

# THE USE OF FOLK SONGS IN THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

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## **Abstract**

*Despite the fact that traditional songs are cast by words of mouth, it can easily be forgotten since these traditional songs are not written down. Haven known that the world is changing and Western songs have been documented, the youths now neglect the pure traditional songs but strive to document theirs. Parents at home do not have the time to teach their children the local language and their traditional songs. The people of Etsako Local Government Area of Edo State tend to forget that they can use folk songs in training a child and moreover, the functions of folk songs in the society. They also loose focus of the fact that a child can be taught to respect the elders through folk songs and most especially love for peace. The purpose of this write up is to encourage the documentation of the traditional songs for future learning. It also tells us how traditional songs serve as an effective instructional medium for the pupils and how the lyrics of the songs enhance the teaching of the culture of the society in which they exist and how the young ones could be educated with the use of traditional songs.*

Folk songs are traditional or indigenous songs of a society. Even in the face of increasing western songs, traditional songs are still preserved carefully. These songs are not written down but they are passed from one generation to another orally. They are also transmitted by what is described as “home-made, hand-made-down in words and music, songs accepted by the whole community, songs voted well by the generation of singers and passed on by words of mouth to succeeding generations. Originally folk songs were created and composed by ordinary people.

These traditional songs are accompanied with traditional musical instrument like drum (Igede) metal gong (Ulo) maracas (Aze) to mention but a few. In order to preserve these traditional songs, it is wise to document them especially for the pupils in primary schools in Ayogwiri in Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State, to learn. Also it is necessary to make the pupils know the meaning and the importance of these traditional songs.

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However, there are contemporary folk songs, by modern composers who used the folk songs from ballad hymns, new words to old tunes to comment on our times and these songs vary from protest songs against war to personal and institutional songs.

### **Categories of Folk Songs Are**

- (i) Historical songs (ii) Lullaby songs (iii) Reflective songs (iv) Ritual songs
- (vi) Dirges (vii) Moral songs (viii) Relaxation songs
- (ix) Recreational songs and (x) Rite of passage songs

### **Historical Songs**

Historical songs are songs that are based on the society's past and value. They are usually derived from oral tradition of the society in view. Historical songs involve detailed narrations of events with brief allusions to significant incidents and account of descent from ancestors and date back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century and depict the Cossacks struggle against the tartars and Turks, the best known and the best about border.

### **Lullaby Songs**

Lullaby songs are for luring a baby to sleep with gentle soft sound, Mothers use these songs for their children when the Mother wants them to help a baby to sleep. An example of the song is "go to sleep my darling, close your little eyes angel, we above us piping through the skies God is in his heaven and he watch dolt keep.

### **Reflective Songs**

These are usually philosophical songs that are based on proverbs, poetic images, witty saying replete with the use of allusion. Reflective songs are songs that are composed to make the individual in the society have conscious thought and morals. It may be satirical, humorous or conical and these are used to go for war which means tears to thousands of mothers when their sons go to fight and lose their lives.

### **Ritual Songs**

These include all songs that are closely connected with worship or a set way of carrying out religious worship or performing rights or ceremonies.

### **Dirges Songs**

Dirges are songs of lamentation for the dead. They are purely sorrowful as against other funeral songs that could be praise songs. They are songs especially intended to accompany a funeral or provide a memorial for the deceased.

### **Moral Songs**

These are songs which concern the principles of right and wrong. They help to set moral standards, providing moral sense, a tool for distinguishing what is right and wrong in the society.

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### **Relaxation Songs**

These are songs used in typical situations in the live of rural community. After a day work, while resting or relaxing, some songs are usually song and it could be for an individual or group of persons.

### **Recreational Songs**

These are types of songs that are played or sang for enjoyment; it could be song used at the palm wine bars or centers, love songs and boasting songs for making each other happy.

### **Rite de Passage**

Rite de passage are those songs that are used during ceremonies such as naming, marriage, manhood and womanhood initiations, these songs are closely related to the life cycles of individuals in a society.

### **Funeral Songs**

These include all songs for burials. They could be mournful song, song for the deceased persons, praise songs of the ideas unfolding the good things the deceased did when he was alive and it is also a song someone can sing to make him happy.

### **Types and Function of Folk Songs**

There are different types of folk songs and the roles played by such folk songs are of vital importance. We have ritual songs, ceremonial songs, cult songs, marriage songs, burial songs, association music, war songs or music to mention but a few. The different types of folk songs will be grouped under the following headings:

1. Recreational songs
2. Ceremonial songs
3. Entertainment songs

### **Recreational Songs**

In the African society, there are songs which are used for leisure; that is at free time or period such as during moon light play. These songs are songs for both personal and group entertainment and are so interesting and fascinating that the songs induce people to perform excellently well without fear or shame. It is through these recreational songs (that are most especially used during moon light plays) that children share their sense of belonging, social integration and friendliness. There are songs for recreational activities such as building of bridges, clearing of paths which the people use thereby making the work lighter and less.

### **Ceremonial Songs**

There are two types of ceremonies; those connected with royal institutions and aristocracy and those connected with the event of the life cycle.

- a. for the installation, coronation, funeral of a king.
- b. for the private functions, chiefs and the aristocrats (symbolic function).
- c. for war preparations and victory celebration

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d. for political rallies

And in all, there are different types of songs for the different ceremonies mentioned above. There are also songs which are connected with the life cycle such as for marriage ceremonies, birth and naming ceremonies. These are elaborate conventional forms of songs designed by societies for the purpose of expressing feelings, sentiments and emotions.

In contrast to ritual ceremonies, these are not enforced by divine sanctions, but by conventional ones.

### **Traditional Songs**

By African traditional music, we mean the indigenous music of Africans. Traditional music has no written documentation; and no person can say when and how traditional music started because traditional music is as old as man.

Africa music is a pure African music which has been in existence from one generation to another through oral transmission. African music is an organized sound that is performed by the boys with local musical instruments such as rattles (Aze), trumpet (Uke), etc. There are various types of African music such a secular music which is the worldly music and also religious music which is used for the worship of gods and goddesses. But not withstanding, both secular and religious can be vocal or instrumental or combination of both. These are songs that have no written documents also it is transmitted orally from generation to generation either through words of mouth, imitation and participation.

In the African society, one should be very careful when pronouncing the words because a little thing might change the meaning of the songs. In fact in singing African songs the following points are taken into consideration: the soloist sings while others respond. The songs are often repeated several times. It is also full of improvisation.

### **Didactic Songs**

These are traditional songs which are used to teach moral, norms and values of the society. In fact, some didactic songs in attempt to teach becomes insulting. For example, in some festivals such as “Egho festival” (Initiation of young girls into womanhood) in Ayogwiri in Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State, insulting songs are sang to reveal all the hidden ills of respective girls and also warning the defaulter not to do such things any more.

### **Cradle Songs**

In Africa, these are songs sang to new born babies i.e. lullaby to keep the baby happy, fresh and to stop the baby from crying. The cradle songs are both performed by the child, mother and other people to whom the care of the child is entrusted.

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### **Recreational Songs**

Recreational songs are songs which are sung during moon light plays; these songs are songs for both personal and group entertainment. People perform this or sing this type of song without fear or shame. It is through this recreational music especially during moon light plays, that children come together to share a sense of belonging, social integration and friendliness.

### **Praise Songs**

These are traditional songs used in praising or congratulating somebody for any courageous act. They are mostly used to admire or give recognition to heroes whose heroism are worthy of great praise. It is also used for those in the court i.e. members of the royal family. There are songs for ritual performance and they for occasional uses. This kind of songs are used to invoke the spirit, to initiate a new member and for coronation ceremony.

### **Importance of Traditional Songs**

Traditional songs are used to entertain people during social gatherings in schools and visit of an important person. Traditional music is used to make their visit interesting. Traditional music is also used to educate people living within the same community and to guide them to know the rules and regulations of their society, for those that worship gods and goddesses, traditional music is used to communicate with the gods, to worship them and to invoke the spirit.

Music in itself has the power to heal. African traditional music is very useful in the medical aspect, before a native doctor starts, he will first of all consult the gods with special songs of praise which are used to invoke the presence of gods. Music is used to maintain high moral standard. African music is explored in all aspects of life of an individual starting from birth to death. Each stage has its own musical activity.

### **How Traditional Songs can be Used in the Teaching of Pupils in Primary Schools**

In the primary school system, (where the teachers ask the pupils to sing a folk song in front of the class.) before the teacher asks any pupil to tell a story, the teacher will first of all tell the pupil some short stories that have traditional songs. When the teacher tells the pupils a story that has traditional songs, getting to the point where the song is, the teacher will then ask the pupil to join in the chorus while the teacher sings the verses. After that, the teachers will then starts to ask each pupil to tell the class a story which has a traditional song. As the pupils do as they are taught. At the end of every story and song, the pupil will be asked to explain the importance of the story they have heard. Questions will be distributed to the pupils to be answered by the teacher that is one way in which pupils can be taught traditional songs. Again, children's attention should be drawn to the radio whenever they are singing traditional songs to enable the children to be serious when they are told to do the same thing.

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Children at home should be allowed by their parents to watch their mates on the television when they sing traditional songs. Also dancing competition should be organized to encourage the use of traditional songs of a particular school in Ayogwiri in Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State. Traditional songs help to inculcate moral in the pupils in the primary school, in the sense that when the pupils are told any story which has a traditional song, at the end of that story the meaning will be explained to the pupils from there, the effect of such a story will be related from past to the present time, if the relationship of the story is bad, that will now help pupils to be of good moral conduct.

Traditional songs help to control bad behaviour such as gossiping, stealing, jealousy, sexual immorality, laziness, etc. what the researcher is saying in this aspect is that traditional songs help to tell those that gossip to stop gossiping through traditional songs without mentioning persons names.

Figure 1;            obo khian iyomhe-obo khian iye.  
                          Mother you are welcome  
                          You have come back  
                          From market  
                          Mother you are welcome.

The song shows a great relationship between a mother and her children, whereby the children are very happy to see their mother come back from the market.

### **Conclusion**

It is a known fact that if we compare Western songs to our own African traditional songs especially in Ayogwiri in Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State, we discover that our traditional songs are not documented. It is high time that this programme, should be the major concern of every music scholar in order to solidify and place our traditional songs in the right footing in our school system.

Since the school must help to transmit values, needs and aspirations, we are fully aware that the traditional songs are some of these societal values which must be transmitted in our system.

This write up if well circulated, will enable students to be equipped with their culture both past and present of the society.

### **Recommendation**

In the light of the above discussions on traditional songs, the writer has come to examine the meaning of traditional songs to the African child and why traditional songs should be used in the teaching and learning process in the primary school.

He has also come to see that music cannot be separated from the school system, music is used during teaching and learning process, children often sing their

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multiplication table which fosters memorization. Even in the schools social activities, music plays a number of roles; it is used on prize giving days, speech days, etc.

The tradition, culture and songs of the people needs to be fully used and taught in all school programmes, instead of the move towards western songs which have to be engraved in the curriculum that is why the writer upholds the view of Nationalism which says “I am proud of my own colour” we should be proud of our traditional songs.

Having seen the problems and teaching of traditional songs in primary schools in Ayogwiri in Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State, the following recommendations will improve the teaching and learning of traditional song in the school setting. Parents at home should not fail to teach their children traditional songs and parents also should explain the meaning of these traditional songs to their children. Recreation periods in schools should involve music and dance. More periods should be allocated to the teaching of music by the time table planners.

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