

TOWARDS THE BETTERMENT OF MUSIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The richness and the abundance of both human and material resources are expected to have caused the stability and the emergence of the nation Nigeria in the face of twenty first century challenges. It is therefore to this end that one should be concerned about the trend and the growth of Music Education in Nigeria. The study however argues among others that as music education in Nigeria is with its challenges, there is no discipline that does not have its own challenge, operational system, and occupational hazards. No matter how poor the perception of parents about music education might be people shall continue to study music, due to its relevance to the society. Also, for music education to meet its goal realistically in Nigeria much still need to be done in overhauling the curriculum to meet specific goals of the society. The study later recommends that adequate awareness be created for the possible job opportunities that a music graduate can benefit from after the successful completion of his training; this can be facilitated by creating a general course for music students. It also recommends a reappraisal of the goals and benefits of music education to the Nigeria society and proper reorientation in the educational system for the betterment of music education in Nigeria.

Nigeria as a nation is blessed with multi-ethnic and socio-cultural backgrounds to the extent that some have seen these as a convergence of different nations into a complex one. To this end some have argued that the richness of its socio-cultural and political structures should have been to the advantage of the nation. The richness and the abundance of both human and material resources are expected to have caused the stability and the emergence of

the nation Nigeria in the face of twenty first century challenges. It is therefore to this end that one should be concerned about the trend and the growth of Music Education in Nigeria. Omojola (1992: 1) writing about the historical trend of Music Education in Nigeria argued that:

In traditional Nigerian societies, music is conceived as an object of aesthetic contemplation as well as a socio-cultural phenomenon whose importance transcends musical values. Thus in addition to conceiving their works as aesthetic creations, composers and performers of traditional Nigerian music place great premium on the relevance of their works to socio-political issues relating to their daily lives. Musical performances also constitute a dynamic forum through which members of a society respond and adapt to new conditions through the retention of relevant elements of existing tradition and assimilation of new ideas. In addition, musical performances provide effective enculturative medium through which new members acquire community-shared skills and values. In this regard, music constitutes an important educational forum through which members of the traditional Nigerian societies learn to live together as well as cope with the ever changing challenges of life.

Music is an important aspect of the socio-cultural life of the Nigerian communities. Moreso, music is one of the indicators of certain culture and belief system of the Nigerian people. For there to be continuity and change in the socio-cultural system of a people, there has to be some sort of continuity in terms of the musical growth of the people. Music Education beginning

from the traditional therefore is the medium through which this continuity and change in the society can be sustained. For as musical activities are being carried out from one generation to the other, some sort of skills and value are being developed, sustained and shared. In western countries the same acculturative tendencies are entrenched into their educational systems. Their understanding of music education is not limited to the studies on the rudiments of music. More than merely teaching notes and rhythms, music education seeks to develop the whole person. It touches on the development of the affective domain, including music appreciation and sensitivity. It helps to develop fine motor skills in students who play instruments, and it expands cognitive development through the recognition and interpretation of music symbols and notation.

In junior high school or its equivalent, music should normally continue to be a required part of the curriculum as it is done in some western world. The development of music in such circumstances can not but be progressive. No wonder the noticeable development in western music, since from the elementary levels young children are exposed to all it takes to develop the total person through music education, both in the classroom settings and in everyday life situations. For example in an average American home, a piano is seen as part of the furniture in the living room which affords everyone, especially the children in such homes to have developed some musical sensitivity from tender ages. Many missionaries that brought western education to Nigeria had such backgrounds as part of their growing up.

Emphasis on Theoretical Approach to Music Education

The forms of music education in traditional African settings are practical oriented. Most people learn either by being apprentices to a master musician or through regular

participation in musical activities that can promote skill acquisition and creativity. This idea is evident in some of the definitions of some African music scholars. Nzewi (2003) argues that musical learning in indigenous Africa as subtle features of formalities. The fluid transaction of formal education in traditional cannot be easily appreciated by mentality framed by rigid regimentation and compartmentalization of life, attitudes, procedures, and responses as exemplified in classroom education. This views the process of teaching and learning of music in Africa beyond what is done within the four walls of a classroom and beyond the theoretical approach. Music education focuses more on the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Though skill and knowledge can be acquired through theoretical approach to education, yet acquisition of skills and knowledge are better facilitated through practical approach to teaching and learning of music.

In Nigeria too much emphasis has been placed on the acquisition of knowledge through theoretical approach to education. This has also taken its toll on music education. A situation where there is high level of education without a corresponding skill acquisition is prevalent not only in music but also in other disciplines. This is more or less issues relating to the value system of Nigerians, which will need to improve to expect a positive growth.

Challenges of Negative Perceptions of Music Education

Generally many people in Nigeria and the world at large believe that music should not be among the list of courses that a right thinking child should go and study in any tertiary institution. People who hold this view can do everything humanly possible to stop or discourage their children from studying music.

In addition to parental pressure, Mbanugo (2007: 23) argued that there are lots more of stressors that affect the perception of

students studying music. Some of these stressors according to him include fear of performing to audience, uncertainty of the future, uncertainty about regular employment, Public misunderstanding of the role of music in the society, and the status of musician in the society. He therefore suggests that:

In order to maintain effective teaching outcome it is reasonable to assume that music educators must have an adequate understanding of the personality and background of their students. Without such understanding, however energetic and enthusiastic the educator may be, it is reasonable to assume that his/her educational/professional instruction can yield nothing but poor results, if any. (Mbanugo (2007:23)

As music education in Nigeria is with its challenges, there is no discipline that does not have its own challenges, operational system, and occupational hazards and no matter how poor the perception of parents about music education might be people shall continue to study music, due to its relevance to the society.

The challenge of parental influence as a result of poor perception which is not peculiar to Nigeria, but also common to some western world can not stop people entirely from studying music for various reasons. Some western countries were able to overcome such struggle through persistence and public enlightenments, and through empirical studies in music advocacy. For this to happen in the Nigerian context, more empirical research studies must be undertaken with the view to correcting the erroneous perception of the study of music. Such people that will necessarily be targeted are the students and their parents. Teachers of music themselves must of necessity believe in and celebrate their profession and constantly look for means to better their art and productivity levels.

To better appreciate the extent to which music education is relevant to the general

wellbeing of man and his environment, the following list include areas where music students or graduates could function within the society:-

1. Art and Culture establishments
2. Research institute
3. Broadcasting and Media Houses- T.V/ Radio Stations
4. Print Media such as Music publishing establishments.
5. Ensembles
6. Military and Armed Forces
7. Church
8. Educational set ups –Schools
9. Ministry of Tourism
10. Ministry of Youth and Productivity
11. Entertainment industries apart from Media Houses
12. Music Recording Studios
13. Hospitals and other Rehabilitation Centers

Students Industrial Work Experience (SIWES) and Discrimination against Music Students

The Students Industrial Work Experience (SIWES) programme is another avenue through which the demand of education in terms of integration of learning is supposed to be fully developed. As Wodi and Dokubo (2009: 43) observes, the objectives of SIWES among many others include to:-

- *Provide an avenue for students in institutions of higher learning to acquire industrial skills and experience in their approved course of study;*
- *Prepare students for the industrial works situation which they are likely to meet after graduation.*
- *Expose students to work methods and techniques in handling equipment and machinery not available in their institutions.*
- *Provide students with an opportunity to apply their knowledge in real work situation thereby bridging the gap between theory and practices.*

- *Enlist and strengthen employers' involvement in the entire educational process and prepare students for employment in Industry and Commerce.*

As good as the objective of the government initiative through SIWES is its limitation to students from certain discipline is a militating factor. SIWES would have been very appropriate for the growth of music education in Nigeria, but the inadequate understanding of the role of music to man and his environment on the part of the National University Commission is a factor which has influenced the inability of the scheme to fulfill her objective to music students in tertiary institution in Nigeria. If SIWES was created as a bridge between educational institutions and industrial employers for providing general and specific occupational skills and knowledge, and music students were discriminated against in exploring such opportunity for growth, how then can there be productivity.

Nigeria's National Goal of Education and the Curriculum of Music Education

For music education to meet its goal realistically in Nigeria much still needs to be done in overhauling the curriculum to meet specific goals of the society. The same problem of value system on music education as a viable option in Nigeria's educational system is affecting the educational policy of 9-3-4 system which only allows for low patronage of music as a subject in the junior secondary school. For example music as a subject is listed as the fourth out of five non-prevocational electives out of which only one subject shall be offered. It does not fare better in the senior secondary school. This does not place music education on better footing for focused training to fulfill the Nigeria's national goal of education which is supposed to be "geared towards self- realization, better human relationship and nation efficiency,

effective citizenship national consciousness, national unity as well as towards social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress" (FRN, 1998:8, in Okafor 2005: 292)

There is the need for the curriculum of music education in Nigeria to be geared towards realizing the national goal of education. For as Okafor 2005:295) further opined that the available curriculum 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.

Another great challenge of the growth of music education in Nigeria is the low patronage of music programmes in Nigerian secondary schools. Many schools even the so-called mission schools through which music education in Nigeria took its start in the recent past have continued to show reluctance in the inclusion of music subjects in the list of subjects offered. Not even at the junior secondary schools as suggested by the 9-3-4 educational system. This is not helpful for the growth of music education as intended. As a result, the interest in the study of music has dropped at all levels drastically since the philosophy of music education has not been on the right premise of developing and restoring the social, cultural and economic values from the start. Okonkwo (2007:4) noted that:

Music studies at all levels in Nigeria do not exist in the North, which inhabits predominantly Moslem states. Except for two Federal Colleges of Education in Okene and Pankshin in the Northern States, this statement will be judge true, considering that the tertiary institutions with music departments are predominantly in the South.

The above observation of Okwonkwo is valid in the discussion of the place of music education in Nigeria. Music education like the western education in Nigeria is much more

predominant in the Southern Nigerian, since that was also the beginning point for western education and the premise for its start was basically to evangelize on Christian religious grounds.

Music Education and Computer Technology

One of the greatest challenges of the advancement of music education in Nigeria today is the low level of growth in the area of music technology. For example, many of the developed nations today have integrated computer technology into every facet of human endeavour. This was possible because computer education has been integrated into the curriculum at all levels of education. It is quite unfortunate that in almost all the institutions where music is taught in Nigeria, there are still struggles in coming to terms with the realities of computer technology. Nwamara (2007: 52) in observing the trend of computer technology in the composition of music in Nigeria stated that:

Much technological advancements such as the effective use of computers in music technological practical classes, the effective use of computers in on-online exchange of musical materials and ideas in schools and so on, have been achieved and witnessed in art music education and practice of other cultures of the world, but in Nigeria, Art music generally and composition in this respect has not been seriously and properly taken into consideration in this respect. (Nwamara, 2007:50)

The above submission of is one challenge that music education in Nigeria may have to face for a long time to come. This is because most institutions do not have such computer related courses reflecting in their curriculum. In cases where this is not so, the struggle is usually in the area of funding such projects, whereas music education in advanced countries is daily being developed through

computer technology, in-class instructional facilities and adequate provision of studio equipments for students to learn and as well to integrate their learning.

People struggle aimlessly to achieve standards that computerization has afforded in some areas of the world. Till date many musicians in Nigeria who are music literate still uses the crude means of notating (writing) their music using music manuscripts and pen when there are computer software that can do the same and even more in less time and with little stress. For there to be growth in the general appreciation of music in Nigeria, there has to be a corresponding level of awareness and availability of resources to enhance the high level of productivity in music production and performances especially in view of the realities of the computer age.

Computer technology in music education according to Nwamara (2007:50) can help students to:

- (a) *appreciate good music based on interaction with the computer during class sessions*
- (b) *easily learn by doing; students can thereby compose, document, record and publish their own music faster than ever.*
- (c) *Sustain interest through concentration, cooperative learning and creative thinking as they work together using computer.*

Inadequacy of Musical Instruments for Teaching and Learning

Schools offering music programmes at higher levels in Nigeria deserves government recognition and commendation. To run music course is not usually very easy, especially when material and human resources are limited in supply. Not much can be achieve with any serious minded fellow who loves music and wants to build a career when he does not have musical instruments to learn and develop his art, worse still when the teacher lacks in-class

instructional musical instruments and other necessary equipments.

Music education in Nigeria has not been given a due attention in the area of providing adequate resource for its effectiveness. In most schools offering music, students are forced to get every instrument they need for their study. One can imagine the situation for a student who is struggling to convince the parents and guardians to support his education by providing funds couple with the economic situation of the country, this is however not to think of who provides the instrument for the teacher in some cases.

Towards the Betterment of Music Education in Nigeria

For music education to grow better in Nigeria however, the following needs to be observed and implemented by the relevant authorities.

1. Music Education beginning from the traditional level must be sustained at all levels of a child training and growth, this will give more recognition to the social and cultural value of music in the society. As music education is one of the medium through which the continuity and change in the society can be sustained.
2. Education generally in Nigeria has for too long been seen as mainly a classroom affair. As earlier observed, the fluid transaction of formal education into traditional education cannot be easily appreciated by mentality framed by rigid regimentation and compartmentalization of life, attitudes, procedures, and responses as exemplified in classroom education. More attention to education through traditional mediums and de-emphasis on the acquisition of certificates are ways through which the goals of music education in Nigeria can

be achieved. This will afford a proper integration of the art of music into human existence.

3. Parental pressure against choosing of music as a career can be reduced if government and the society will encourage musicians by providing incentives and adequate reward for their art. A situation where music graduates are discriminated against can not help to foster the development of music education.
4. Adequate awareness should be created for the possible job opportunities that a music graduate can benefit from after the successful completion of his training. This can be facilitated by creating a general course for music students.
5. A reappraisal of the goals and benefits of music education to the Nigeria society need to be sought, and proper reorientation in the educational system is required for the betterment of music education in Nigeria.
6. The following submission of Okwonkwo (2007:9) on strategies towards the progress of music education in Nigeria are also worthy of note:

Music educators should seek opportunities to advance music education by accessing the communities and by working cooperatively with other individuals and groups such as professional musicians, the music industry, art organizations and educational organizations.

A National Music Association should include all music educators as stake holders or associations formed at each level of education to address pressing issues in music education.

7. More serious approach to the use of computer software in the production of music in the areas of print and media

- should be given more priority in the curriculum design for music education.
8. Music technology, especially in the area of development of musical instrument and production of both western and indigenous African musical instruments should be encouraged. More music institutions offering music as a course should be encouraged to develop stress areas in such field.
9. Accrediting bodies in Nigeria should make sure they carry out more thorough job when they visit institutions offering music for the purpose of accreditation, especially in the area of instructional facilities.
10. Finally, more schools should be encouraged to begin music programmes at all levels, such programmes should however be designed to integrate more into the needs of the society.

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