

## The Future of Music in Nigeria

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### Abstract

The future of music in Nigeria is of great concern to music educators in specific and educationists in general. Music is a dimensional subject but also a skill oriented subject. These functions create career opportunities and means of livelihood for individuals, and even generate revenue for the government. It is from this premise that this paper sought to discuss the concept of music, education and music education. It highlights traditional and western music education in Nigeria. An examination of formal music education in Nigeria is presented in this article. The paper examines the structure and objectives of music education. It also highlights the general situation of music education. Lastly the paper looks into the future direction of music education in Nigeria. Descriptive, survey and bibliographic method were used to determine the future of music education in Nigeria. The outcome of the study revealed that music education in Nigeria is western oriented. It lacks social cultural identity relevant to Nigeria situation. The paper in its conclusion and recommendation emphasized that, the future direction of music education rests solely on the re-structure of music education curriculum so as to provide fertile land for the growth, strength and values of music in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Music, Education, Music Education, Curriculum, Nigeria

### Introduction

The situation of music in Nigeria today is of great concern to music educators. There is need to look into the future of music in Nigeria. Although, various questions may arise such as: What is music education? What is the focus and direction of music education in Nigeria? Is there any relevance of music education to the societal need in Nigeria? What is the people's view and perception of music within Nigerian society?

This paper attempts to define the concept of music, education and music education; outline the aim and objectives of music in Nigeria; highlight traditional and western music education; examine formal music education in Nigeria; examine the general situation of music in Nigeria and look into the future direction of music education in Nigeria. In other words, the music education discussed in this paper includes both western and traditional music.

One of the most unique forms of communication that can change how individuals think, feel and act is music. Music education combines intellect and feeling forging forward to enable one's personal development through expression and reflection. Music educators in Nigeria are thus face by the challenge of making music an integral part of Nigerian's culture and the foundation upon which musical for future generations is based.

### Discussion

#### *The Concept of Music, Education and Music Education*

The essentiality of music to man today, dates back in the historical times, with a stable and vibrant cultural manifestation which is ethnic bound both practice and appreciation. Although a universal phenomenon, music is not uniform and every society has her own types of music which she makes in her own ways to appeal to her own citizens.

Olorunsogo and Olorunsogo (2001, p. 2) noted that, music is defined by various people in various ways depending on the perspective from which it is viewed. To some, it is the word



“music” that appeals to them, to some it may be the content of music while to others it may be what is believed to be its end or goal. This therefore, has brought about as many definitions as there are institutions and individuals engaged in the field of music.

Music according to Merriam (2000, p. 765) is the science or art of ordering tones or sounds in succession, in combination, and in temporal relationships to produce a composition having unity and continuity. Music, in-fact is a structural expression by means of tones or sound arrangement, organization and modulations, to create evocative, symphonies sounds that appeal to the auditory senses.

In defining music, some of the commonest things in life defy precise definition. Sometimes, educationists tend to go by general assumptions or by effects (of the term) or by a set of actions. Nwachukwu (2000, p. 1) remarks that Shakespeare looks at music as a concord of sweet sounds, which wrongly suggests that all music is sweet or pleasant sounding.

Ajewole (2002, p. 3) is of the opinion that, music is a reflection of what is in the society. Music is a difficult concept to be single-handily defined. Technically, what is music? It doesn't have a single answer. Okafor (2001, p. 3) stressed that, music has been defined as a universal language because everybody in every culture recognized music when he/she sees one or needs it. Another thing is that music is culture-bound. Every culture decides on what is music. Many of us have had the experience of putting on music of other cultures and congregation of people from an in-culture, that is, the indigenous culture and they will continue talking away because they did not recognize that as music. However, when any music from their own culture was put on, they all said, “This is music”. It is culture that gives music its definition.

Education is the major pivot on which the orbit on any society rotates. We cannot effectively talk of music education without digging out the concept of education. Education, like its purpose continues to expand with culture and age. Education is multifaceted. It is what the individual sees or thinks it to be. Eya (2000, p. 143) sees it as “the sum total of processes by means of which a community or social group (ethnic group), whether small or large transmits its acquired power and aims with a view to securing its continuous existence or growth”. In line with this definition, Ozongwu (1999, p. 84) looks at education as the “process of making the learner share in the evolved pattern of his culture; a formal process by which the elders or rulers select and transmit patterns of behavior of their choice”. The elders in an ethnic group transmit their musical culture and identities to the younger generation through education.

Music on the other hand is a part of the system of cultural dispensation of an experienced group. Given this definition, education therefore is an experience which one or an ethnic group needs to conform to the forms and mores of the (their) society (culture) in which he/she live(s). For one to acquire this musical-cum-cultural identification he/she must have undergone some kind of training; hence, he cannot adequately fit in or participate actively.

Since education involves culture, and culture compasses music as its integral part, it is therefore pertinent at this point to examine music education. Okafor (1991, p. 60) stated that in Nigerian traditional societies, music education had existed before the coming of the whites. Music education starts with the folklore, which embraces early knowledge of the traditional folk- the stories, clan mythologies, music and dance, cookery, simply crafts- which begins from childhood. Children, for example, learnt through the folktale, the dos and don'ts of their communities. They equally learn, through mnemonics and simple game songs, complicated subjects, numerology or numeracy, even to compose words and use their language.

In other words, Americana (1974, p. 638) reaffirms that: music education is the training or studies in music, with a view to impart or acquire music creation and appreciation competences. It is the training in all aspects of music, and most especially school



programmes designed to teach people to make music and to listen to music as preparation for creating own musical culture.

Music cannot be separated from education, from the fact that education involves the process of training, teaching, imparting or infusing knowledge; a process of causing somebody to become acquainted with a body of facts, skills or knowledge which can be acquired either through formal or informal education. Ajewole (2001b, p. 80) noted that, music education is abstract in nature, the skill or knowledge of music can only be acquired through appropriate teaching and training so as to enhance a better performance of music in all its ramifications. Ajewole (2003, p. 2) in support of this assertion remarked that, music is skill that has to be learnt and understood properly.

### ***Music in the Nigeria Traditional Society***

The history of music education in Nigeria is based on an oral tradition handed down from father to son, because Nigerians have not yet invented a musical notation. Odunuga (2002) in support of this assertion noted that, music education in Nigeria has been in existence from time immemorial. Traditionally, music education existed in oral tradition. Here, instruction was passed down informally by word of mouth. There was no curriculum, yet teaching and learning took place through apprenticeship, imitation and observation.

According to Nwanneri (2001), traditional music exists in two dimensions. First is the informal aspect which occurs through the mother's unintentional and incidental exposition of the child to musical activities, followed with peer groups, age grades and the likes. Second is the formal, highly organized and well-structured aspect, which commence at maturity during which time the learner is capable of active participation in musical activities through careful observations and imitations. Today, the informal music education is still in existence but it has been overtaken by the formal music education.

Ajewole (2001c, p. 4) gives the assertion that, music in Nigeria traditional society starts very early. The mother sings to her child and the child begins to develop sensitivity to music right from the cradle. Further training at the early stages of a child's life is developed in games and stories which have songs. Ifemesia (1987, p. 3) in his own submission noted that, in the African dispensation, for example, music has been flourishing by direct and indirect instructional situations which mainly depend on practical teaching and learning by doing, observation and participation, as by oral transmission, listening and reproduction.

### ***Western Music Education in Nigeria***

Afro-European trade and European colonizing penetration, Christian evangelistic activities and Islamism/Arabic conquests are some external factors which have influenced the course of music in Nigeria. Islam brought in Arabic culture and Arabic musical instruments like the snare-drum (*ganga*), the hour-glass drum (*gangan*), the reed oboe (*algaita*) and a range of strings. It also introduced elements of Asian music and discriminated against a lot of indigenous music as being related to Satan.

Christianity, through its schools and churches, introduced melodrama, proscenium stage singing, congregational singing, western harmony and choral singing, the organ / harmonium and group singing very different from the traditional call and response. Of course, western keyboard instruments cannot accurately reproduce all African music in which some passages are half-spoken and half-sung, or are produced by acoustically dead objects such as the stamping of ornamented feet on the ground. Attempts to transpose such passages for the keyboard have however led to distortions.



Like Islam, Christianity discriminated against some constituents of the Nigerian culture and its music. Christians therefore developed a religion-artistic sense of what is appropriate or wrong in music. More than that, training for playing the piano, class-singing, reading the tonic sol-fa or Gregorian or Ambrosia notation brought in a new brand of music. True, it was nothing as organized or disciplined as what now exists in institutions, but music education was all the same. It produced people for performance purposes in their environment and economy.

In the schools, the curriculum of this day consisted mainly of singing classes, the voice, unlike musical instruments, being easily available and within the ability of more people to use reasonably. Most of the teachers of class-singing had little or no formal musical education. They had absorbed what they could, informally. Ajewole (2002, p. 4) noted that, western music education developed as a result of the introduction of western education brought by the Christian missionaries. Thus, the Christian missionaries to promote their proselytizational activities introduced early education in music within the western school system.

### ***Formal Music Education in Nigeria***

To correct some of the anomalies of western music, Western- trained Nigeria musicians made excellent contributions to the growth of music in Nigeria. They were the people who brought a type of organization into the teaching of music. Formerly, music, like anything cultural, was regarded as very easy, and everybody regarded himself as an expert once he knew what he thought it meant. Nonetheless, these people tried to organize things and bring in system and order. In the records there are notably names: Professors Fela Sowande, W.W.C. Echezona, Laz E.N. Ekwueme, Akin Euba and Sam E. Akpabot; Mr. Steve Rhodes, Mr. Olaolu Omideyi, Mr. J. Olu Sowande and Christopher Oyesiku to mention a few.

Formal music education started with some teacher training colleges and secondary schools which enlarged their curriculum to add lessons in the rudiments of music to singing and concert shows. Some of the schools and institutions where knowledge of music education is received in Nigeria include:

1. Government Colleges -Umuahia, Oyo, Afikpo and so on
2. King's College, Lagos
3. Queen of the Apostles College Kakuri
4. Holy Child College, Ifulo
5. Ozubulu Girls Schools
6. St. Marks Awka.
7. H.R.C Enugu.
8. Ibadan Grammar School.
9. Abeokuta Grammar School.
10. St. Charles' Training College, Onitsha.
11. College of Primary Education, Epe, Lagos
12. College of Education, Agbor.
13. College of Education, Warri.
14. College of Education, Ekiadolor.
15. College of Education, Isugbe.
16. Osun State College of Education, Ilesa.
17. Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin
18. Rivers State College of Education, Port-Harcourt
19. Cross Rivers State College of Education, Akamkpa.



20. Oyo State College of Education, Oyo.
21. Lagos State College of Education, Ijanikin
22. Ondo State College of Education, IkereEkiti
23. Enugu State College of Education, Nsugbe
24. Alvan Ikoku College Education, Owerri
25. Federal College of Education, Okenne
26. Federal College of Education, Pankshin
27. Federal College of Education Osiele Abeokuta
28. Federal College of Education (Special) Oyo.
29. Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu
30. Ibadan Polytechnic, Ibadan
31. Delta State University, Abraka
32. University of Nigeria Nsukka
33. University of Uyo, Uyo
34. University of Lagos, Lagos
35. Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile- Ife
36. Nnamdi Azikwe University, Awka
37. University of Ibadan, Ibadan
38. Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye

Idolor (2001, p. 140) remarks that, various schools and education had their curriculum moderated by a university to which they were affiliated. The common problem of the pioneering days of music was that students were not as well equipped as was desirable, their exposure to music was rather limited and their grasp of the subject was weak.

### ***Structural Objectives of Music in Nigeria***

Music in Nigeria can be said to restore be founded on a tri-level structure. The first is the traditional society; the second is the popular music industry while the third could be found in the formal schools-primary, post-primary and tertiary. Okafor (2002, p. 4) noted that, the traditional society uses the apprenticeship system for imparting knowledge from one generation to another or from the expert who knows to those who wish to learn or those endowed with the art and want to learn and to improve. For that matter, the apprenticeship system always relies on the expert to teach. The main method of transmitting knowledge or art is by performance. The society teaches by performing. Music is part of the life cycle, often called the life-rites, in the traditional society.

The aim of the popular music industry is simply to be popular and to earn a living. The popular music industry uses the apprenticeship system though in a much-modified manner. The open apprenticeship system is often linked with the closed apprenticeship system. The objective of making money is also linked with the objective of making fame. The popular music industry and the traditional music industry, as we have seen, both use the apprenticeship system to transmit their musical art, even though their objectives are slightly different.

The third level-formal music school is vastly different. Though its history may have started about the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when music education in Nigeria started to be formal with the introduction of the Arabic schools and Western schools. The aim was to produce musicians who could chant and recite the Koran, who could teach songs for the Christian churches, and music for the school parade.

It was on these plains or levels, in these situations, that music began to develop. As the school grew, in terms of population and expertise they began to need teachers. So, from producing



pupils who were for general usage, they developed the level of training the trainers. This was the beginning of the teacher training colleges or teacher training institutions in Nigeria.

### **The General Situation of Music in Nigeria**

Nigeria has giants in the three musical provinces namely, traditional music, popular music and classical music. It has also started in music education, yet a country so endowed has not been able to produce tangible results.

In the primary school, Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (1998, p. 13) stated that, the curriculum for primary education shall include ...Cultural and creative arts (Drawing, Handicraft, Music and cultural activities) (p.8). There is no guide as regards selection, variation, implementation, goals and opportunities for the provision. The matter is further complicated by the general low level of cultural education even among teachers in the country.

FRN (1998, pp. 19-21) recorded that, in the secondary school, where pupils have minimum of 10 and a maximum of 13 subjects in the junior secondary school, the pupils have 8 core subjects, 5 pre-vocational elective and 5 non-pre vocational elective, that is, 18 subjects in all. Music is listed as the fourth out of five non-prevocational elective out of which only one subject shall be offered. It does not fare better in the Senior Secondary School. Here, the design is that the senior school shall be comprehensive with a core-curriculum designed to broaden pupil's knowledge and out-look. The student shall offer 7 core subjects provided at maximum (one of which is music) and 17 non-vocational elective. One of the 3 elective subjects may be dropped in the last year of senior secondary school course. Here again, music is swallowed in the heap of figures.

Consequently, according to Okafor (2001, p. 26), few students offer music at the senior secondary school certificate or general certificate examination levels. The universities, which offer degree courses in music, have very few students. The music industry of the country is dominated by those who have had little academic training despite the fact that the average Nigeria engages with more music per day than with any other art form of entertainment. Many disciplines and technologies of the age depend on or engage in musical production, reproduction, storage and transmission and there is not enough work in the educational institutions, from primary to tertiary for the few music educators that where in the country, despite the magnitude of the need.

Moreover, Okafor (1988, p. 16) remarks on the situation of music in the tertiary institution that, at National Certificate of Education (NCE) music major's course is one-third "Education" and two-thirds "Music". Does it produce an educator or a musician? Music with all its facets and technicalities: What quantity, quality and type of music does such an arrangement expect the graduates to have imbibed, practiced and been prepared to impart to others as a foundation for future musical practice? Clear answers will help music education and the course of music in Nigeria. Perhaps there could be an arrangement for NCE students to take only the core courses in education and leave more time for clearly oriented music courses.

### **Future Direction of Music in Nigeria**

The future direction of music in Nigeria rests solely on the re-structuring of music education content and curriculum so as to provide fertile land for the growth, strength and values of music in Nigeria. The curriculum of music in Nigeria is too European-music oriented. It does not tackle effectively the concrete needs of social development in Nigeria. Students are being taught the music for which there is no sufficient market or taste in the Nigerian economy.



Consequently, they are not very relevant when it comes to playing an active part in the musical life of an over-whelming majority of Nigerians. There is some academic patronizing altitude to popular and traditional music. No university in Nigeria conducts either degree or diploma courses in popular music or in Nigerian traditional music. African music provides big umbrella under which a very wide field of study resides. Consequently, the Nigerian musician, who has been trained either in Nigeria or abroad, is incapacitated when it comes to performing in the Nigerian economy.

Furthermore, courses in popular and light music should be introduced and vigorously pursued in all music education in the country. It will open more avenues for practical musicianship, and give a tonic to the national economy through a vibrant recording industry, theatre and cinema industry, and electronic media advertising. All we need to begin is for the general snobbish altitude of the music arrangement for secondary schools needs a review so that music and arts, both very important and twin-subjects, can stand on their own and give budding artists the opportunity to be validly initiated into both. This approach will widen both avenues for study and economic activity. This suggestion is necessarily and facilitates a thorough re-orientation of music and music education. Music is a great industry and its potential in a country like ours is obvious.

School of music should be adequately staffed and equipped with western and traditional musical instruments, music textbooks and teaching aids. Talented musicians should be motivated by the award of scholarship into institutions of higher learning both in Nigeria and abroad. Lastly, the music curriculum in our schools and institution should be revised with the demands of the Nigerian society.

### **Conclusion**

Music education in Nigeria has achieved much within a short time and within its parameters. But it is a dynamic field and demands that we should, from time to time, look at it again critically, for the good of the discipline, of music and of the Nigerian society. That is a challenge to which all musicians and music educators, should think, respond to and work on to preserve the future of music in Nigeria.

Music educators should be masters of their own field and competent to discharge their duties. It also expects that they understand its own educational and general needs and how music fits into meeting of those needs and the solutions of its problems. What the society needs of music education is to produce musicians and music educators, people who can function effectively in the society and her economy; people who can use their knowledge as musicians and music educators to earn a good living and contribute to the development of society.

It is worrisome that in spite of the tremendous changes in policies, number of institutions, music graduates, funding and awareness among others music has not been able to attain the goals set for its teaching in schools as contained in the national policy on education. Effort need to be made to appropriate our teaching methods to achieve these goals. The curriculum of music in the school should be broadened to be more humanistic. We should be able to follow music as it affects various institutions of life in the country.

### **Recommendations**

In considering the future of music in Nigeria, it must be noted that, music curriculum should be re-visited to meet the need and demand of Nigerian society. An inspectorate division of music should be created in every Nigerian Ministry of Education, with the responsibility of fostering the growth of music in our schools. A conservatory of music should be established



in the country where performing musicians of various kinds would receive adequate musical training and refresher courses. School of music should be adequately staffed and equipped with western and traditional musical instruments. Music educators should be made available in all levels of our educational systems.

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