

THE STATE OF MUSIC TEACHING IN NIGERIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: A CASE OF TEACHER PREPARATION AND COMPETENCY

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ABSTRACT

Music as a subject of instruction found its way into the school programme through the church. It is one of the oldest courses of instruction in both traditional and Western European educational systems. Academic music education in Nigeria was started by the British colonial educationists. On colonization and preparation for the evangelization of Nigeria, the colonial masters adopted Christianity as the only official religion of the country. To ensure the people's commitment, they drew up educational programmes that were meant to serve their main purpose. The school curriculum had Reading, Writing and Religion as the central subjects. In addition to these, they introduced music in the form of hymn-singing. With the inception of formal music education about the middle of the 19th century, the aim was to produce musicians who would perform in church services. The music curriculum which was founded on Western musical cultures ignored the relevance of the rich traditional musical cultures of Nigeria. Though the curriculum succeeded, it did not create a brighter musical future for Nigerian musicians. On realization of this, Nigerians started preparing grounds for teachers and students of music by drawing up a curriculum that addressed the needs of the people. They also prepared grounds for providing adequate facilities and instructional materials. In modern-day Nigeria, music as a school subject cuts across the early child development to adult stages. It rests on a tri-level structure, namely: the traditional society, the popular music industry and the formal school. It has traditionally been integrated in all levels of formal education – early childhood education (i.e. crèche, nursery and kindergarten), primary education, secondary education and tertiary education. In the life of a child, musical training starts very early and must be sustained through the highest level of education. Music teaching in primary schools in Nigeria which this write-up examines should therefore not remain passive rather, must be involving if a better future for music scholarship must be actualized. The study therefore recommends that qualified music teachers should be employed to teach music in Nigerian primary schools and that primary schools should offer music education that enables the pupils to make music successfully both within and out of school situation.

KEY WORDS: Music, teacher, music teacher, competency, Nigerian Primary Schools, Nigeria, Music Education, Problems of Teaching Music, Future of Music Scholarship.

Introduction

Historically, music education had existed in Nigeria before the advent of the European missionaries. Informal music education occurred in apparent organizations such as families, homes, clans and other social environments where emphases were basically on imitations or repetitions and unconscious influence of elders, masters, leaders and other older members of the community. The traditional society used the apprenticeship system for imparting expert knowledge from one generation to another. This is however a provisional affiliation system.

Music education programme in the traditional society is in two stages. Music at the first stage is for everybody and begins informally from infancy and continues through adulthood. It aims at integrating members of the community into the culture and making them active participants in the traditional musical events. Mothers and peers are the first teachers. At the second stage, music is for talented or professionals and aims at making learners proficient and skilled performers within the norms of their culture. It is formalized and guided. Instruction is given by the father, if the learner is from a musical family, or another relative or any other member of the community who is skilled in the medium of performance. Instructional methods involve rote-learning and imitation.

In Efik/Ibibio and other culture areas of Nigeria, parents deliberately take their children to the performance scene whenever there is an event or when they themselves are performing. At the venue of the performance, the child sits near the parents and watches. He/she is given advice and information on particular skills or techniques while drawing his/her attention to important section/s of the performance. The apprenticeship system is also adopted in the popular music industry but in a modified manner. The learner has the freedom to select and join the band group he/she wishes to receive the training. He/she would stay with the group until he/she masters the instrument of his/her choice and found capable of performing with other members of the group. Although, the length of training varies with the natural abilities of individual learner, a comparable length of time is required before the child can graduate to mastership. In contemporary Nigeria, formal music education takes place in recognized and approved institutions of learning. In these institutions, there are or there ought to be qualified music teachers, accredited music programmes and syllabi, moderated tests and examinations with awards of certificates, diplomas and degrees in music at the end of intensive studies. This study discusses primary education in Nigeria and its goals, the current position of music education in Nigerian primary schools, music teacher preparation and competency, and possible problems of teaching music in Nigerian schools and finally, the future of music scholarship in Nigerian.

Primary Education in Nigeria and its Goals

Primary education is a very important form of education given to children between the ages of six and eleven years inclusive. As pointed out by Ekwueme (2010), primary school level is the best time to introduce useful knowledge, skills and values, and that includes music. The author points out that, primary school serves as the foundation on which education is built and grows from. Every educated person started learning the basics of his/her discipline from the primary school level and developed cumulatively from that point. The success or failure of the entire educational system depends on it.

Some children of primary school may not have passed through the early childhood or pre-primary education (crèche, nursery and kindergarten). It is very fundamental and should be

taken seriously and made compulsory for all Nigerian children to have formal childhood education before proceeding to primary school. Children of primary schools in Nigeria are called pupils and on successful completion of the six-year primary education, the child is awarded the First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC). The certificate qualifies him/her to seek admission into any secondary school of his/her choice.

The goals of primary education, according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) are to:

- (i) inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively;
- (ii) lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;
- (iii) give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society;
- (iv) mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child;
- (v) develop in the child the ability to adapt to the child's changing environment;
- (vi) give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limit of the child's capacity;
- (vii) provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparing for trades and crafts of the locality.

The Current Position of Music Education in Nigerian Primary Schools

One of the objectives of early childhood education as provided by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) is to inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, environment, art, music and playing with toys. This implies that all children should, in addition to acquiring skills in other areas, have some competencies in music so that while some can become music makers, others would be producers and performers of music either as a career or as a hobby.

The success of the child's musical experience basically depends on the musical nurturing he/she received right from early childhood. If he/she receives the right musical education, he/she becomes efficient in that aspect. If it is on the contrary, he/she becomes deficient and this would definitely influence his/her adulthood negatively. Unlike most other African countries like Ghana and South Africa, Nigerian children of the early childhood and primary education do not receive appropriate music education and that has reflected in the level and quality of music production in the society. Ekwueme (2002) points out that, human beings possess seven intelligences which must be developed through training either in the formal or informal system of education. The intelligences according to her are linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetics, musical, interpersonal and intra-personal. The author also points out that if a child is denied the development of his/her musical intelligence alongside other intelligences, he/she is denied a balance of education. Also, if he/she is deprived of the opportunity of developing his/her musical talents, his/her musical talent in him/her would remain dormant and underdeveloped throughout his lifetime.

The picture and position of music education in primary education in Nigeria is disconsolate in spite of the injunction in the National Policy on Education (2004). The policy gave birth to the current 6-3-3-4 system of education which places music as a core subject in the junior secondary schools. Despite this, music is merged with Arts, Craft and Drama to form Cultural and Creative Arts Curriculum (CCAC) for primary schools, thus making music teaching and learning a mere window dressing. By so doing, children are denied the opportunity of developing their musical endowments and aptitudes. The present school system

ridicules and degrades music as a subject, music teachers and their students. In primary schools, singing is used during morning devotion to start the day's activities as well as during the close of work to round up the day. Unlike other subjects like English Language, Mathematics, Primary Science, Social Studies, Drawing and Painting, and even Handwriting, the pupils are not evaluated in Music at the end of the term to test accomplishments. Music is regarded as a subject merely for entertainment.

Statement of the Problem

As observed by Aninwene (2009), the Nigerian primary school children are not taught value songs, folktale songs which reflect the people's myths and mythologies, and songs reflecting nature, morals and mores of our tradition. Also, they are not taught songs for rhythmic body movements and acting or dramatization; they are not introduced to musical instruments and instrumentation; they are not taught how to read, write and interpret music. The schools do not have vibrant music or cultural and creative arts sector. Music and Cultural Arts are merely included on the time table as mere additions to make up the number of subjects in the school system. Also, teachers are no longer trained in music for the primary schools since the Teacher Grade II Certificate Programme was abolished by the federal government.

The minimum teaching qualification for the primary school teachers, as stipulated in the National Policy on Education (2004) is the Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE). This policy is not even the practice because most NCE teachers, except those reading courses in the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education, are trained and prepared for the secondary school level. The question is: if a musically talented child who has passed through the early childhood, primary and secondary education system wishes to take up music as a career, what would be his/her starting point? Regrettably, he/she would start music primer at the tertiary level when he ought to be an advanced student. That may have been one of the reasons music students in Nigeria's Colleges of Education and Universities still learn the ABCs of music.

Music as a professional art is always regarded as a profession of never-to-do-well or drop outs in spite of the significant roles musicians play in the society. For instance, Daramola and Ayeyemi (2010) note that,

Of the three related arts (Fine/Applied Arts, Music and Drama/Theatre) taught as subjects in tertiary institutions, Music appears to have received that most philistine abuse from the public most especially the illiterates and critics. Many music students at one time or the other have suffered derision from parents, friends and colleagues for choosing music as a course as career.

One can clearly see the origin of the weak foundation in music studies in our institutions of learning. To ensure a sound foundation for the future of education, Nigeria needs active music programme started at the primary or even the pre-primary school level. For instance, for comparative purpose, the English teacher started learning English Language from pre-primary school through the University level; the French teacher also started learning French from pre-primary level through the University. On graduation, he/she becomes master in the discipline. This is not so in Music. Obviously, with a good background in music education, music teaching and learning would not only be effective but easy and attractive.

Music Teacher Preparation and Competency

The teacher is the key to the success of any education programme. He/she is very relevant in the teaching process for his/her actions and the methods used determine progress in aspects of education process. According to Anih (2005), the teacher is a pivotal element in the classroom procedure. His/her training and exposure determines progress in all aspects of education. The teacher, according to Babs (1982) in Anih (2005), is like a farmer who with antiquated crude tools available to him/her cultivates his/her farm and, no matter the circumstance, is expected to produce good yield at the end. This implies that, the teacher is germane and highly indispensable in the operations of the curriculum. In his work, he/she brings his/her competency acquired through sound and qualitative training and his/her personality to bear on the job, especially in a favourable condition. The very important questions, at this juncture, which need immediate answers as far as this study is concerned, are: (i) Who is a teacher? (ii) What are the qualities of a good teacher?

Iwuagwu (2006) says that a teacher is someone who merely instructs or helps others to acquire a skill or training. To the author, a trained teacher is someone who has acquired professional training in Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs), Colleges of Education (COE), and Faculty of Education in the Universities and awarded a certificate that qualifies him/her to teach in a specified level of the school system. On his part, Mkpa (1987) considers a teacher as someone who underwent and completed in a formal teacher training institute, a planned programme of training, among other areas, in the principles and practice of education. The author adds that the teacher must have been exposed to an observed period of internship or teaching practice either after or as part of the period of training. Also, Gbamanja, (1997) sees a trained teacher as an educationist who underwent pedagogical training including a good knowledge of the principles and practice of education, in addition to his/her teaching subject/s or discipline.

From the three authors' point of view on whom a teacher is, it could be deduced that the teacher is the repository of knowledge and an input operator into the educational system. He/she plays a big role in the teaching-learning process. The person called teacher must therefore be dedicated, well informed, knowledgeable, inspiring and positively oriented at all levels of education. He/she is the main determinant of the quality of education within his/her area of operation. A good music teacher therefore must be trained in the basic elements of music or music fundamentals, how and when to teach them. He/she must be familiar with the contemporary content of music education, methodology, and techniques. He/she must have such qualities as good knowledge of subject matter, good personality, professionalism, ability to understand child psychology, ability to inspire learners, resourcefulness and skills to improve and ability to observe and evaluate.

Teacher education had always been the pivot of all educational systems. The National Policy on Education (2004) which is Nigeria's most working guide on the nation's philosophy of education emphasizes that no system can rise above the quality and standards of its teachers. Generally, teacher education, according to Aninwene, (2004), is programmed to produce youngsters with maximum knowledge of their fields of endeavour. Teacher education institutes meant to produce teachers are:

1. Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) which award the Teachers Grade II Certificate (TC II).
2. Colleges of Education (COE) which award the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE).
3. The Polytechnics for producing technical teachers/manpower which award the Ordinary National Diplomas (ONDs) and the Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) respectively.
4. Institutes/Faculties of Education which produce degrees of various categories ranging from the Bachelors of Education (B.ED) to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D).

The researcher observes that most of the turned out music teachers perform below expectation. The reason is not because of their production but on the preparations made for the future of music education as it concerns them. The question is: “Why are the music teachers not performing? The reason is seemingly for the disgustingly annoying proportion of lack of infrastructural provision, lack of instructional materials, lack of incentives and above all, lack of adequate preparation. Teachers faced with these conditions cannot perform with job satisfaction, hence, the lack of serious studies that would lead to the development of pupil’s intellectual, theoretical, analytical, and creative and performance abilities and skills.

Competency is the capacity to do something well. It refers to the skills the teacher brings to the teaching situation with the view to arouse the learner’s interest to learn effectively and efficiently. Within the context of this paper, competency is established on the knowledge of the subject matter and the ability to teach efficiently. In other words, it refers to the ability of the music teacher to understand the learner, teach effectively, and inspire him/her using the appropriate materials, methods and techniques as well as proper evaluation procedures.

Mandatorily, the music teacher must arouse the interest of the learner; else, his/her traditional role as the custodian and transmitter of knowledge will be jeopardized. Arousing learners’ interest is an important matter in the teaching and learning of music at all levels of education. This can only be made possible by a competent teacher who is vast in the search of self knowledge and holds himself/herself in high regard; who is self confident; who should exhibit attitude and abilities that will expedite thinking, feeling, creating, identifying and initiative role in the learners; who is mentally alert, adaptable and responsive to his learners.

Music teachers need to show reasonable knowledge of and competency to teach “general music”. The enormity of the task of becoming competent to function within the whole range of music education especially in primary schools dictates the need for new tools in the teachers. Music teachers therefore need something much more than performance skills. They must develop a comprehensive musicianship to enable them face any musical encounter with vigour. They must note that their major concern is to bring the joy of music to their pupils and others, lead their learners from a musical experience in the school system to the broad world of musical art.

Possible Problems of Teaching Music in Nigerian Schools

One of the most fundamental problems of music education in primary schools concerns the development of music programme to meet the pupils’ demand and ability. Looking at this, Nketia (1975) cited in Adeogun (2012) desires to know how the natural and spontaneous experience of music education can be reconciled with the artificially created musical situations of the schoolroom.

Apart from the traditional formal education provided by initiation schools where all the initiates assemble for a period of time and are taught among other things, initiation songs, in preparation for their roles in the society as adults, music education, it is claimed, occurred

naturally from social and cultural situations within the children's environment and was not restricted to any particular place or moment in time. The child from his birth was introduced to the music of his culture, and unconsciously learned what the music required in terms of both body movement and vocal effort from his mother and age grade and also through participation in other musical activities (Okafor, 2005). The problem the researcher envisages is how the music teacher can structure this corpus of music to fit into the institutionalized environment of the classroom in such a way to make learning relevant to the musical experiences of children outside the classroom.

In the researcher's search for a possible solution to problem raised above, deliberate structuring or programming of musical forms as content areas for classroom use has been identified. The implication of this stride is manifold: firstly, it would require modification of the contexts of music education and music performances; and secondly, the general public would need to cultivate a positive attitude towards the inevitable changes that might ensue. For not only will there be a great shift in method and process in the transformation from an essentially oral tradition to one that is written, but also there will be a relaxation of the socio-cultural restrictions of musical performances and development of new repertory.

Another problem concerns the definition and selection of appropriate aims and objectives of the music programme. An important and desirable approach is for the aims and objectives of music education to be consonant with the philosophy and aims of general education which itself is an offshoot of a national philosophy expressed in the aspirations of the people. The question now is: what should be the aims of music education in primary schools or what should it seek to achieve in the pupils? Although the researcher made earlier attempt to offer a few suggestions in this study, the effort presents an individual rather than a group solution. The ideal thing would be a solution which emanates from the collaboration of music educators, curriculum specialists, and education officers to formulate appropriate objectives of such programmes. In doing this the most important task is to select those objectives which will develop knowledge of music as well as about music. In Okafor's (2005) view, knowledge about music has to do with its history and development, its various forms and styles, its instruments, its personalities and its fortunes in the history of the common man. Primary school children can learn much of this without being involved musically or dealing with specifically musical materials. On the other hand, knowledge of music means dealing with musical materials, musical productions of one sort or another. It involves doing not only in the form of making or hearing music, but also studying its theory and structure.

Most primary and secondary school teachers have not been exposed to experiences in school music during their own formal education. The question then arises: what do teachers who teach music need to know and how best can they be prepared? Most teachers, although potentially competent, feel very inadequate to teach music; therefore, they need to be equipped with the understanding of the content areas they are going to teach and the appropriate skills with which to implement effective transfer of music learning. This calls for two different programmes: one for primary school and the other for secondary school teachers as well as others who are involved in music education through the radio and television networks.

In a well rounded programme of music education, opportunities should be provided for experiences in listening, performing and composing. Although these three areas are embraced in the subject matter courses of ear training, applied music and theory, the music teachers in this discussion are ill equipped and cannot handle those concepts effectively.

Away from the dearth of qualified teachers to teach music in primary schools, another major problem is that of insufficient and inappropriate instructional materials. The bulk of music which has been vastly documented on phonograph recordings and in print in the form of films, phonographs, filmstrips, should be converted to classroom instructional materials for teaching music. Available materials at radio stations in various communities should also be compiled, collated and graded for use in the formal classroom.

Arising from the foregoing discussion are many implications, the most important among them are the need to: develop a systematic programme of music for all educational levels in various parts of Nigeria; develop instructional materials and appropriate instructional methodology and educate teachers on the music content they would be teaching and the instructional strategies they should employ. Directly related to the above is the urgent need for research into the study of musical abilities of children and for the development of a sound principle or method of instruction which will synthesize the traditional method of music education and modern instructional strategies.

The Future of Music Scholarship in Nigerian Primary Schools

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and pluralistic society in which each group practices its own music tradition. It is a country with rich musical culture, richer than most other African countries. Vidal (2004), a renowned musicologist and music educator advocates that music education in Nigeria should look into the concept of bi-musicalism and multi-musicalism, both of which can be an emerging phenomenon of the future. The author notes that Nigeria's musical characteristics are observed in the people's spoken languages and each of our schools are made up of pupils from the varying cultures of the country. It is possible for an Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, Efik and Ibibio child to become versatile in the music from other cultures of Nigeria and even the Western musical traditions and practices in addition to his cultural music. The primary school child therefore should be taught to cultivate and practice his/her musical tradition and those of other cultural groups. When Nigerian music education can get to this level, the future of music education in the country will be brighter.

As pointed out by Aninwene (2009), without structures, processes and actors, there can be no products from materialization of past music education policies. In Nigeria, lofty and attractive education policies were formulated but necessary structures were not put in place for proper execution of those policies. Akinbami and Ekwueme (1994) cited in Vidal (2004) observe that most music teachers in secondary and few primary schools teach only rudiments and theory of music because there are no facilities put in place by the government to aid the teaching of music listening and appreciation which are essential aspects of music education. In fact, the practice of theory, listening and appreciation, and performance are the ultimate for the children's better future. The researcher wishes at this point to ask two very important questions: (i) how many primary and secondary schools in Nigeria have defined music departments? (ii) how many primary and secondary schools in Nigeria have music laboratories? These questions definitely yearn for positive answers.

Life performances are *sin qua non* for any effective music programme in schools. Aninwene (2009) suggests that well equipped music laboratories and facilities should be strengthened with life performances. Music experts in all music types should be invited to teach, demonstrate, give talks on the arts and practice of the music profession as well as perform music. Children should also be encouraged to actively participate, create and perform

music instead of being passive. Idamoyibo (2004) opines that music classes should be action-oriented through practical activities such as listening, playing, composing, improvising and dancing in order to achieve a good balance between theory and practical content of the music curriculum.

Musicologists of note like Vidal (2001), Ekwueme (2002), and Idamoyibo (2004) agree that the average Nigerian would rather sing, drum, dance and dramatize than study what he/she does or theorize why he/she does it. Nigerian (African) cultures emphasize performance practice, creativity and traditions as opposed to systematic studies and theoretical generalizations. Aninwene (2004) complains that the Western musicological methods are too alien and narrow to Nigerian children as opposed to their multiple musical culture and elements. The author hopes that Nigerian children should be exposed to playing of traditional and Western musical instruments, singing traditional and Western songs in school choirs, school bands to develop their musical talents and abilities.

The above discussion points to the fact that the music curriculum in Nigerian primary schools call for a serious review to make it functional. Music should be separated from Arts, Crafts and Drama and its curriculum should be titled “Music Curriculum for Nigerian Primary Schools”, and it should incorporate rudiments and theory of music and practice. Emphasis should be laid on practical musicianship, music creativity and application.

Conclusion

Music education has come a long way from the colonial times when most of it in an institution consisted of singing class in pre-primary, primary and secondary schools. Now, music has become a subject, although not a well ranked subject in Nigerian educational institutions, especially in primary and secondary schools. Music is most commonly perceived as singing and dancing with female gender influence still persisting. In most primary and even secondary schools, Music class periods are used either for the teaching of other subjects or for the students or pupils to play around and sing rhymes without the teacher in the class to instruct them on what to do; rather, the musically untrained teacher committed by the school head to teach music is either standing somewhere or sitting in the staff room conversing to the detriment of the students or pupils and the subject.

Despite that the National Policy on Education observes that special teachers of particular subjects including Music should be employed to teach those subjects, this expectation has not been met in the implementation of primary education music programme. Teachers are made to teach all the subjects in the school curriculum in their different classrooms. Most of those teachers were not adequately trained to effectively interpret and plan the subject curriculum, (music curriculum, for example), for excellent attainment of the set objectives.

It is generally acknowledged that the quality of instructional provision embraces not only curriculum content but also delivery. Examples around Nigeria suggest lack of commitment of teaching and pedagogical inadequacies. The majority of primary school teachers are not qualified; a lot more have no interest and ego involvement in the development of music as a subject. This attitude and disposition have led to the non-recognition and death of music in primary and even secondary schools. Unfortunately grounds are not prepared for teachers and learners right from the pre-primary school level; adequate facilities, instructional materials and relevant curriculum are not provided; efforts are not made to analyze and or evaluate teachers and teaching to enable programme planners and developers to identify the

needs of the students/pupils for the sake of improving teaching and learning. The researcher stresses that music in pre-primary and primary levels of education should not be passive but involving.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends that:

- (i) a programme of music should, through listening activities, familiarize student-teachers with the literature of various musical types – instrumental and vocal – and develop an awareness of musical forms and styles as well as knowledge of the history and sociology of music of the Nigerian community;
- (ii) through performance activities, they should acquire skills in singing, playing of instruments or dancing, and develop knowledge of a repertoire of vocal and instrumental music;
- (iii) through compositional activities, they should develop creative ability; acquire knowledge of the theoretical foundation of scales, modes, melody, rhythm, and harmony, etc.;
- (iv) apart from these subject matter courses, there should be courses on music teaching methods. The learners should in addition learn to organize children’s choirs, bands and orchestras;
- (v) primary, secondary and even pre-primary schools should have distinct blocks as music departments, well equipped music laboratories with necessary gadgets for music listening and appreciation;
- (vi) qualified music teachers should be employed to teach music in Nigerian primary schools;
- (vii) primary schools should offer music education that enables the pupils to make music successfully both within and out of school situation;
- (viii) the music curriculum in Nigerian primary schools call for a serious review to make it functional, music should be separated from Arts, Crafts and Drama and its curriculum should be titled “Music Curriculum for Nigerian Primary Schools”, and it should incorporate rudiments and theory of music,
- (ix) African music, history of music, reading, writing and composition as well as singing and dancing in addition to emphasizing practical musicianship, music creativity and application;
- (x) to invent and achieve the future, grounds should be prepared for teachers and learners right from the pre-primary school level; adequate facilities, instructional materials and relevant curriculum should be provided; efforts should be made to analyze and or evaluate teachers and teaching to enable programme planners and developers to identify the needs of the students/pupils for the sake of improving teaching and learning.

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