

**Teaching and Learning in the Humanities  
and Social Sciences:  
Perspectives of Competence**

**Teaching and Learning in the  
Humanities and Social Sciences:  
Perspectives of Competence**

*Edited by*

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## Foreword

I feel privileged to be requested to write the foreword to this book entitled: *Teaching and Learning in the Humanities and Social Sciences: Perspectives of Competence*, a publication put together by the School of Arts and Social Sciences, Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo, Nigeria. The contributors to this book are seasoned scholars in their various fields with solid academic standing. Each of them has unveiled the most salient points in the emerging issues in multi-dimensional pedagogical perspective.

The three-module book, has been broken down into units, which no doubt provides a clear discussion of each of the topics. Of great interest are the first five units of the first module which engaged critical areas of teaching profession. The second module centres on lesson planning and methodology of teaching courses in Arts and Social sciences. Module three focuses on instructional materials for teaching and learning. This ranges from improvisation to utilisation of materials that could be gainfully used in the teaching of courses in Economics, Theatre Arts, History, Geography and Political science in Nigeria school system.

I wish to commend and congratulate the Dean and her team for coming up with this noble idea and nurturing it to fruition. The quality, readability and language used to convey ideas in this book will appeal to students, educational practitioners and general readers.

I therefore, strongly recommend the book as a special and general text for students at all levels as well as practising teachers in tertiary educational institutions.

Professor Olufemi A. Ojebiyi  
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## UNIT 5

# Indigenous Method of Teaching in African Societies

Ebenezer Oluwatoyin AYEYEMI Ph.D

### Introduction

Teaching is the process of impacting knowledge, skills, or information to others. It is also the act of transmitting knowledge from an individual who doubles as master, teacher or educator to learners or students, with the goal of facilitating their understanding of a particular subject, topic or an act. In a formal setting, teaching takes place in an organized atmosphere conducive for both the teachers and the learners, either indoor or outdoor. Teaching and training in traditional African community follows the same process, but with a clear departure in approach and places of impacting knowledge from the conventional school setting. Teaching can take place in various settings, such as schools, colleges, universities, or even informal environments. Teachers utilize a range of instructional methods and strategies to engage learners and promote their intellectual, social, and emotional development. Traditional African communities have a rich heritage of educational practices that have been passed down through generations. For a very long time, there has been unique and effective approaches to impacting knowledge and wisdom in Africa. These teaching methods, deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of the continent, emphasize holistic learning, communal participation, and the preservation of indigenous knowledge. These methods which are rooted in cultural traditions, emphasize communal learning, oral transmission of knowledge, and hands-on practical experiences.

In contrast to Western pedagogical approaches, which often prioritize individual achievement and standardized curricula,

traditional African teaching methods focus on nurturing well-rounded individuals within the context of their community. These methods promote a deep understanding of cultural values, environmental stewardship, and the interconnectedness of all aspects of life. By exploring the teaching methods employed in traditional African communities, we can gain valuable insights into alternative educational philosophies that foster a sense of belonging, social responsibility, and a profound appreciation for Africa's diverse cultures.

In this unit, we will explore the teaching methods that have been practiced in traditional African communities for generations, highlighting their significance and relevance to today's educational landscape.

### **Avenues for Teaching and the Contents Taught**

The home where a child is born is the centre of education for children in Africa. From childhood to the time when someone is able to own a home as a man or to the time she is sent out in marriage as a woman, he or she is still expected to be under tutelage. From the first age, such child begins to acquire education that would mould him or her for moral maturity. Parents that are properly cultured are the first teachers and hold the duty to give their children training. Being a unique ethnic group among others in Africa with cherished rich cultural affiliation, the Yoruba of Nigeria is specifically examined with the aim to shed light on her unique teaching methods and subject matter that were central to the long-standing educational systems and practices. This teaching contents of the Yoruba people as a unit with rich culture among the multiethnic groups, culture and languages in Africa reveal the multifaceted role of music in traditional African societies and its impact on the communities. According to traditional Yoruba religion for example, it is the duty of parents to bring up their children ethically and in the knowledge of God. From the beginning, children are made to believe in reward and punishment.

Parents teach their children by sending them on errands and that they should report back to the parents with any gestures of others within and outside the home. Such errands educate children in some sequential instructions; carrying objects and relating to other members of the family in the neighbourhood. It also teaches children social skills needed for verbal communications. The actualization of the errands is highly valued, because it gives opportunity to the child to relate and interact with others. Seniority among the Yoruba family is not in any way underestimated. The cultured parents draw distinction in terms of seniority among children. According to Fadipe cited by United Nations University in *the Yoruba family* (n.d.) distinctions defining seniority were, of necessity, elaborate and were expressed in the myriad terms by which individuals greeted and addressed each other.

Furthermore, the traditional education of a child continues with the peer groups of different home background. Individuals that make up each group who had acquired education, sheer common ideas as they walk, work and play together in any circumstance. These ideas teach morals and values in the Nigerian society. Such common ideas include folk songs which they have learnt in their different homes. Folk or traditional songs are integral part of the life of everyone born into a typical African family. Children take an active role in music and making music by the age of three or four. For example, musical games played by children prepare them to participate in all areas of adult activity - including fetching of water, farming, grinding, gathering of different materials like firewood, snail, fruits etc, hunting, apprenticing, attending ceremonies like festivals, weddings, funerals and dances. They often set out singing and dancing their way from one village to another or a dance may be held to cement good relationship with neighbouring villages. Such musical games made children acquire the fundamental principles and have an extremely important educational function. Below are other avenues among Yoruba people where teaching is emphasised.

## **Oral Tradition**

Oral tradition was the primary avenue of teaching in traditional Yoruba society. Elders played a crucial role in imparting knowledge through storytelling, proverbs, and folktales. These narratives served as mnemonic devices, encapsulating historical events, moral lessons, and cultural values.

## **Apprenticeship and Observation**

- (a) **Craftsmanship:** Traditional Yoruba society emphasized skill acquisition through apprenticeship. Young individuals would learn various trades by observing and assisting skilled artisans, such as blacksmiths, weavers, potters, and woodcarvers.
- (b) **Farming:** Agricultural knowledge and practices were passed down through generations, with children observing and assisting their parents in farming activities. This hands-on experience provided practical knowledge of farming techniques and sustainable practices (Adegbite, 2011).

## **Peer Group Activities**

During the neo and early colonial era, all age groups among the Yoruba people have common features. For example, children between the ages of 6 to 12, 13 to 16 and 17 to 20 would always come together in their groups (either to play, run errands in their free time) and share family experiences with each other from which they learn. The other senior group also come together in gender identity; male and female groups respectively engaging in other deeper discussions that concerns their future and their welfare. In some of these gatherings, learning through music take place. Since music holds a significant place in the cultural fabric of traditional societies, it forms the background to communication skills which expresses language and grammar vocabularies, idioms, poetry, proverbs, and oral literature to develop and preserve cultural expressions.

Peer group activities are also expressed through historical and ancestral knowledge which include myths, legends, and genealogies

taught to foster a sense of identity and pride among the younger generation. Moral and ethical values are also emphasised through music and poem to reveal the concept of ‘*Omólúwàbí*’ or ‘*Omo rere*’ (good child) in order to portray good character. ‘*Ewi*’ (poetry) is used as an object lesson to instil self-discipline, principles of honesty, respect and communal responsibility. Some of the songs used as a method of impartation among the Yoruba include the selected songs.

### Iwa omólúwabi

Arranged by  
E.O.Ayeyemi, 2023

Call

O - mo re - re kii pu - ro, O - mo re - re  
O - mo re - re kii se - ke O - mo re - re  
O - mo re - re kii so - le, O - mo re - re  
O - mo k'o-mo ton-pu - ro, O - mo k'o-mo

Response

Ta lo fi jo,  
Ta lo fi jo,  
Ta lo fi jo,  
O-moi-bi ni,

7

kii pu-ro, O - mo re - re kii pu-ro,  
kii se-ke, O - mo re - re kii se-ke,  
kii so-le, O - mo re - re kii so-le,  
ton - pu-ro, O - mo k'o-mo ton-pu-ro,

Ta lo fi jo,  
Ta lo fi jo,  
Ta lo fi jo,  
O - moi - bi ni,

Ta lo fi jo,  
Ta lo fi jo,  
Ta lo fi jo,  
O - moi - bi ni,

13

kii pu-ro, kii pu-ro Ta lo fi jo -  
kii se-ke, kii se-ke Ta lo fi jo -  
kii so-le, kii so-le Ta lo fi jo -  
ton - pu-ro, ton - pu-ro O - moi - bi ni -

Ta lo fi jo Ta lo fi jo -  
Ta lo fi jo, Ta lo fi jo -  
Ta lo fi jo, Ta lo fi jo -  
O - moi - bi ni, O - moi - bi ni -

These three songs were selected to represent some of the various aspects of life that are focus to establish the cultural and identity of the Yorubas and as a rich representation of African culture. The songs are: *Iwa Omoluwabi*, (the character of a good child). The second song is *Aye Ole*, (the life of a lazy man) while the third one is *Awa yoo soro*, (we will perform our sacrifice). These songs exhibit the lesson on cultural transmission. This method (capable of aiding children, youths and adult to memorise and bear the subject of culture in mind) helps people to imbibe the cultural systems. Suffice it to say that in this twenty first century system of acculturation, most African youths are ignorant of the culture because they are not rooted in African cultural education.

### **Interpretation**

A good child don't lie	Who do you resemble?
A good child don't lie	Who do you resemble?
A good child don't lie	Who do you resemble?
Don't lie	Who do you resemble?
Don't lie	Who do you resemble?
A good child don't play prank	Who do you resemble?
A good child don't play prank	Who do you resemble?
A good child don't play prank	Who do you resemble?
Don't deceive	Who do you resemble?
Don't deceive	Who do you resemble?
A good child is not lazy	Who do you resemble?
A good child is not lazy	Who do you resemble?
A good child is not lazy	Who do you resemble?
Not lazy	Who do you resemble?
Not lazy	Who do you resemble?
Any child that lies	He is evil
Any child that lies	He is evil
Any child that lies	He is evil
That lies	He is evil
That lies	He is evil

The textual analysis of this song revealed that no cultured child behaves in an unruly manner in the society. It is believed among Yoruba that any child or individual who had gone through traditional or cultural education cannot lie, play prank or be lazy. This could be so because he or she would have been taught life experience. This kind of education received at the background encapsulates all aspect of living; dressing, respect for elders, self-discipline, hard work, power to resist covetousness, submission, tolerance, love and unity, wisdom in handling situations and lots more. If anyone expected to have come out of a decent and disciplined family eventually misbehaves in the society, the question 'who do you take it from' arises. The song concludes that any person or child who falls short of the cultural expectation is tagged 'evil'. In other words when a child conducts him or herself well, he or she makes the family, the community, state and country where he was raised proud. In this respect, an adage in Yoruba says '*bi Egungun eni ba jo o re l'awujo, ori a ya oluwa re*' (when the masquerade dances well, the master feel proud).

Masquerade among Yoruba people literarily refers to a traditional religious deity, full of spirit of the dead symbolic to specific lineage of family. They are typically adorned in colourful fabrics. Masquerading is often held for entertainment purposes such as during festival. During these festivals, they perform dances and rituals, accompanied by drumming, singing, and chanting. Their movements and gestures are believed to convey messages from the ancestors to the community. When their performance are favourable to the people, the families they represent become proud.



Song 2

**AYE OLE**

(Lazy Man's Life)

Arranged by  
E.O. Ayeyemi (2023)

**Moderato**

Voice

E - ni b' o - le ko r' o -

**Moderato**

Piano

4

mo - bi, O - le fa so i - ya b' o - ra sun, O - le a - la - pa ma

8

si - se. - - - E wa wa - yc o - le lo - de

**Interpretation**

The mother of lazy hasn't got a child,  
The lazy's cover cloth is suffering,  
He got arms but would not work,  
See how worthless his life would be,

Textual analysis of the above song describes the life of lazy men in African societies. It is generally believed that a lazy man typically lacks motivation and ambition to pursue goals or engage in productive activities, delays important task until the last minute or ignore them, leading to increased stress and consequences, relies on others for various tasks and responsibilities, without a strong work ethic or willingness to pursue meaningful employment, do not actively seek new experience or acquire new skills which could result to limited intellectual and emotional growth. The Yoruba see this type of life as a deterrent to development of the society and realise that the parents that produced such a lazy child has not gotten somebody to rest upon in their old age, because that child is a failure.

**AWA YOO SORO**

(We will do sacrifice)

E.O. Ayeyemi, (2023)

The musical score is arranged in a system with five staves. The top two staves are for vocalists: 'Men' and 'Baritone', both in bass clef with a 12/8 time signature. The bottom three staves are for instruments: 'Tambourine', 'Wood Blocks', and 'Cymbal', all in treble clef with a 12/8 time signature. The 'Concert Bass Drum' part is also in treble clef with a 12/8 time signature. The lyrics are written below the vocal staves, starting with 'so ro i- le wa - o a- wa yo so- ro i- le wa o A- wa yo so ro i- le wa - o, a wa yo'. The score includes various musical notations such as rests, eighth notes, and sixteenth notes.

6

so ro i - le wa o. E sin kan ko pe - o e e sin kan ko pe ka-wa ma so - ro A wa yo

9

so - ro i - le wa o.

### **Interpretation**

We shall perform the rituals of our family,  
 We shall perform the rituals of our family,  
 No religion! No religion can stop the ritual,  
 We shall perform the rituals of our family.

### **The Role of Music as means of Teaching and Cultural Transmission**

In traditional African societies, music has a significant role in teaching and cultural transmission. It serves as a powerful tool through which knowledge, values, and traditions are conveyed to

younger generations who will further pass it on to the next generation. These younger ones, take up the role of moderating, supervising, coordinating the affairs of the community or societies, and upholding the culture and beliefs which they have been taught. Each individual (male and female) in the African society sees teaching as a responsibility they owe the growing ones. This is done to prevent them from straying in the course of life and career development. The imbibed culture helps the growing ones to be able to face the different challenges of life, fit in to the expected norms and behaviours and also to caution them from excesses. The elderly ones in the society equip themselves with all the tools and methods for teaching. Music, being an important instrument, which captivates emotion is mostly employed for teaching, instructing and training among traditional African folks. Below are some of the importance of music in education, its various functions, and its impact on preserving and promoting cultural heritage in traditional African societies.

### **Music as an Oral Tradition**

In traditional African societies, where written language may be limited, music serves as an essential form of oral tradition (Nzewi, 2007). Through songs, chants, and rhythms, important information about history, customs, and societal norms is passed down from one generation to another. This oral transmission of knowledge ensures the continuity of cultural practices.

### **Mnemonic Device**

Music acts as a mnemonic device in traditional African societies, aiding in memory retention and recall and enabling the retelling of intricate stories with accuracy and emotion. Complex rhythmic patterns and melodic structures are employed to facilitate the memorization of important information, such as genealogies, rituals, and proverbs (Arom, 1991). This ensures the preservation of cultural knowledge and facilitates its transmission.

### **Cultural Context and Values**

Music in traditional African societies reflects the cultural context and values of the community. It serves as a means of socialization, teaching individuals about their roles, responsibilities, and the values upheld by their society (Kubik, 1999). Through lyrics, dance movements, and instrumental performances, music communicates social norms, ethics, and moral teachings.

### **Rituals and Ceremonies**

Music plays a central role in rituals and ceremonies in traditional African societies. Whether it is a birth celebration, initiation rite, marriage ceremony, or funeral, music accompanies and punctuates these significant life events (Agawu, 2003). It creates a communal atmosphere, facilitates emotional expression, and reinforces the cultural significance of these rites. The use of specific songs, rhythms, and dance movements helps participants connect with their ancestors and spiritual realms (Nketia, 1974).

### **Community Building and Cohesion**

Music serves as a unifying force in traditional African societies, fostering a sense of community and social cohesion. It is often performed collectively, involving singing, dancing, and drumming. These communal music-making activities strengthen social bonds, promote cooperation, and cultivate a shared identity among community members.

### **Music as a Pedagogical Tool**

In African societies, music is utilized as an effective pedagogical tool to convey knowledge and life lessons. It facilitates learning by engaging multiple senses and enhancing memory retention (Arom, 2004). Through rhythmic patterns, melodic structures, and poetic lyrics, music aids in the transmission of historical events, moral teachings, social customs, and practical skills.

### **Enculturation and Cultural Preservation**

Music plays a crucial role in the enculturation process, ensuring the transmission of cultural values, norms, and traditions from one generation to another (Turino, 2008). It serves as a vehicle for preserving the collective memory of a community, fostering a sense of identity, and strengthening social cohesion.

### **Oral History and Storytelling**

Through music, oral history and storytelling are preserved and transmitted across generations. Griots, the oral historians and custodians of tradition, utilize music to recount ancestral narratives, epic tales, and historical accounts.

### **Social Commentary and Cultural Critique**

Music in traditional African societies often serves as a platform for social commentary and cultural critique. Griots and other musicians employ their art to address societal issues, voice dissent, and advocate for social change. This allows communities to reflect on their values and challenge prevailing norms (Diawara, 1990).

The role music plays in African community cannot be underestimated, because the daily life of Africans as such be cannot detached from music. However, the encroachment was widespread influence of Christianity and Islam indeed relegated the use and function of traditional religion and to the level of disregard. The traditional devotees could not freely perform their required sacrifices at the coming of these new religions. These traditional activities were regarded as idolatry. Agu (2011:16) comments that in spite of the well-established musical traditions and practice among Nigerian societies, external influences laid the foundation for infiltration of other music genres, including pop and contemporary music. Music is intimately linked with individuals and groups of people within society in Africa. It is a powerful part of culture and everyday life and a vital aspect of both sacred and secular ceremonies. Traditional music is still practised and performed widely in spite of the influence

of globalisation on world cultures (Ayeyemi, 2017). This is therefore reflected in the musical example that in spite of the introduction of the new religions and their influences, traditionalist will continue to perform their rites, rituals and do their festivals. No other religion would stop them from doing this.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that Music as a pedagogical tool in African societies is utilized to convey knowledge and life lessons. It facilitates learning by engaging multiple senses and enhancing memory retention. Through rhythmic patterns, melodic structures, and poetic lyrics, music aids in the transmission of historical events, moral teachings, social customs, and practical skills.

### **Procedure for Teaching Using Indigenous Music in African Societies**

Using indigenous music in teaching in African societies can be an effective and culturally relevant approach to education. This procedure outlines the steps to incorporate indigenous music into the teaching process. Below are the benefiting highlights that support the implementation of this approach.

- a. **Understand the Significance of Indigenous Music:** Familiarize yourself with the cultural, historical, and social significance of indigenous music in African societies. Explore research articles and books that discuss the role of music in African cultures.
- b. **Identify Indigenous Music Styles:** Researching and identifying specific indigenous music styles that are relevant to the African societies worthy of teaching, considering various genres, such as traditional folk songs, drumming rhythms, storytelling chants, and ceremonial music and consult ethnomusicological studies and fieldwork reports to gain deeper insights into different music styles.
- c. **Integrate Indigenous Music into Lesson Plans:** Aligning the chosen indigenous music styles with the curriculum

objectives and topics. Incorporating the music into lesson plans, ensuring a balanced integration with other instructional materials. Connect the music to relevant subjects, such as history, geography, social studies, or language arts.

- d. **Involve Indigenous Musicians and Elders:** Collaborating with local musicians, community members, and elders who possess expertise in the indigenous music styles. Visiting or and inviting them to share their knowledge, perform, or conduct workshops for students. Respectfully acknowledge and learn from their cultural traditions and practices.
- e. **Encourage Active Participation:** Engaging students actively in the learning process by encouraging them to participate in creating and performing indigenous music. Providing opportunities for students to play traditional instruments, learn songs, practice rhythms, and explore dance movements. Foster a sense of pride and cultural identity among students through active involvement.
- f. **Promote Cultural Understanding and Appreciation:** Facilitating discussions about the cultural context and significance of the indigenous music styles. Encouraging students to reflect on their own cultural heritage and draw connections to the music being studied. Promote empathy, respect, and appreciation for diverse cultures and traditions.

## **Conclusion**

Indigenous music has emerged as a powerful mode of teaching in African societies, facilitating the preservation of cultural heritage, fostering learning outcomes, and promoting cultural inclusivity that foster cultural appreciation, identity, and understanding among students. By embracing indigenous music and leveraging modern technology, educators can unlock the full potential of this valuable educational resource. However, careful consideration must be given



to ethical and cultural sensitivities to ensure the authentic representation and respectful integration of indigenous music in educational practices through lesson plans and involving local musicians and community members, educators can create a meaningful and inclusive learning environment. By recognizing the role of music in traditional African education, we can appreciate its richness, diversity, and enduring significance in these societies. By appreciating the power of music, the youth of this generation can gain deeper insights into the cultural richness and diversity of traditional African societies by paying positive attention to the factors enumerated above.

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