

## FUNCTIONALITY: THE BASIS FOR APPRECIATION OF MUSIC EDUCATION IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

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### **Abstract**

The goal of every educational pursuit in any given society is to produce functional individuals. The quality of any product is very vital to both the producers and the users of the objects or products especially when one considers that the graduands will eventually form the bulk of leadership in the society. Among the courses in the School of Arts and Social Sciences, Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu none has the credibility of its pursuit attached to performance like music education. The society values only those who studied music and can prove their music competence in theory and practice. To them, the performer of music is more important than the composer and the academic musician. This paper highlighted the formal music education in Nigeria. Also, discussed are the functionality of music education curriculum in Nigeria and its challenges. Conclusion was drawn and some recommendations on way forward were made.

Education is the only necessary tool for the overall development of an individual in particular and the society at large. The fundamental goal of every form of education is to produce functional individual who can give service to himself and also to the society. According to Urevbu (1991) education is the total process of human learning by which knowledge is imparted, facilitated, trained and skills developed. Nzerem (2000) sees education as a life long process which enables an individual to develop his potentials in order to give service not only to himself but to the community at large. It is therefore imperative that any educational system be fashioned in such a way that the

beneficiaries will live up to the expectation of the society.

Music education programme is aimed at producing graduates who have acquired skills in music and be able to impart same to others, and also participate in some kind of musical performance either as an individual or as a member of a group. According to Uzoma (2001), music education provides experience when acquired, helps the learner to live and contribute positively towards the development of her society. When observed from the perspective of the desired goals of music education, one will discover that music education in Nigeria has not been truly functional due to some deficiencies and problems obstructing it.

### **Concept of Music Education**

Omibiyi-Obidike (1987) defined music education as a comprehensive education system geared towards a functional and artistic earner in the society. Agu (2009) sees it as school programmes designed to teach students to make music and listen to music. According to Adeogun (2006) cited in Nwonyeh (2010) music education is a discipline that helps prepare personnel that are technically competent in music making and capable of managing interaction between man, Music and society.

Hornby (1995) defines functional as practical and useful. Functionality therefore means the quality of being functional. So for music education to be appreciated it must be functional and useful. According to Idowu

(1999), functional education is the total process of bringing up individuals to develop their potentials to the fullest and consequently to be able to contribute maximally to the development of the society.

From the views above, functional music education is expected to lead to the realization of the potentials of music graduates who are technically competent in music making and practice and be able to earn a living through it, and also contribute positively to the society.

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

Tracing the historical trend of formal music education in Nigeria, Nnamani (1991) asserted that music education was introduced in Nigeria in 1884 at Badagry by the Methodist Mission and at Onitsha in 1857 by the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S). According to Nnamani, by then music was taught in primary, secondary and teacher training colleges. The curriculum was western oriented, and the content of instruction was western classical music. Udensi (1999) states that schools established by the Christian Missionaries such as Methodist Girls College, Yola, King's College, Lagos and Hope Waddel Training Institute, Calabar included music in their school curriculum right from their establishment. According to Omojola (1995) others include Baptist Teachers College, Ogbomosho, Wesley College Ibadan and Zik's Grammar School, Sapele founded in 1897, 1905 and 1943, respectively.

Omibiyi –Obidike (1979) cited in Nnamani (2009) states that the missionaries and immigrant Africans taught music at the primary, secondary and teacher training schools. As a result of this, there was a strong preference for western classical music between 1844 and 1890. These missionaries found the culture of the natives utterly different from their types and not proper for their religion. According to Omojola (1995) the schools established at that time included music in the curriculum with the hope

that “primitive music” will give way to “cultured” (western) music.

Nnamani (2009) observed that the period from 1916 saw a revision and expansion of the music curricular through education edicts. He further observed that music was later excluded from the syllabus of secondary and teacher training colleges. This development brought some set back to music education in Nigeria. Between 1920 and 1960, there had emerged three different categories of musicians in church, academic and popular musicians.

The period from independence to present time witnessed the advancement of music education in the public sector and tertiary institutions with the University of Nigeria, Nsukka taking the lead with four pioneer students. The programme of studies of the university culminate into a Diploma in Music education, a Bachelor of Arts Degree and the Master of Arts Degree after a 3-year, 4-year and 2- year programmes respectively.

Also included is the establishment of music programmes at the Alvan Ikoku College of Education, Owerri since 1974 and the inclusion of music in the programmes of 14 other colleges of education and on polytechnic in Nigeria. The programme of studies also gave birth to the establishment of a department of music at the Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka in 1991. Currently the university offers a 3-year diploma, 4-year Degree, 2-year Masters Degree and a Ph.D music programme. These efforts offered more Nigerians the opportunity to read music within at an advanced stage. Although all these efforts have been put in place to enhance quality manpower it is very glaring that the number of schools from primary to post secondary levels that teach music today are very insignificant when compared with those that do not. The majority of schools in the rural areas do not know what formal music education is like. Whereas some urban cities and towns may boast of schools with music curriculum,

the best of music programme are still indistinguishable both in public and private schools. Perhaps this is a transfer of attitude from the traditional society where music is not viewed as a profession or career to be chosen by any serious individual. The question now is: where are the products of these schools and colleges that have music curriculum?

### **Challenges of Functional Music Education in Nigeria**

Some of the problems militating against the functional music education in Nigeria include non formal music teaching in the primary and secondary levels. The formal music teaching in primary school has not been taken seriously beyond class singing, solfa notations of church songs tunes and occasional Nigerian traditional songs are taught by rote. Instrumental music education where offered at all emphasizes knowledge about western musical instruments which the children have no performance and or hearing access to. They are not normally affordable and are scarce too. Where any may be available, there may be no music teacher who maybe competent enough to teach it. The question now is, can one offer what he does not have?

The few music teachers do not encourage the formal study of Nigerian traditional musical instruments because they, the teachers and educational planners alike are mentally sold to western culture as appropriate for modernization in Nigerian environment. This perception is interpreted by the majority of the populace as western music having superior quality over Nigerian music.

While Haydn, Handel, Mozart and Bach were presented as deities, Nigerian academic musicians had not been given such ephemeral status. Infact, the status of musicians generally in Nigeria especially the academic musicians are low. The reason being that they cannot prove

their musical ability practically in playing of western musical instruments.

In the universities and college of education, the music education curricula emphasize the knowledge and practice of western music. However, in the tertiary institutions many students come into the department of music by chance or out of frustration. That is, they cannot be absorbed in other departments. Therefore they seek other subject combinations with music especially in the colleges of education so that they can later drop music for the other combinations. Another challenge is lack of adequate and sufficient infrastructure and equipment. In some colleges and universities there are no acoustic sound proof cubicles for individual students practice. Very many colleges do not have music auditorium where the students can perform, listening room, recording studio where they can listen to different genres of music and record their songs respectively. When these things are put in place, the students will not be ashamed to practice on their choice instruments, they will be exposed to stage performance and be able to fit into the society at the time of graduation.

Off campus living is another challenge of functional music education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This hinders the students from extending their practice hours in the department to late nights. Again these students cannot easily practice in their living apartments in town to avoid being a nuisance to their neighbours. When one therefore compares music education with other subjects in Nigeria schools and colleges, one will be stunned over the fact that music education has not really made a veritable impact in Nigeria even after several years of its introduction.

### **Functionality of Music Education Curriculum in Nigeria**

Curriculum has been put in different ways and forms by different authors. Among them are Ezeliora and Eze (2000) who state that curriculum means the parth way which students have to run in order to achieve the educational goals. According to Nnadozie (1995) curriculum refers to whatever experiences or activities which are presented to the learner for the achievement of their set objectives.

Music education is designed in a way that at the end, it will produce people who are musically literate and competent both in theory and practice. The music curriculum is expected to, at the end produce people who are musically literate and competent both in theory and practice. From the primary to the tertiary levels, the cumulative nature of the curriculum should lead to that end. Unfortunately, the goal seems to be a very difficult task. Hardly is music taught in every primary schools except in privileged ones. At the secondary, only a handful teach it at the J.S.S. level while the S.S.S. level witness even a lower percentage. It is not surprising therefore that when it comes to the turn of the colleges of education entrusted to train teachers for primary and J.S.S. levels, the whole effort literally begins from the scratch. Many of the music students in the colleges of education have great difficulty in coping with the course. As earlier stated and as a teacher in a college of education, most enter into college as adults without musical knowledge or find themselves studying music as a last resort. According to Ekwueme (2000) the low entry qualification of students into music study is one of the contributing factors to the poor assimilation and performance by the students. For this and other reasons, the N.C.C.E minimum standard is hardly realized by the colleges of education. In view of this, Olorunsogo (2000) states that most of the time the amount of skill proficiency acquired by graduates of colleges of education naturally falls below required

Minimum Standard that most of them graduate with elementary skills in piano or other instruments. This therefore accounts for why the greater percentage of music graduates have no faith in themselves to impact to others what they have studied. This group of music graduates attempt taking teaching positions at the J.S.S. level. Infact, by the state of things, the S.S.S. syllabus is still higher than what is being acquired at N.C.E level. The question is, how can the music curriculum be functional when the people to implement it are themselves incompetent?

Right from time, music curriculum content in Nigeria is western oriented. Although the current music curriculum included development in indigenious cultural expressions; formal music education still mirrors the west. Some music departments of tertiary institution in Nigeria have treated music hours as when students are expected to receive either instruction or guide on how to play chosen instruments. Very few departments are known to give instruction in indigenious musical instruments. The instruments provided are piano, trumpet, violin, saxophone, guitar, clarinet, trombone and other western musical instruments. However, the instructions that lead to excellence are best acquired when such instructions are built on past experiences of the learners. Since most of the students that take up studies in music are from the average class, they would have been acquainted with one indigenious musical instrument or the other which would make the learning of indigenious musical instruments easier.

It is very unfortunate that the curriculum focus on the teaching of western instruments at the expense of the indigenious instruments have further contributed in limiting any growth and development of skill and practice of indigenious instruments. However, at the end of the students' course of study they hardly play the western musical instruments.

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There are two major factors that are responsible for this. Firstly is the scarcity of western musical instruments in most departments of music across the country. Secondly is lack of sufficient practice by students in school and during vacation. Students' lack of practice during vacation is highly because of the non availability of the western musical instruments in most homes for private use. Therefore, a functional music curriculum that would meet the standard and expectation of the society in the 21st century becomes almost beyond reach.

#### **Functionality of Music Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

As stated earlier, any claim to music education is often weighted on the balances of practicability. According to Ekwueme (1995) music teachers must play a musical instrument especially the piano that is a basic instrument so as to hold their respect. This has the capacity of boosting the image of the teachers before the students in particular and the community in general who would feel satisfied that such teacher has a good mastery of his subject area. While western musical instruments like the piano could be used for classroom instruction, students and the teacher alike could still take up other indigenous instruments on their own to learn to play which they may have had some degree of exposure in the past. The development of skill and dexterity on such instruments will be easier especially as the learner would be building on past experience and application of formal musical knowledge.

The society gives recognition to performing musicians who do not have formal music education rather than the academic musicians who cannot prove their knowledge of music practically. The difference between the academic musician and the non-academic but performing musician lies in what the society perceive as music functionality. The society will not recognize the academic compositions and theories of the academic musician as the practical

performance of the musician without formal music education. In fact, to the society the composer is not as important as the performer. The society seems not to understand that someone would spend time and resources in the higher institution in the name of studying music without showing for it, yet those who never took up formal music study are making better living than such a person.

The acceptability and appreciation of music education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to a large extent, lie in the hands of the academic musicians.

#### **Conclusion**

Music education as earlier cited is a comprehensive education system geared toward a functional and artistic earner in the society. To achieve this goal, music educators, students of music and government should all rise up to their responsibilities. The people engaged in the teaching and learning of music owes the society the duty of distinguishing themselves in the career they have chosen through being practically functional in the society. These are achievable through the lecturers, students and of course the establishers of the institutions to provide the infrastructure and equipment.

#### **Recommendations**

Education on its part can never be a static thing, but represents the thought of people who are continually caught in the whirl of a changing society. In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, greater attention ought to be given to the fact that it is labour lost on the part of lecturers and resources wasted on music departments across the nation to keep turning out graduates that are largely practically incompetent. The following are necessary for the functionality of music education in this 21<sup>st</sup> century.

1. The music education curriculum from primary to tertiary levels should lay strong emphasis on practical performance than the

- theoretical work. This practical performance must not lean too heavily on western music but should strike a balance between indigenous and western music.
2. The music education curriculum should function to offer a programme of music which is well balanced both in western and indigenous music.
  3. The teaching of music education in primary and secondary schools should be taken seriously beyond the class singing periods by music educator.
  4. Music educators should be encouraged to procure musical instruments and equally under go some practical training on these instruments so that they can in turn impart the knowledge and skills they have acquired to the students.
  5. Students should be encouraged to offer music in junior and senior secondary schools and also register it alongside other subjects.
  6. The few western musical instruments found in some schools and colleges that offer music should promptly be maintained and the obsolete ones replaced where necessary.
  7. In the absence of musical instruments, the government and relevant authorities should make money readily available for the purchase of musical instruments and other musical equipment.
  8. Music educators involved in indigenous music should redefine their goals in terms of society's changing needs.
  9. There should be internalization of the Nigerian music curriculum to foster and attitude of respect towards our nation's culture and traditions. Also standardized and modernized Nigerian instruments should be sourced for students to professionalize in. Emphasis on practical performance with indigenous musical instrument will in no small measure lead to growth and development in the performance technique and technological development of these indigenous instruments.
  10. Students should be encouraged to procure for themselves some indigenous instruments for personal use since they are relatively cheap and easily available. This could lead to mastery of the instruments by the students and enhance further development and production of the instruments.
  11. Purposeful provision for practice continuity should be made for students so that even during vacations, they could still engage in practical music making or related activities that would enhance their development.
  12. Practical performance and proficiency among students should further be encouraged through giving of awards to students that distinguish themselves on any chosen instrument whether western or indigenous.

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