



Endingidi (Tubefiddle) Pedagogy in Bunyoro Kingdom: Individual Mastery, Narrative Transmission, and Solo Performance Traditions in Ugandan Music Education

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Article History

Received: 2025-06-29

Revised: 2026-04-08

Accepted: 2026-04-16

Published: 2026-04-20

Keywords

Bunyoro Kingdom

Endingidi

Indigenous music

Pedagogy

Solo performance

How to cite:

Busobozi, N., & Ekadu, P. E. (2026). *Endingidi (Tubefiddle) Pedagogy in Bunyoro Kingdom: Individual Mastery, Narrative Transmission, and Solo Performance Traditions in Ugandan Music Education*. *African Musicology Online*, 15(1), 41-53.

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Abstract

This article examines *Endingidi* pedagogy in Bunyoro Kingdom, Uganda, analysing how this single-string tube-fiddle tradition transmits individual mastery, narrative competence, and solo performance skills across generations. Drawing on eighteen months of ethnographic fieldwork, participant observation, and in-depth interviews with seven master *Endingidi* performers, the study employs Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) within an integrated theoretical framework combining Community of Practice theory, Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, ethnomusicological transmission theory, decolonial pedagogy, and embodied cognition. The study identifies seven analytically derived pedagogical principles: individual agency, narrative competence, technical mastery, improvisation, intimate performer-audience relationships, portable learning, and intergenerational mentorship. Crucially, for each principle, the study documents not merely what is learned but the processual HOW – the specific mechanisms through which integration is achieved. These mechanisms include the Graduated Release of Autonomy (GRA), parallel curriculum sequencing, periodic performance assessments, variation assignment pedagogy, audience reading exercises, contextual diversity strategy, and individualised 'reading the learner' instruction. The findings challenge ensemble-centric assumptions in African music education scholarship, extend Community of Practice theory, and contribute a replicable decolonial pedagogical framework applicable to indigenous instrument education across sub-Saharan Africa.

Introduction

In the evening quiet of a Bunyoro village, an elderly musician sits beneath a mango tree, his *Endingidi* a single-string tube fiddle fashioned from local materials resting against his shoulder. As his bow draws across the string, the instrument produces sounds that are simultaneously music and narrative, technical performance and cultural transmission. A young apprentice watches intently, not merely observing technique but absorbing a comprehensive pedagogical system that has sustained Bunyoro musical culture for generations. This scene encapsulates the central concern of this article: how does *Endingidi* pedagogy work, and what can it teach us about indigenous music education in Uganda and beyond?

Previous scholarship on Bunyoro music education has emphasised ensemble traditions: Amakondere's hocketing techniques, Engoma drumming ensembles, and communal singing practices



have received scholarly attention as paradigmatic examples of African music pedagogy (Nzewi, 2007; Akuno, 2019). This emphasis on collectivist, ensemble-based learning has become so dominant in the literature that solo instrument traditions have been systematically underrepresented, creating a significant gap in our understanding of the full range of indigenous music education practices in Uganda.

It is important to note, however, that prior scholarship has made valuable contributions to *Endingidi* studies. Kigozi et al. (2024) have documented the instrument's origins, educational dimensions, and aesthetic characteristics; Nannyonga-Tamusuza and Weintraub (2012) have examined the role of sound archives in preserving Ugandan musical heritage, including *Endingidi* recordings; and Kafumbe (2025) has analysed court music traditions that contextualise *Endingidi* performance. This article extends, rather than displaces, this existing scholarship. The specific pedagogical mechanisms through which individual mastery, narrative transmission, and solo performance competencies are acquired remain under-theorised. This article provides the first systematic analytical framework for the processual HOW of *Endingidi* pedagogy.

Recent scholarship on African music education increasingly recognises the need to move beyond ensemble-centric paradigms that may inadvertently privilege certain learning modalities while marginalising others (Makwa, 2025; Walubo et al., 2025a). The decolonisation of music education requires not only incorporating African musical content but also recognising the full diversity of African pedagogical approaches, including solo performance traditions that have been systematically overlooked in formal education (Addo, 2023; Human & Akuno, 2024; Rakena et al., 2024). Indigenous solo traditions like *Endingidi* embody pedagogical wisdom developed over centuries, offering approaches to individual development, creative expression, and narrative transmission that complement and enrich ensemble-based learning.

The urgency of this documentation is compounded by the precarious institutional position of indigenous music traditions in Ugandan formal education. Uganda's current lower secondary curriculum includes music as a component of Creative and Performing Arts, yet the content remains predominantly oriented toward Western notation, ensemble singing, and recorder performance (Walubo et al., 2025b). Indigenous instrument traditions such as *Endingidi* are treated, where they appear at all, as cultural artefacts to be observed rather than pedagogical systems to be learned. This curricular marginalisation is not merely a matter of content selection; it reflects a deeper epistemological assumption that indigenous music traditions lack the systematic pedagogical architecture required for formal instruction. This article challenges that assumption directly by demonstrating that *Endingidi* pedagogy constitutes precisely such a systematic architecture – one that is analytically rigorous, empirically documented, and practically applicable to teacher preparation and curriculum reform (Makwa, 2025; Komabu, 2025).

This article examines *Endingidi* pedagogy in Bunyoro Kingdom through ethnomusicological analysis of construction processes, performance techniques, repertoire characteristics, and learning processes. The article identifies seven analytically derived pedagogical principles characterising *Endingidi* learning and, critically, documents the specific processual mechanisms through which each principle is enacted. In doing so, it responds to growing calls from African music educators for documentation of diverse indigenous pedagogical traditions as a prerequisite for meaningful curriculum reform (Ngoma, 2024; Agbenyo et al., 2025).



Theoretical Framework

This study draws on five interconnected theoretical frameworks, each contributing a distinct analytical lens to the study of *Endingidi* pedagogy. These frameworks are not parallel but nested: Community of Practice theory provides the social architecture; Vygotsky's ZPD supplies the cognitive scaffolding mechanism; Ethnomusicological Transmission Theory contextualises the cultural-musical setting; Decolonial Pedagogy establishes the epistemological positioning; and Embodied Cognition accounts for the somatic-kinaesthetic dimension of bow-technique acquisition. As the analysis demonstrates, Community of Practice theory alone would describe the social structure of learning but miss the embodied, somatic dimension; Embodied Cognition theory alone would account for physical learning but miss the decolonial significance of indigenous knowledge transmission outside institutional frameworks.

Community of Practice theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) provides the foundational social learning architecture, framing *Endingidi* pedagogy as situated learning within a community defined by shared practice, mutual engagement, and joint enterprise. Apprentices move from legitimate peripheral participation toward full membership through progressive engagement with performance contexts, repertoire, and master-apprentice relationships. Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development extends this framework by identifying the cognitive scaffolding mechanisms through which masters calibrate instruction to each learner's developmental trajectory, providing support precisely calibrated to the gap between current performance and potential achievement.

Ethnomusicological Transmission Theory (Nettl, 2005; Nzewi, 2003, 2007) contextualises *Endingidi* pedagogy within the broader landscape of African music education, emphasising the integration of musical, cultural, and social knowledge in indigenous transmission processes. This framework directs analytical attention to the ways in which musical learning is inseparable from cultural identity formation and community membership. Decolonial Pedagogy (Wa Thiong'o, 1986; Mignolo, 2007; Ngoma, 2024) provides the epistemological positioning, framing *Endingidi* pedagogy as a self-sufficient indigenous theory of music education that challenges Eurocentric assumptions about what constitutes legitimate pedagogical knowledge. Crucially, this framework also demands analytical specification: the manuscript identifies the specific colonial epistemic structures that *Endingidi* pedagogy disrupts, namely the privileging of notation-based, institution-mediated, and ensemble-centred music learning.

The interaction between these five frameworks is not merely additive. Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD, when applied within the Ethnomusicological Transmission framework, takes on a culturally specific character: the 'zone' is not merely a cognitive gap between current and potential performance but a cultural-musical space in which the apprentice's developing identity as a Bunyoro musician is at stake. The master's scaffolding is not only technical instruction but cultural initiation a process through which the apprentice is progressively recognised by the community as a legitimate bearer of the tradition. This intersection of cognitive scaffolding and cultural identity formation is not captured by either Vygotsky or Nettl alone; it requires their integration. Similarly, Decolonial Pedagogy and Embodied Cognition intersect in the instrument construction process: the act of building one's own *Endingidi* is simultaneously a decolonial assertion of indigenous craft knowledge and an embodied act of corporeal schema formation. The nested framework developed here thus generates analytical insights that no single theory could produce independently (Larkin et al., 2006; Chilisa, 2020).

Embodied Cognition theory (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Leman, 2008) addresses the somatic-kinaesthetic dimension of *Endingidi* learning, recognising that musical knowledge is not merely cognitive but fundamentally bodily. The personalisation of instrument construction documented in the Organology



section is theorised through this framework as an embodied act that integrates ecological knowledge, craft skill, and cultural meaning into the performer's corporeal schema. Throughout the Results and Discussion sections, each analytical claim is explicitly linked to the relevant theoretical framework(s).

Methodology

Research Design and Approach

This study employs Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2015) within an ethnomusicological research design. IPA was selected because the study's primary concern is with the lived experience of *Endingidi* pedagogy as understood and articulated by master performers and their apprentices. While IPA is fundamentally idiographic concerned with the particular rather than the general the study's design enables a principled movement from idiographic analysis to cross-case pattern identification. Following Smith et al.'s (2009) distinction between idiographic analysis at the individual level and pattern identification across a homogeneous sample, the study identifies convergent themes across seven master performers who share comparable expertise, cultural background, and performance context. All generalising claims are explicitly bounded: findings are presented as characterising '*Endingidi* pedagogy as practised by master performers in Bunyoro Kingdom' rather than as universal propositions about African music pedagogy.

Researcher Positionality

The first author is a Ugandan doctoral researcher with familial connections to Bunyoro Kingdom and prior experience as a music practitioner. This insider positioning provided privileged access to master performers, cultural custodians, and performance contexts that would not have been available to an outsider researcher. However, it also introduced risks of confirmatory bias and romanticisation of indigenous practices. Three bias-mitigation strategies were employed: (a) member-checking, in which three master performers reviewed and verified the researcher's interpretations of their practice; (b) peer debriefing, conducted with the doctoral supervisor throughout the analysis process; and (c) reflexive journaling, maintained throughout the eighteen months of fieldwork to document the researcher's evolving interpretive position. Interpretations are understood as co-constructed through the researcher-participant relationship rather than as objective representations of a pre-existing reality.

Participants and Data Collection

Participants were selected through purposive sampling targeting master *Endingidi* performers with recognised expertise and community respect across all four sub-counties of Bunyoro Kingdom. Seven master performers (Performers A-G) and twelve apprentices (Apprentices 1-12) participated in the study. Master performers had between 19 and 41 years of performance experience (mean: 29.4 years). All seven master performers are male, reflecting the current demographic reality of *Endingidi* performance in Bunyoro Kingdom; the gendered dimensions of this tradition are identified as an important direction for future research. Data were collected through eighteen months of ethnographic fieldwork (2023-2024), comprising participant observation at 47 performance and learning events, semi-structured in-depth interviews (two sessions per master performer; one session per apprentice), and informal conversations documented in the reflexive journal. All interviews were conducted in Runyoro and translated by the first author, with verification by a bilingual research assistant.

Data Analysis: IPA Audit Trail

Data analysis followed a five-phase IPA Audit Trail, providing transparent documentation of the coding process:



Phase 1 – Familiarisation: Fourteen interview sessions were transcribed verbatim, generating approximately 84,000 words of transcript. All transcripts were verified by participants.

Phase 2 – Initial Noting: Line-by-line coding of all transcripts generated 312 initial codes capturing descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual observations.

Phase 3 – Emergent Themes: 312 initial codes were clustered into 47 emergent themes through iterative grouping and abstraction.

Phase 4 – Cross-Case Pattern Search: Themes appearing in ≥ 5 of 7 transcripts ($\geq 71\%$ convergence rate) were elevated to analytical principles. Seven themes met this criterion, yielding the Seven Analytically Derived Pedagogical Principles. Divergent cases were examined separately; no theme reaching the convergence threshold was contradicted by divergent evidence.

Phase 5 – Integration and Theoretical Mapping: The seven principles were mapped onto the integrated theoretical framework. Member-checking with three master performers confirmed the accuracy of interpretations. Data saturation was reached after the seventh master performer, when no new themes emerged in initial noting.

Results

Organology and Construction

The *Endingidi* is a single-string tube fiddle constructed from a cylindrical wooden tube (*omukondo*), a single gut or wire string (*omuguha*), a small bow (*omukono*), and a resonating gourd (*entamu*). Construction materials are sourced locally: the tube is typically carved from the stem of the *omukondo* plant; the string is traditionally made from the gut of a monitor lizard, though steel wire is increasingly used; the bow is fashioned from a curved branch strung with horse or synthetic hair. The instrument produces a single sustained pitch that the performer modulates through bow pressure, bow speed, and finger stopping.

What is analytically significant about *Endingidi* construction, and what differentiates it from many other instrument-building traditions, is the degree of personalisation involved. Master performers do not construct generic instruments; they construct instruments calibrated to their own physical dimensions, tonal preferences, and performance contexts. As Performer C explained: ‘The instrument must know your hand before it can speak your voice. I built mine over three months, adjusting the tube length until the pitch matched the register where my voice sits comfortably’ (Performer C, master performer, 34 years’ experience; Interview 1, 2023). This personalisation is theorised through Embodied Cognition (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Leman, 2008) as an act of corporeal schema formation: the instrument becomes an extension of the performer’s body, and construction is the first pedagogical experience through which ecological knowledge, craft skill, and cultural meaning are integrated.

Construction knowledge transmits through direct apprenticeship: apprentices observe master performers constructing instruments, assist with specific stages, and eventually construct their own under supervision. This process, which typically takes three to six months, constitutes the first phase of *Endingidi* pedagogy and establishes the embodied relationship between performer and instrument that characterises master-level performance.

Performance Techniques and Musical Characteristics

Endingidi performance integrates three simultaneous competencies: instrumental technique, vocal narration, and audience engagement. The performer produces a continuous drone or melodic ostinato on the instrument while simultaneously narrating stories, histories, and social commentary in a heightened speech-song style.



Figure 1: A master performer playing the *Endingidi* (tubefiddle) while singing the *Kidaimanda* narrative song, a performance tradition that integrates instrumental technique, vocal narration, and cultural transmission in the Bunyoro Kingdom, Uganda.

This integration of musical and narrative competence is not merely additive it is constitutive: *Endingidi* performance without narrative is considered technically incomplete, and narrative without instrumental accompaniment lacks the aesthetic authority that marks master performance (Performer D, master performer, 28 years' experience; Interview 2, 2024).

The repertoire encompasses royal histories (*ebisoko*), moral tales (*ebigambo*), praise poetry (*ebitontomi*), laments (*emitoogo*), and contemporary social commentary. Each genre carries specific melodic conventions, narrative structures, and performance contexts. Mastery of repertoire is inseparable from mastery of the cultural knowledge embedded within it: a performer who can produce the correct melodic patterns for *ebisoko* but does not know the historical content is not considered competent (Performer B, master performer, 35 years' experience; Interview 1, 2023).

This integration of musical and cultural knowledge in repertoire acquisition distinguishes *Endingidi* pedagogy from Western instrument-learning traditions, where technical mastery and cultural knowledge are typically sequenced separately or treated as independent domains. In *Endingidi* pedagogy, they are inseparable from the first lesson: the apprentice learns the instrument by learning the stories and learns the stories through the instrument. Okpewho's (1992) analysis of African oral literature provides a useful theoretical anchor here: the performer is simultaneously a musician, a historian, and a social commentator, and the pedagogical system must develop all three competencies in parallel. This finding reinforces the Parallel Curriculum Sequencing mechanism identified in the Results section and provides its ethnomusicological grounding (Finnegan, 1970; Nzewi, 2003).

Seven Analytically Derived Pedagogical Principles of *Endingidi* Learning

The following seven principles constitute analytically derived constructs, each grounded in the integrated theoretical framework, differentiated from generic apprenticeship traditions by specific processual mechanisms, and supported by convergent evidence from ≥ 5 of 7 master performers. For each principle, the study documents not merely what is learned (the WHAT) but the specific mechanism through which it is achieved (the HOW). These mechanisms are etic constructs, researcher-constructed analytical labels derived from and grounded in performer narratives and observed practices, rather than emic terms used by the performers themselves.

Principle 1: Individual Agency and Creative Expression

Individual agency is theorised through Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of legitimate peripheral participation: apprentices do not passively receive knowledge but actively construct their musical identity through progressive engagement with performance contexts. This principle is distinguished



from generic apprenticeship by the Graduated Release of Autonomy (GRA) mechanism, which is absent in standard craft apprenticeship models (Nzewi, 2003; Agawu, 2016).

HOW – Graduated Release of Autonomy (GRA): The GRA operates through three phases: (1) Imitation, in which the apprentice reproduces the master’s performance exactly; (2) Supervised Improvisation, in which the master assigns structural constraints within which the apprentice must introduce variations; and (3) Independent Performance, in which the apprentice performs solo before a community audience with the master present but non-interventionist. As Performer A explained: ‘I do not teach by telling. I teach by showing, then by watching, then by stepping back. The moment I step back is the moment they become musicians’ (Performer A, master performer, 41 years’ experience; Interview 1, 2023).

Principle 2: Narrative Competence and Oral Literature Transmission

Narrative competence is the most analytically distinctive feature of *Endingidi* pedagogy and its most significant contribution to African music education scholarship. It is theorised through Ethnomusicological Transmission Theory (Nettl, 2005; Nzewi, 2007) and Oral Literature Studies (Okpewho, 1992; Finnegan, 1970), which frame narrative as inseparable from musical competence in African performance traditions.

HOW – Parallel Curriculum Sequencing: Musical technique and narrative complexity develop simultaneously through a dual-track approach. While the apprentice is practising bow technique and drone production, the master is simultaneously teaching the narrative content, historical context, and performance conventions of specific repertoire genres. These two tracks converge at the point of first solo performance. As Performer D observed: ‘The music and the story are not two things. They are one thing that you learn in two ways at the same time’ (Performer D, master performer, 28 years’ experience; Interview 2, 2024).

Principle 3: Technical Mastery Through Sustained Practice

Technical mastery is grounded in Vygotsky’s (1978) ZPD: masters continuously assess each apprentice’s current technical level and assign practice tasks calibrated to the upper boundary of their developmental zone. This principle is differentiated from generic practice regimes by the Periodic Performance Assessment mechanism.

HOW – Periodic Performance Assessments: Informal but structured evaluations occur at community gatherings, where apprentices perform before audiences of varying size and formality. These performances create accountability cycles: the apprentice knows that their technical progress will be publicly visible, creating intrinsic motivation for sustained practice. Performer F described this: ‘When a child plays badly in front of the elders, it is not shame it is information. The elders tell you what they heard. You go home and practice until they hear something different’ (Performer F, master performer, 22 years’ experience; Interview 1, 2023).

Principle 4: Improvisation and Compositional Creativity

Improvisation is theorised through Embodied Cognition (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Pressing, 1988) as a somatic-kinaesthetic process in which the performer’s body generates musical variations through learned physical dispositions rather than conscious compositional decisions. This principle is differentiated from generic improvisation pedagogy by the Variation Assignment mechanism.

HOW – Variation Assignment Pedagogy: Masters assign structural constraints within which apprentices must improvise: ‘Play the ebisoko melody for the Omukama’s arrival but change the rhythm of the third phrase’. This constrained improvisation develops both technical flexibility and cultural sensitivity simultaneously. As Performer E explained: ‘Improvisation is not freedom. It is



freedom within the rules. You must know the rules completely before you can break them beautifully' (Performer E, master performer, 19 years' experience; Interview 2, 2024).

Principle 5: Intimate Performer-Audience Relationships

The performer-audience relationship is theorised through Community of Practice theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991): audiences are not passive recipients but active participants in the performance community, whose responses shape the performer's musical decisions in real time. This principle is differentiated from generic performance pedagogy by the Audience Reading Exercise mechanism.

HOW – Audience Reading Exercises: Apprentices are deliberately placed in solo performance contexts before they have achieved full technical mastery. The purpose is not to display competence but to develop real-time audience responsiveness. Masters observe from the audience and provide detailed feedback on the apprentice's ability to read and respond to audience reactions. Performer B described the rationale: 'You cannot learn to read an audience by watching. You learn by performing and failing and performing again until the audience's face becomes as readable as the notes' (Performer B, master performer, 35 years' experience; Interview 1, 2023).

Principle 6: Portable and Accessible Learning

Portable learning is theorised through Decolonial Pedagogy (Wa Thiong'o, 1986; Ngoma, 2024): the absence of institutional infrastructure is not a deficit but a design feature that ensures learning is integrated with lived cultural experience rather than segregated in formal educational spaces. This principle is differentiated from generic informal learning by the Contextual Diversity Strategy.

HOW – Contextual Diversity Strategy: Learning is deliberately distributed across multiple social settings domestic spaces, community gatherings, royal ceremonies, markets, and funerals. Each context demands different repertoire, different performance conventions, and different audience relationships. Masters ensure that apprentices experience all major performance contexts before being considered ready for independent practice. As Performer G explained: 'The instrument must travel with you. If it only knows one room, it will only speak one language' (Performer G, master performer, 27 years' experience; Interview 2, 2024).

Principle 7: Intergenerational Mentorship with Individualised Instruction

Intergenerational mentorship is the structural architecture through which all other principles are enacted. It is theorised through Community of Practice theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD, with the master functioning simultaneously as cultural custodian, technical instructor, and developmental assessor. This principle is differentiated from generic mentorship by the 'Reading the Learner' mechanism.

HOW – 'Reading the Learner' Individualised Instruction: Masters continuously assess each apprentice's learning profile their physical disposition toward the instrument, their narrative aptitude, their social confidence, and their cultural knowledge base and adapt instruction accordingly. No two apprentices receive identical instruction. As Performer A observed: 'Every student is a different *Endingidi*. You must tune your teaching to their string, not to a standard pitch' (Performer A, master performer, 41 years' experience; Interview 2, 2024).

Discussion

Challenging the Ensemble-Centric Paradigm

The Graduated Release of Autonomy mechanism demonstrates that individual mastery is pedagogically sequential to collective participation in *Endingidi* pedagogy. This finding qualifies Mabingo's (2020) argument in Research Studies in Music Education that African solo traditions



‘simultaneously cultivate individual expression and communal values’: in *Endingidi* pedagogy, individual mastery is not simultaneous with but preparatory for communal engagement. The solo performer must first achieve technical independence before the community can recognise and respond to their musical voice. This sequence individual mastery preceding communal integration represents a distinctive contribution to our understanding of African music pedagogy that challenges the ensemble-centric paradigm.

This finding has direct implications for how African music pedagogy is theorised in the literature. Dominant frameworks, from Nzewi’s (2007) community-centred model to Akuno’s (2019) collective practice paradigm, have constructed African music learning as inherently communal from the outset. *Endingidi* pedagogy complicates this picture by revealing a tradition in which the community is the destination, not the starting point. The seven master performers interviewed for this study consistently described the early phases of apprenticeship as deliberately solitary: ‘You must first learn to speak before you can speak to others’ (Performer A, master performer, 41 years’ experience; Interview 1, 2023). This pedagogical philosophy individual mastery as a prerequisite for communal contribution is not a deviation from African music education values but a specific elaboration of them, one that the ensemble-centric paradigm has systematically rendered invisible. Recognising this dimension enriches rather than displaces collective frameworks, pointing toward a more complete account of the full range of African pedagogical traditions (Agbenyo et al., 2025; Mdhluli et al., 2025).

Extending Community of Practice Theory

The GRA mechanism provides the missing processual dimension in prior applications of Lave and Wenger’s (1991) Community of Practice theory to African music education (Mapana et al., 2023; Isabirye, 2021a, 2021b). While Community of Practice theory describes the social architecture of apprenticeship learning, it does not specify the mechanisms through which peripheral participation becomes full membership. The GRA operationalises this transition as a three-phase, pedagogically managed process, extending the theory’s explanatory power in the specific context of African solo instrument pedagogy.

This extension has theoretical implications beyond *Endingidi* studies. Lave and Wenger’s (1991) original framework was developed primarily through studies of tailors, midwives, and naval quartermasters – occupational communities in which peripheral participation is largely unstructured and emergent. *Endingidi* pedagogy, by contrast, reveals a tradition in which the movement from periphery to full membership is explicitly managed through a named, recognised, and culturally sanctioned mechanism. The GRA is not an informal process that researchers have retrospectively theorised; it is a pedagogical practice that master performers consciously deploy and can articulate. This finding suggests that Community of Practice theory may underestimate the degree of intentional pedagogical design present in indigenous apprenticeship traditions, a limitation that Wenger (1998) himself acknowledged but did not resolve. Future research might examine whether analogous structured-release mechanisms exist in other African instrument apprenticeship traditions, such as the kora in West Africa or the mbira in Zimbabwe (Kubik, 1982; Agbenyo et al., 2025).

Decolonial Contribution: Indigenous Knowledge as Theoretical Resource

Endingidi pedagogy constitutes a self-sufficient indigenous theory of music education that concretely disrupts three colonial epistemic structures: (1) the privileging of notation-based learning, which *Endingidi* pedagogy replaces with embodied, oral transmission; (2) the privileging of institution-mediated learning, which *Endingidi* pedagogy replaces with community-embedded, contextually distributed practice; and (3) the privileging of ensemble-centred African music education, which *Endingidi* pedagogy challenges by demonstrating the epistemological priority of individual mastery.



These disruptions extend the decolonial frameworks of Ngoma (2024), Rakena et al. (2024), and Kigozi et al. (2024) from programmatic argument to empirically grounded specification.

It is equally important to note the risks of formalisation. Integrating *Endingidi* pedagogy into institutional curricula carries the risk of re-colonising the tradition through standardisation, assessment bureaucratisation, and decontextualisation from the community performance contexts that give the seven principles their meaning. Any curriculum integration must be designed to preserve the contextual diversity, individualised instruction, and community embeddedness that constitute the tradition's pedagogical architecture. Chilisa's (2020) framework for indigenous research methodologies offers a useful caution here: the goal of decolonial scholarship is not merely to document indigenous knowledge but to ensure that documentation itself does not become an act of epistemic extraction. The seven principles and their processual mechanisms are presented in this article as a contribution to the scholarly record, but their living authority resides with the master performers and communities of Bunyoro Kingdom whose practice they describe. Ongoing community partnership, rather than one-time documentation, is the appropriate model for curriculum development in this tradition (Makwa, 2025; Nannyonga-Tamusuza & Weintraub, 2012).

Implications for Teacher Preparation and Curriculum Design

The seven processual mechanisms constitute a replicable pedagogical framework for formal music education contexts. Teacher preparation programmes in Uganda and across sub-Saharan Africa could incorporate the GRA as a structured approach to developing student autonomy; Parallel Curriculum Sequencing as a model for integrating musical and cultural content; and Audience Reading Exercises as a technique for developing performer-audience responsiveness. These mechanisms are not culturally specific in their application: while they are derived from *Endingidi* pedagogy, their underlying logic graduated autonomy, contextual diversity, individualised instruction is transferable to other indigenous instrument traditions across the continent (Mapana et al., 2023; Addo, 2023).

At the level of curriculum design, the Parallel Curriculum Sequencing mechanism suggests a specific structural model for integrating indigenous music into formal schooling: rather than treating cultural knowledge as supplementary content to be added to existing music curricula, it should be sequenced in parallel with technical instruction from the earliest stages of learning. This approach is consistent with calls from Ngoma (2024) and Human and Akuno (2024) for decolonial curriculum reform that treats indigenous epistemology as foundational rather than supplementary. Practically, it would require teacher preparation programmes to develop educators who are simultaneously competent in instrumental technique and cultural-narrative knowledge – a dual competency that current Ugandan music teacher education programmes do not systematically address (Kule et al., 2025; Walubo et al., 2025a). The 'Reading the Learner' individualised instruction mechanism further suggests that effective indigenous music pedagogy requires formative assessment practices that are relational and contextual rather than standardised and summative, a finding with implications for assessment reform in East African music education more broadly (Melaku, 2022).

Limitations

This study is subject to four limitations that constrain the scope of its claims. First, the study is geographically bounded to Bunyoro Kingdom; findings may not transfer to other regions or to related tube-fiddle traditions in East Africa, such as the *Inanga* or the *Endongo*. Second, all seven master performers are male, reflecting the current demographic reality of *Endingidi* performance; the gendered dimensions of *Endingidi* pedagogy including the historical exclusion of women from certain performance contexts are identified as an important direction for future research. Third, the eighteen-month data collection represents a temporal snapshot; longitudinal studies tracking apprentices from



initiation to mastery would provide more complete documentation of the GRA mechanism. Fourth, as an IPA study, the findings represent the researcher's theorised account of participant experience; alternative theoretical frameworks might yield different constructs.

Conclusion

This article has documented *Endingidi* pedagogy in Bunyoro Kingdom through an integrated theoretical framework and a transparent IPA methodology, identifying seven analytically derived pedagogical principles and, for each, the specific processual mechanism through which it is enacted. The findings make three contributions to African music education scholarship: they challenge the ensemble-centric paradigm by demonstrating the epistemological priority of individual mastery in *Endingidi* pedagogy; they extend Community of Practice theory by providing the missing processual dimension in its application to African music apprenticeship; and they contribute a replicable decolonial pedagogical framework grounded in empirically documented indigenous practice.

The seven processual mechanisms GRA, Parallel Curriculum Sequencing, Periodic Performance Assessments, Variation Assignment Pedagogy, Audience Reading Exercises, Contextual Diversity Strategy, and 'Reading the Learner' Instruction constitute a framework that is both analytically specific to *Endingidi* and transferable, with appropriate contextual adaptation, to other indigenous instrument traditions across sub-Saharan Africa. Future research should examine the gendered dimensions of *Endingidi* pedagogy, track the longitudinal development of apprentices through the GRA phases, and investigate the conditions under which these mechanisms can be integrated into formal music education without re-colonising the tradition through institutional standardisation.

Endingidi pedagogy, as this article has demonstrated, is not a relic of pre-colonial practice requiring preservation but a living, analytically sophisticated educational system with genuine explanatory power for contemporary music education. The seven processual mechanisms – Graduated Release of Autonomy, Parallel Curriculum Sequencing, Periodic Performance Assessments, Variation Assignment Pedagogy, Audience Reading Exercises, Contextual Diversity Strategy, and 'Reading the Learner' Instruction constitute a replicable, analytically grounded pedagogical framework whose integration into formal music education curricula across sub-Saharan Africa represents a concrete, evidence-based pathway for the decolonisation of music education.

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