

# **The Role of Modern Technology, Education and Innovation in Reviving and Sustaining Mbira Heritage in Zimbabwe: A Post-Colonial Exegesis**

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## **Abstract**

The mbira is a traditional instrument that originated from the Shona people of Zimbabwe, particularly the Zezuru ethnic group. It is made up of metal keys mounted on a gwariwa (soundboard) by a crossbar using wire or chain adjusters. The Deze (gourd) resonator, made from pumpkin gourd, is used to amplify the sound produced by the mbira. The instrument has been used to evoke ancestral spirits as well as to maintain solidarity and stability, particularly among the Zezuru people of Zimbabwe since time immemorial. Soon after Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, several mbira ensembles emerged, with some playing mbira together with Western musical instruments like guitars. The introduction of modern technology in the performance practices of mbira, along with the teaching of mbira to youths in schools and innovations on the mbira, has contributed to its popularity and sustenance locally and abroad. These developments spared the instrument from being shunned by its people, particularly the young generation of Zimbabwe, who were in the past told by Christian churches that the instrument is unholy. This study sought to establish the role played by technology, education, and innovation in sustaining mbira. The findings revealed that modern technology, in the form of microphone pickups attached to mbira, audio and video recordings, playing of the music on radio, performance of mbira in urban dandaro shows, teaching of mbira to youths, and innovation around the mbira instrument, have sustained mbira both in Zimbabwe and abroad. The study recommends the teaching of mbira in institutions of learning like schools, colleges, and universities in order to increase its popularity. This may raise the demand for the mbira instrument. As a result of the demand, the study recommends that the department of the government that preserves culture support the mbira makers so that they meet the increased demand.

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