward multimodal and glocal approaches, in which traditional musical forms are not simply preserved but revitalized and transformed through new media. As Sæther (2010) suggests, the blending of traditional and digital modes can support both musical hybridity and cultural adaptability, equipping students with the tools to participate in a pluralistic and rapidly evolving musical world.

Recent scholarship further suggests that culturally embedded creative practices in music education can enhance motivation, social cohesion, and intercultural understanding (Swanwick, 2016; Karlsen & Westerlund, 2015). Such practices support the development of critical musical agency by allowing students to situate themselves within broader cultural narratives and construct meaning through personal and collective engagement with tradition.



Figure 6. High school students in a music technology classroom experimenting with digital software to create compositions inspired by traditional Greek musical themes. This practice illustrates the integration of heritage and contemporary media in culturally responsive music education.

MUSIC AND CULTURAL IDENTITY IN EDUCATION.

5.1 Music as a Medium of Belonging and Memory

Music plays a pivotal role in the construction and expression of cultural identity, functioning as a symbolic and affective medium through which individuals articulate personal narratives and engage with collective memory. Musical experience is closely linked to emotional processing, social cognition, and the formation of self-awareness, all of which are central to educational development and intercultural understanding (Panksepp, 1995; Lamont, 2002). In this sense, music is not solely an aesthetic practice but also a cognitive, relational, and cultural resource that supports belonging and identity formation within educational settings.

Within school contexts, music can also serve as a medium through which historical continuity and collective memory are made experientially meaningful. Through repertoire, performance, and ritualized participation, students encounter traditions not as abstract content but as embodied and emotionally resonant forms of cultural knowledge. This is especially evident in educational practices where music is linked to local history, community memory, or commemorative events. In such cases, music education enables learners to explore how identity is shaped through shared symbolic and affective experience.

5.2 Music Education in Multicultural and Plural Contexts

In multicultural learning environments, music education can foster inclusivity by bridging cultural difference and validating diverse artistic expressions. As Volk (2004) and Allsup and Shieh (2012) argue, music may serve

as a pedagogical lens through which learners interrogate diversity, challenge ethnocentric assumptions, and develop critical intercultural literacy. When students encounter a variety of musical idioms, traditions, and histories, they are invited both to deepen their understanding of their own heritage and to engage respectfully with that of others.

This dimension is especially important in contemporary classrooms, where identity is often shaped by hybridity, migration, and multiple cultural affiliations. Bhabha's (1994) concept of the "third space" is useful here, as it highlights how cultural meanings are negotiated, translated, and reconfigured rather than simply inherited. Within music education, such a perspective allows students to bring diasporic, minority, or hybrid identities into dialogue with dominant cultural narratives. Music-making thus becomes a means of negotiating tensions between tradition and innovation, local and global, personal and collective.

At the same time, culturally sustaining pedagogy reminds educators that music education should not merely include diversity symbolically, but actively sustain the evolving cultural practices of students and communities (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). Heritage-based music education therefore becomes most meaningful when it affirms multiple forms of belonging and supports learners in engaging critically and creatively with the cultural worlds they inhabit.

5.3 Greek Examples as a Lens for Broader Educational Questions

The Greek educational context offers a particularly rich example of how music may function as a medium of identity formation, cultural sustainability, and participatory citizenship. Music Schools, school-based cultural programs, and national commemorative practices demonstrate how formal and extracurricular educational settings can connect learners with intangible cultural heritage through song, ensemble performance, oral tradition, and interdisciplinary artistic activity (Zervas, 2017; Zaharopoulos & Zoubouli, 2020).

In Greece, national celebrations such as those associated with the 25th of March and the 28th of October often include songs, recitations, and staged performances through which students encounter collective memory and civic identity in structured educational forms. At the same time, heritage-based programs involving regional, Pontic, Asia Minor, or other local repertoires reveal how music education may also support more plural and dialogic understandings of belonging. These examples show that music in education is never only about repertoire; it is also about which histories are remembered, which identities are legitimized, and how students are positioned in relation to cultural continuity.

For this reason, the Greek case should not be viewed as a narrowly national example, but as a lens through which broader educational questions can be explored. It raises issues that are relevant internationally: how music education mediates between tradition and diversity, how schools engage with intangible cultural heritage without reducing it to static symbolism, and how learners may be supported as active participants in the interpretation of culture. In this respect, music education becomes a site where cultural memory, identity, and democratic participation intersect in ways that extend beyond any single national context.



Figure 7. School choir performing during a national celebration, embodying music's role in emotional expression and civic identity formation.

TEACHING STRATEGIES AND PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

Educators who seek to integrate cultural heritage into music education need pedagogical strategies that foster cultural responsiveness, student agency, and meaningful artistic participation. Such strategies move beyond content transmission and instead promote inclusive, student-centered, and contextually grounded forms of learning that recognize and value the cultural backgrounds of learners (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2010). Within this framework, music education functions as a participatory and transformative process that supports critical cultural understanding, identity formation, and civic expression.

6.1 Intercultural Music Education

Intercultural music education promotes the study and practice of music from a range of traditions, encouraging students to explore unfamiliar musical systems, instruments, and aesthetic values. This approach cultivates intercultural competence by validating musical difference and highlighting the symbolic, ethical, and communicative functions of music across cultures (Schippers, 2010; Volk, 2004). As Karlsen (2013) argues, intercultural learning in music can foster empathy, challenge hegemonic perspectives, and support more democratic and pluralistic educational environments. In pedagogical terms, this approach becomes especially meaningful when students are not positioned as passive consumers of “other” musics, but as reflective participants who examine how musical traditions relate to identity, history, and cultural power. In this way, intercultural music education contributes not only to musical understanding but also to broader educational aims linked to dialogue, inclusion, and global citizenship.



Figure 8. Students and community tradition-bearers collaborating in a workshop where traditional instruments are introduced and played, illustrating community-linked pedagogy.



Figure 9. Global distribution of traditional musical instruments: a visual representation supporting intercultural music education through the exploration of diverse musical heritages and sound practices.

6.2 Experiential and Embodied Learning

Learning grounded in embodied practice, sensory awareness, and critical reflection allows students to internalize cultural knowledge in integrative and lasting ways. Musical engagement through singing, movement, composition, improvisation, and listening facilitates the convergence of somatic, emotional, and cognitive

processes, thereby deepening both musical understanding and cultural responsiveness (Wiggins, 2015; Veblen et al., 2013).

In the context of heritage-based education, embodied pedagogy enables students to encounter music not simply as repertoire but as lived cultural form. Through participation in ensemble performance, dance, rhythm, gesture, and ritualized musical action, learners engage with tradition through the body as well as the intellect. Such forms of learning may foster stronger affective bonds with cultural heritage while also supporting inclusive modes of participation, especially in diverse or mixed-ability classrooms.

6.3 Creative Workshops and Collaborative Composition

Creative workshops and collaborative composition provide students with opportunities to interpret cultural heritage through their own artistic perspectives. Grounded in sociocultural and constructivist theories of learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1998), these practices support dialogic meaning-making and encourage learners to position themselves as active contributors to cultural continuity rather than passive receivers of tradition.

Composition linked to cultural themes can foster reflective musicianship, strengthen identity work, and connect students' personal experiences with broader cultural narratives (Burnard, 2012; Barrett, 2011). Such approaches are particularly effective when they allow students to draw on local musical forms, ancestral repertoires, or family histories while also experimenting with new creative possibilities.



Figure 10. Students from a Greek Music School performing in a traditional ensemble and choir during a school-based workshop, demonstrating the integration of cultural heritage through creative musical collaboration.



Figure 11. Students at a Greek Music School engage in a collaborative orchestral rehearsal that combines traditional and classical instruments. This activity illustrates how collective musical practice can support cultural identity, creative expression, and the co-construction of artistic meaning.

6.4 Community and Intergenerational Engagement

Bringing tradition-bearers, local musicians, elders, and community practitioners into the educational process helps bridge school knowledge with lived cultural expertise. These collaborations legitimize alternative epistemologies and support the continuity of oral traditions, rituals, and musical repertoires. According to Campbell (2004), partnerships between schools and communities create authentic contexts for learning and establish reciprocal relationships that contribute to cultural sustainability.

Community and intergenerational engagement also support culturally sustaining forms of pedagogy by situating learning within broader social and historical contexts (Paris, 2012). In music education, this may involve inviting students to work with community musicians, document local musical practices, explore family repertoires, or co-create performances that connect school learning with communal memory. Such strategies reinforce cultural pride, civic participation, and students' sense of belonging, while also expanding the educational meaning of music beyond the classroom.

CRITICAL TENSIONS AND PRACTICAL CHALLENGES

While heritage-based music education offers significant pedagogical possibilities, its implementation is neither simple nor ideologically neutral. The integration of music, cultural heritage, and identity in formal schooling raises important practical and conceptual tensions that must be acknowledged if such approaches are to remain educationally meaningful, inclusive, and critically grounded.

7.1 Teacher Preparation and Pedagogical Mediation

One important challenge concerns teacher preparation. Music educators may be expected to work with local traditions, intercultural repertoires, oral transmission practices, and community-based knowledge systems, yet they do not always receive sufficient preparation in ethnomusicological approaches, heritage education, or culturally responsive pedagogy. As a result, heritage-based teaching may risk becoming selective, celebratory, or insufficiently connected to students' lived cultural realities.

This places considerable responsibility on the educator as mediator. Teaching music as cultural heritage requires more than repertoire knowledge; it also requires sensitivity to context, awareness of cultural complexity, and the ability to facilitate reflection, dialogue, and creative participation. In this sense, teacher education and continuing professional development become central conditions for the responsible implementation of heritage-based music pedagogy.

7.2 Curriculum Constraints and Resource Inequality

A second challenge relates to curriculum design and institutional support. In many school systems, music occupies a limited or marginal place within the timetable, which restricts opportunities for sustained engagement with traditional repertoires, creative reinterpretation, and community-based learning. Heritage-oriented music education requires time for listening, discussion, performance, reflection, and often collaboration with musicians, families, or cultural institutions. Without curricular flexibility and institutional recognition, such practices may remain occasional rather than transformative.

Resource availability also shapes implementation. Access to traditional instruments, local repertoire archives, community practitioners, and digital tools for musical creation or reinterpretation is uneven across schools. These inequalities affect the depth and quality of students' engagement with cultural heritage and may limit the extent to which heritage-based music education becomes pedagogically meaningful and socially inclusive.

7.3 Heritage, Inclusion, and the Risk of Cultural Essentialism

Heritage education should not be treated as culturally neutral or automatically inclusive. There is always a risk of presenting tradition as fixed, homogeneous, and representative of a single dominant narrative. In such cases, music education may unintentionally reproduce narrow or exclusionary versions of identity, particularly in contexts marked by migration, hybridity, or internal cultural diversity.

This issue is especially important in contemporary classrooms, where students may identify with multiple, overlapping, or minority cultural affiliations. If heritage is taught as a closed inheritance rather than a living field of interpretation, students whose identities do not fit dominant narratives may experience cultural distance rather than belonging. Heritage-based music education therefore needs to remain critically attentive to questions of representation, legitimacy, and whose musical histories are included or marginalized in the curriculum.

7.4 From Preservation to Critical Cultural Participation

For these reasons, the educational aim of heritage-based music education should not be reduced to preservation alone. While safeguarding intangible cultural heritage remains important, pedagogy must also create opportunities for critical cultural participation. Students should be invited not only to perform inherited material, but also to interpret, question, adapt, and creatively engage with it in relation to contemporary social realities.

Such an approach allows music education to move beyond symbolic celebration and toward reflective participation. Learners are positioned not as passive bearers of culture, but as active participants in the co-construction of meaning. In this way, heritage-based music education can support both continuity and transformation, fostering culturally aware, critically engaged, and socially responsive forms of learning.

CONCLUSION

Music education represents a multilayered pedagogical domain that can strengthen cultural literacy, emotional development, and social cohesion while also supporting students' engagement with intangible cultural heritage. By integrating traditional repertoires, local instruments, and heritage-based practices, music education offers learners meaningful opportunities to explore identity, participate in cultural transmission, and engage creatively with historical and social experience.

The present article has argued, through a conceptual and literature-based analysis, that music education can function not only as a means of artistic development but also as a medium of cultural continuity, intercultural dialogue, and participatory meaning-making. The Greek educational context provides a particularly valuable example of how this relationship may be enacted through Music Schools, school-based cultural programs, and commemorative musical practices, while also illustrating questions that are relevant to broader international discussions on heritage, identity, and education.

At the same time, the article has highlighted that the successful integration of cultural heritage into music education depends on practical conditions such as teacher preparation, curriculum flexibility, and access to appropriate cultural and pedagogical resources. It has also emphasized the need to approach heritage critically, so that music education does not reproduce static or exclusionary narratives of culture, but instead supports reflective, inclusive, and dialogic forms of participation.

Future research would benefit from comparative case studies and empirically grounded investigations that examine how heritage-based music education is implemented across different cultural and institutional settings. Such work would further clarify the role of music education in fostering culturally sustainable, inclusive, and socially responsive schooling.

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