

# THE TEACHING OF MUSIC IN ETSAKO WEST SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EDO STATE.

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## **Abstract**

*Music education is not novel in Edo state Ministry of Education curriculum and indeed in Etsako West Local Government Area of the State. Around 1980, in which colleges of Education in the Old Bendel State Government were established, music teachers were trained in order to reduce the shortage of teachers in schools. In spite of this information, of about 26 schools in Etsako West Local Government Area, only 2 offer music as a subject which represent 7.6% of the schools, contrary to subjects such as English language, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Agricultural science etc. which are offered by all the schools. It is not known whether the lack of interest on the part of the teachers, lack of infrastructures, lack of motivation for teachers and students, lack of instructional materials, lack of teachers, the attitude of parents, teachers, students, school heads, Government and the public are responsible for this development. This write-up therefore aims at examining the casual factors responsible for this development with the aim of suggesting the possible solution.*

In the past, schools were in the hands of the missionaries (Catholics, CMS and Asarodin) in the then Etsako Local Government Area. Schools were built and the system of formally having teachers as full time workers where in operation. Teachers' salaries were formalized, as well as their fringe benefits and other entitlements. At this time, teaching was a full profession requiring professional training.

Etsako West which is the focus of this write-up the situation is really ugly. There are inadequate infrastructures in most secondary schools. Today in Etsako West Local Government Area, music is not well taught, while it is not in the time-table of several schools. In some of the schools, where it is taught, it is limited to junior secondary school (J.S.S.) classes.

To some school administrators, (Principals) music is seen as a waste of time and if there are to / be budgetary cuts, it is music that has to suffer it because musical instruments are very expensive to purchase. They do not see music as an important academic subject and so feel that it should not share the same status with other teaching subjects, and as such, only about 4% of the school schedule is devoted to music.

Again, music curriculum is not structured in such a way as to enable students put into practical application what they have learnt. A number of people believed that

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the method of imparting the knowledge by teachers is not encouraging and stimulating and hence the lack of interest by the students who see music as a profession for the never well in the society.

It is the aim of this write-up to highlight the main problems associated with the teaching of music in Etsako West Local Government Area, with the view of finding solutions and recommendations so that the students, teachers and the public will change their negative attitudes towards music.

Music education has an important function in the Nigeria educational programme. It is so because it is a creative art, it makes the child to sing independently to gain self confidence, foster international aspect of music by singing in various languages, enhance teaching of Nigerian languages through singing from other parts of the country, improve diction, breathing etc. (National Curriculum for Junior Secondary School, Volume 6 page 10)

The study of music within the formal school setting in Nigeria started with the efforts of the missionaries to educate their converts in the 19th century. According to Obbeng (1984), “the primary aim of missionary education was to convert the African to the Christian faith”. Education would help the convert to read his bible, sing songs from hymn books and interpret the sermon of the priest.

In spite of the desperate efforts of the early missionaries to educate Nigerian in the art of singing after our independence, much is still expected of Nigerians to pass on this knowledge to the next generation. This has failed because of the problems related to the teaching and learning of music which we have to solve. These are resource personnel and instructional materials. In order to solve some of these problems, the National curriculum for Junior Secondary School has recommended some possible solutions to these problems which include:

1. Government to purchase recorders, indigenous instruments. Use of leading materials should be restricted to a small group.
2. Qualified music teachers to be sponsored to music writer workshop to produce books for schools.
3. Instructional materials are needed, pictures of instruments, musical signs and terms, notes, composers, Nigerian foreign musicians.

Snyder in “Sound Music Administration and supervision”, made it clear that music has long been recognized as capable of improving school-community relations. Public relations in music are based on the philosophy of service to the people in the community. The people, in return, support school music programmes in a variety of ways: their presence in school concerts, their efforts to contribute money for equipment and supplies, allowing their children to participate in performances, etc. All these will help reduce the problems relating to teaching and learning of music in our secondary schools here in Etsako West.

The community has an important role to play in making music significant and joyful in the child's life. Education is not confined to the school alone. The whole environment- home, family, friends, street, church, society, house, the mass media, the day-to-day events etc, all educate the child and man.

### **Definition of Music**

According to Onosemuodo (1989), "People have different definitions for the word 'music', as it appeals to them". Summarily music can be defined as "An organized sound pleasing to the ear". Sound which is not organized and /or not pleasing to the ear is regarded as a disturbing noise".

The universal English Dictionary defined music as "the art of combining sounds or tones for production by the voice or by various kinds of musical instruments in rhythmical, melodic and harmonic form so as to affect the emotions".

Renee (1925), defined music as "the art of experiencing sentiments and emotions of all kinds by means of sounds.

The Encyclopedia Americana, (1829:646, Vol. 19) defined music as "the art by which a composer, through a performer as intermediary, communicates to a listener certain ideas, feelings, or state of mind. Music which makes use of tones, singing and in combination with various rhythmic configurations may be subjective or objective, appealing to the emotions on the intellect. It is, in essence, a tonal design created to stir and influence the listener".

Lundin (1967:304) noted that "music is among the most ancient of all therapeutic devices. The therapeutic uses of music include a variety of applications. Among these we may mention the use of music with the mentally ill; either in actual treatment or as part of the situation in occupational therapy, where parents learn to play musical instruments as part of their rehabilitation".

### **A Brief History of Music and Music Education in General**

In regard to the history of music and music education, Leonard and House (1972) said that every human society right from early men had practiced the art of music and music education. In non-literate societies, music performs basic functions as an agent of tribal tradition, aesthetic meaning and personal expression. Individuals at work employ it regularly as a spontaneous outgrowth of the activity at hand. It plays a vital role in rituals and religious worship. Through simple educational methods, such musical understanding and skills are passing on from generation to generation to ensure continuity. The art of passing these on is what is meant by music education.

Young boys learn instrumentation drumming and percussion playing by practicing what adults taught them. Singing was also learnt through imitation and rote. Dance steps also accompanied music. In some places, apprenticeship was practiced though music education was very informal. The objective was for the youth to be able to carry on the musical culture and ceremonial traditions of the people.

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Music education became gradually formalized, as civilization developed in the Mediterranean area. An extensive use of music in the ancient civilization had been discovered through the study of artifacts, sacred writings and mythologies; it accompanied poetry, dance and the priestly class.

Leonard and house went on to explain that Greek education was built on music and gymnastics. Music and poetry were considered as one part. They went further by saying that in the 16th century, music curriculum developed around the five books of Beethius "De musica" and the ancient manuscripts collected by Cassiodorus for the cathedral and monastery schools. Music was then studied as a pure science without the need for mass. "Scholae Cantorum" was established in Rome in the 4th century. Instructions were given in singing, playing, elementary harmony and composition. Music became a requirement for admissions to the study of Law, Medicine and Theology.

All this time, the common people maintained their musical heritage, having no contact with liberal education or cathedral choirs musical skills passed on from father to son and from a member of a group to another.

With the influence of Martin Luther and John Calvin, subjects like reading, writing, catechism and singing were taken in elementary schools in Germany and Western Europe. Singing and music were essential parts of instruction in the secondary schools.

Today in many parts of Europe are conservatories that give high concentrating training to students for high caliber musicianship. Degrees in Music were awarded in Universities based on philosophical and scholastic studies. In the primary and secondary schools, general musical training and development of powers for church services are given.

The system described above has produced famous composers and performers like Gluck, Bach, Haydn, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, Debussy and several others.

The introduction of formal western education into Nigeria was also the beginning of formal western music education. In the mission schools, religious instruction has music in the form of singing of hymns and European folk tunes as part of the lesson. This association of music education with the church in Nigeria had its origin in this. Music then was seen as part of the converting and civilizing process of the African. The traditional music was excluded as it was regarded as paganistic, schools who had music on their time-table modeled their curriculum after those of choir schools in Europe especially in Britain.

The cultural revolt that occurred between 1880 and 1920 against European culture also affected music education. Composers began to experiment with traditional materials; we have been informed (Onibiyi 1983:124) that the colonial authorities in

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response to this revolt began to de-emphasize music in the school curriculum which led to the decadence of music in Nigerian schools, the consequence of which we are still to recover from.

Between 1920 and 1960, there was a gradual and steady growth in schools especially in primary, secondary and teacher training institutions. Music in various guises such as singing was generally done in most of these teacher training institutions notable among them are St. Andrew College, Oyo and the Baptist College, Iwo.

The curriculum of such institution was largely a transposition of that of the associated board of the Royal schools of music in London, whose content was mainly western classical music. The teachers were mainly missionaries who had knowledge of the Harmonium and rudiments of music but were not trained as music educators. In these schools, music was regarded as an auxiliary subject that could be removed, replaced, or discarded at will.

Prior to 1960, all tertiary music education had to be undertaken abroad; as such facilities did not exist in Nigeria. Thus, from the first music graduate, Mr. R.A. Coker, who graduated in Germany in 1874 through T.K.E. Philips that graduated from the trinity college of music in 1914, to most of pupils-Fela Sowande Akin Euba, Ayo Bankole, W.W.C. Echezons, Samuel Akpabot all studied abroad. The type of musical training they received affected their perspective but credit must be given to them for recognizing the need for research into our music. Akpabot did his fellowship thesis on "*Ibibio Music in Nigeria Culture*". On returning home, most of them worked as music producers in the former Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation and undertook Nigerian traditional music.

The opening of the Department of Music at the university of Nigeria. Nsukka in 1960, with an intake of four students was a milestone in the historical records of music education in Nigeria. Secondly, African music was a basic course of study, in the programme. The inclusion of African music in the curriculum was in pursuance of the philosophy of the founding fathers that we should study our music alongside with those of our cultures. The Nsukka's experiment in this area also promoted other departments of music that were later established (Alvan Ikoku, Abraka, Ife, Ikere-Ekiti) to follow suit. Despite this attempt at correcting the abnormality of a western dominated music education coupled with well-meaning calls from various quarters, the curriculum has, in design or implementation, or both, paid lip service to the original intention.

Despite the general acceptance of this principle, most educators in Nigeria, we find that very little attempt is being made to improve this curriculum especially at the tertiary levels. (At the primary and secondary level, there exist national curriculums that meet with the parameter we advocate here).

**What is Music to the African**

Looking at music from the African point of view Nketia (1979:195) describes the meaning of music to the African as “providing opportunity for sharing in creative experience for using music as an avenue for the expression of group sentiments”. He therefore concludes that “music is not just an organized sound but an inspired sound to the African”.

Sowande (1984:2) defines the role of music to the African to be “patterns that relate directly to the life experience of a society and acceptable to the society”

Obbeng (1984:17) in agreement with several African music educators, sees music as forming an integral part of the day-to-day activities of the African community from birth to death. According to him, “the African is born, named, initiated, nurtured, betrothed, married, and buried to music. Every aspect of traditional life, maturational growth, and learning experiences of the African are punctuated with one form of music or the other”.

Bamijoko (1985:17) sharing the same view with them said that “music has life to the African lives and services the society in many different ways”.

Mensah (1986) says that:

*African music exists for almost every kind of situation: Religions, ritual, the celebration of birth, adolescence, adulthood, marriage and death, and for regulating work, making war and dignifying chiefs and kings. At these events, masked or unmasked and costumed performers Participate with others singing and dancing to the rhythmic accompaniment of various types of instrument. Music is therefore woven into the daily life of the community and thus forms an important factor of the African culture. Mensah (1986:60)*

Therefore, in African setting, music is functional, children are taught by imitating elders and grown-ups in the chants, handicaps, drum and gong beats associated with ceremonies and dance, thereby preserving the tribal customs. In many places, music is used as a medium for the recitation or epic tales of heroism, narratives formulated to inspire bravery and morality in the hearer, presentation of the history of the people, etc. this value is handed down to generations through oral tradition in the form of songs committed to memory through practice as part of education. This is a joint application of music and poetry to the moral education of the people.

**Music in General Education** highlighted the use of community resources in teaching; television, radio, motion pictures, public concerts, music stores and record shops, newspaper and periodicals, churches, music clubs, musicians’ union, museum, community festivals involving music, family music groups, music industry, Local composers and arrangers, folk singers, piano technicians, amateur performing groups etc. by utilizing these resource, students readily realize the extent of musical interest present in their immediate environment.

The community has an important role to play in making music a significant and joyful part of each child's life, education is not confined to the school alone. The whole environment- home, family, friends, church, street, the mass media, settlement, house, the day-to-day events, etc. all educate the child and man

### **Conclusion**

The greatest single problem identified to threaten an effective teaching of music in Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo state is lack of Adequate number of qualified music teachers to handle the subject. The implication of this is that while many schools in Etsako West do not teach music at all, those teaching it has the tendency of being overloaded with many teaching periods as most of the schools have over three arms of J.S.S. 1, 2 and 3 with each arm having about forty students. Some music teachers are also given other subjects to teach in addition, for instance, some teachers interviewed orally were made to teach other subjects like English Language, religious studies and social studies. This overburdens the music teachers and maximum productivity is not possible.

The time allotted for music in some of the schools visited is not just convenient and suitable for the type of topics the teachers have to teach. It was even recommended in the J.S.S. syllabus that a minimum of three periods per week in a class should be allotted to music and that music is a core subject in the J.S.S. classes. With what is happening in Etsako West, one is tempted to ask how core is the subject now?

Lack of fund is another major problem facing an effective teaching of music. Lack of fund has led to the very scanty number of musical instruments in secondary schools. Many principals complain that the subvention they collect is not just enough for the running of their schools, not to talk of buying very expensive instruments like the electronic keyboard or piano that now coats not less than N20, 000.00 only very few principals give little money out for the purchase of few local instruments.

Many school heads do not see the need for music in their school time-table. They see it as a luxury. They therefore do not support or promote music as they ought to. A school visited in which the researcher met one of the N.C.E. teachers who complained that his principal did not allow him to teach music, instead he insisted that he must teach his second teaching subject, which is English or he will declare him redundant because he felt that English language is much more important than music.

There are some of the parents who held negative attitude towards the acquisition of musical skills and knowledge by their children according to them, musicians or musicologist are not reckoned with in the society. They will prefer their children going into other professions. Some parents however have love for music. They even have electronic organ at home which they bought for their children for practicing music, so that they might be playing for the church and not to take it as their profession.

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The teachers of music have never attempted publishing books on the subject. Lack of textbooks as one of the instructional materials makes teaching abstract and learning will not be meaningful if students on their own have no reference books.

Teachers, having obtained their Nigerian certificate in education (N.C.E.) feel contented with that. There is no attempt to further their education, they do not attend music workshops, seminar, concert, symposia, etc. they do not even attempt to organize dance as musical activities in their schools. These categories of teachers are not always abreast with innovations and developments in music teaching. This may lead to their teaching wrong concepts to their students and some may not even know when there is a change in the scheme of work.

Music is not taught in the senior secondary school (S.S.S) classes because of the following reasons;

1. One teacher in a school cannot teach from J.S.S. 1 to S.S.S. 3 classes.
2. N.C.E teachers cannot teach in the S.S.S classes. If music is taught only in the J.S.S classes and thereafter dropped in the S.S.S classes, there is no way such students can go further to study music at higher level. They will not have that qualification to go further in music since he/she did not offer it in his/her senior school certificate examination (S.S.C.E) continuity is a great hindrance to the teaching and learning of music in Etsako West Local Government Area.
- 3.

Lack of motivation on the part of the students and that of the teachers influence the teaching and learning situation in music negatively. They are not provided with instructional materials and provision of current textbooks, etc is not forth coming; this poses a problem to the teaching of the subject. Teachers find it difficult to develop and improve their knowledge in music.

Generally, students should be given proper exposure to musical attitude so that they can be objective in their reasoning and create greater order in our country. Government on their part has to make sure that all educational policies are implemented in all secondary schools.

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