

MUSIC STUDENTS' UNPRECEDENTED APATHY TO STUDIES: THE NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

This paper interrogated Nnamdi Azikiwe University music students' unprecedented apathy towards studies with the aim of finding a solution to the problem. The problem has spread to all the levels of undergraduate study and is gradually becoming irredeemable if no pragmatic counter measures are engaged. The malaise portends obvious dangers for the students, the lecturers, the Department of Music, the entire University and the future of formal music education in Nigeria because of the existential threats it poses to the department. Primary data was sourced from class room observation of the behavior of the students, class attendance registers, performance rating of the students in quiz and examinations over the span of four years, group rehearsal attendance and participation, lecture notes and lecture delivery of the lecturers. Questionnaires and interviews were granted to the students and lecturers of the Department to seek their candid opinions regarding the problem and this formed the secondary source of data of the research. Data garnered from these sources were considered and analyzed using some qualitative tools of data analysis. Findings show that the major factors fueling the apathy are forced admission, prevailing economic crises, trending peer pressure to amass wealth, social media/internet culture, issues from mobile learning, parental indifference, financial distress, inadequate teaching approaches, and rigid curriculum of studies. It is recommended that students should not be admitted into the department of music against their wish, more learner friendly approaches should be engaged by the lecturers to encourage the students, students also should put off all peer distractions and youthful utopia and brace up to the challenges of university education.

[keywords: Unprecedented apathy to music, quest for solution, forced admission]

Introduction

Music as a course of study in Nigerian higher institutions has been a threatened specie for quite a long time. Even though the subject flourished during the post –independence era of the early sixties that produced the first generation and second generation of Nigerian foremost musicologists such as Ayo Bankole, Fela Sowande, Wilberforce Echezona, Akin Euba, etc. This wave of musicological glory also birthed some Music departments across Nigeria as found in the University of Nigeria Nsukka and Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife. The same musical tornado swept through the length and breadth of the nation producing further generations of renowned musicologists in Nigeria such as Professors Meki Nzewi, Omotola Omubiyi-Obidike, Richard Okafor, Tunji Vidal, Mereni, Idolor, Onyi Nwamkpa, Christian Onyeji, Agatha Onwuekwe, Femi Adedeji, Sr. Cordis-Achikeh, Charles Aluede, Alvan –Ikoku nwamara, Nnamdi Onuora-Oguno, Rev.Fr. Emmanuel Umezina, Eunice Ibekwe, and a host of others.

The musical evolution that produced these great minds was so strong that everyone envisaged that the coming generations of student musicologists would surpass their pedigree but the musicological apathy witnessed currently amongst music students is worrisome.

Over a decade's experience (2012-2023) in teaching undergraduate courses from year one to year four has kept one worried about the future of music in Nigerian Universities with Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, as a case study. It is now fashionable to majority of the students to attend lectures whenever they feel like and always late whenever they decide to attend. Many dress like entertainers, fashionistas, divas, and touts to school, with provocative dread locks, dyed hairs, torn jeans, half-clad and skimpy wears leaving one with the impression that they care less about any norm and codes regarding dressing on campus.

A review of pertinent concepts

- **Learning**

Many scholars have made attempts on this concept but we shall adopt Robert Gagne's position as a working definition for this paper. Gagne (1977) explains that:

Learning is a change in human disposition or capability which persists over a period of time, and which is not simply ascribable to processes of growth. The kind of change called learning exhibits as a change in behavior, and the inference of learning is made by comparing what behavior was possible before the individual was placed in a "learning situation", and what behavior can be exhibited after such treatment. The change maybe, and often is, an increased capability for some type of performance. It may also be an altered disposition of the sort called "attitude" or "interest" or "value." The change must have more than momentary permanence; it must be capable of being retained over some period of time. Finally, it must be distinguishable from the kind of change that is attributable to growth, such as change in height or the development of muscles through exercise (p.3).

The explanation above has furnished this paper with the adequate knowledge to define the concept of musical learning which is pertinent to this paper

- **Apathy to Learning**

Apathy is lack of enthusiasm, zeal, energy, or interest in anything (Encarta Dictionary, 2009).

- **The Concept of Musical Learning**

Musical learning is a change in human disposition towards the acquisition of adequate skills in singing, music reading, tone discrimination, composing, dancing, arranging, playing and mastering of musical instruments, etc. The philosophy behind every musicological endeavor whether in the kindergarten, primary, secondary, University, or conservatory is towards musical learning.

- **Apathy to Learning Music**

Apathy to learning music is a lack of enthusiasm, energy, and zeal in learning music. The general term for such people is 'philistine'. Although this might sound derogatory but truly there are people who are naturally unmusical no matter the amount of music around them.

For a working definition in the context of this paper, we shall define Music students' apathy to music as students' lack of enthusiasm, zeal, and energy in learning music.

This is unprecedented and prevalent amongst music students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. It is natural and normal for individuals to show little or no interest in any field of study but for formally admitted and bona fide music students of a higher institution to demonstrate the degree of apathy found recently is completely worrisome and unacceptable.

- **The Philosophical Fulcrum of Music studies**

Generally, the philosophy of education is the basis of principles and the application of those principles in solving educational problems. Reid(1962) simply put it this way, 'Philosophy of education in the most general sense is the application of philosophy to problems of education'(p.17). No educational endeavor succeeds without a clear philosophy or vision. The philosophy of music studies, therefore, are established principles and assumptions that inform

the practice of music education as a discipline. One of such visions upon which music education is premised is that music builds holistic man through the learning and appreciation of the emotive elements of music such as tuneful melody, sound of a musical instrument, different pitch structures interwoven in harmony and texture, etc.

- **Learning Sequences in Music**

Gordon(1980), expatiated on the notion of ‘learning sequences in music’ by which he meant the logically ordered precepts and principles that guarantee learning in music. He argued that:

Cognitive psychologists interested in learning, as it relates to perception, memory, conception, and psychoacoustics, have largely concerned themselves with isolated aspects of learning in terms of information processing rather than with the logical sequence of integrated principles of learning. Emphasis has been placed increasingly on *how*, in comparison to *what*, one learns. And, unfortunately, only a modicum of the writing of music psychologists bears on a generic interpretation of the sequential process in music. There have not been advanced rigorous experimental research models upon which a definitive sequential learning process, particularly for music, can be based. But current educational practice necessitates the development of objectives which are sequentially ordered (p.vii).

Some of the learning sequences in music mentioned by Gordon are, skill learning sequence, content learning sequence, combined skill and content learning sequences, pattern sequence within content learning sequence, etc.

The whole point of Gordons research is that what to be learned in music and how they are sequenced are pertinent to effective music learning. The revelation is also pertinent to this paper because if students have a lot to grapple with in learning music why then do they choose to while away time pursuing mere fantasies?

On the other hand, music educators should stand up to the challenge for a rigorous experimental research models upon which a definitive sequential music learning process can be based and the development of objectives which are sequentially ordered as highlighted by Gordon from the forgoing.

- **Some Psychological and Sociological Considerations in Learning Music**

Music presents itself as art and not just art but performing art and this nature comes with several psychological and sociological peculiarities. Virtually all aspects or elements of music such as tone, pitch, melody, rhythm, texture, dynamics, etc., are all first heard via the auditory system, processed by the brain, and perceived by the mind. No one has ever seen tone, pitch, or rhythm; they are all a function of the brain’s processing and mind’s perception. This principle is termed ‘audiation’ by Gordon(1980).The implication of this principle is that musical learning depends a great deal on the students’ ‘audiative’ capacity and willingness. If students have low audiation and unwillingness to perceive musical elements learning becomes futile no matter the efforts of the teachers.

Music also requires and demands some sociological considerations for its expression. No composer composes for themselves, neither does a choir or ensemble perform for themselves; there is always an audience, no matter how small or immaterial, to appreciate the work. Art exists for appreciation, even the composing, rehearsing, and preparations for the actual performance, entertainment, and the appreciation of a target audience, most times require a group of people who function as a team or ensemble. A musical band usually consists of about six to seven-man squad, a choir can range from five to about one thousands choristers. The target audience for a band, orchestra, choir, or any musical ensemble can fill a concert hall to the brim.

These sociological peculiarities about music sometimes do not augur well with some students who find it uncomfortable to mix in a group. Students are required, as a prerequisite to

graduating, to engage with fellow students in ensembles for group learning, rehearsals, and performance presentations. Even their personal performances termed Individual Performance studies (IPS), which run from year one to fourth year, are always presented before a panel of adjudicators. These peculiarities create no room for introversion amongst students. But so many of them still find it difficult adjusting through these processes.

- **Music Studies/Musicology**

Music studies or musicology refers to the discipline of music in all its ramifications as it is studied in the university or higher institutions.

The Nigerian Musicological Milieu in Retrospect

Music studies in Nigerian universities has traversed a difficult history to emerge as what it is now. Okafor (2005) observed that:

Formal music education (in Nigeria) started with some teacher training colleges and secondary schools which enlarged their curricula to add lessons in the rudiments of music to singing and concert shows. The University of Nigeria, Nsukka, the first autonomous University in Nigeria, established the first college of music in Africa. It was a great step towards the dignity of music and the musician. One of the pioneer advanced teacher training colleges (college of education), the Alvan Ikoku College of education, Owerri, also introduced music in its curriculum and began producing music teachers (trainers) for secondary schools and teacher training colleges. The common problem of the pioneering days was that students were not as well equipped as was desirable, their exposure to music was rather limited and their grasp of the subject was weak... Even students who were in non-music disciplines were exposed to organized music in their General studies. A diploma programme in Music Education- half conservatory and half academic- was introduced to train practicing musicians and music educators, leaving the degree programme for the academically minded and the potential trainers of trainers (p.198).

A lot can be gleaned from Okafor's report above regarding Nigerian musicological journey to limelight. The major point in Okafor's submission is that music is a demanding field of study and requires individuals who are committed and focused.

Musicology in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (2004-2022)

Music studies in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka operates on the holistic philosophy of music where every student is exposed on diverse forms and genres of music from which they choose a specialty towards graduation. Students are exposed to rudiments of music, vocal and choral studies, musical instruments studies, musicianship studies, Individual Performance Studies(IPS), keyboard studies, ethnomusicology, music research methods, music pedagogy, music theory and composition, ensemble studies, performance specialties, etc. Competent lecturers have always been engaged in the various fields of musicology mentioned earlier and who handle the students with an appreciable degree of competence.

The robust curriculum and the competency of the lecturers have benefited so many students and produced graduates who are actively involved in various forms of music practice in the society such as music directors, choral directors, music cantors, music event managers and planners, music teachers, composers, choristers, band leaders, choristers, arrangers, etc.

However, the issue of some students' apathy and disinterest to music still persists despite the fortification of the department with robust curriculum and competent lecturers. The situation calls to mind the proverbial 'taking the horse to the waters but finding it difficult to make it drink water'.

Students' Attitude towards Lectures

The attitude of music students towards lectures as observed from 2013 to 2023 is worrisome and apparently has metastasized into full apathy to learning which is the burden of this paper. These negative attitudes to lectures are manifested in so many ways such as:

- **Resuming late to school**

It is now culture amongst most students to resume late for school. Some resume two months, one month, two weeks, etc., into the semester depending on their convictions. Many resume late fully fortified with all kinds of lies and excuses such as hospitalization, accident, bereavement, financial challenges, travel, concerts, etc. This attitude has endangered most of the students' studies and has also affected the overall output of the department. If a department with student capacity of about two hundred resumes every semester with about fifty, it is a problem.

- **Staying away from lectures**

Staying away from lectures is another identified negative attitude of music students lately. Even after resuming late to school, so many of them still resort to the habit of staying away completely from lectures most part of a semester and appear during exam as bona fide students to take exams. When students stay away from lectures which are manned by lecturers, how would they fare in group ensemble rehearsals manned by their fellow students? It is difficult to understand why students who gained admission into the university after all the painstaking drills, should resort to dodging lectures which is their preoccupation in the university.

- **Lateness to lectures**

When students decide to come for lectures, most of them come late; some ten, twenty, or thirty minutes into the lecture. This attitude of lateness is very demeaning to the lecturers and the department. The distraction of scolding and advising habitual student late comers is enormous for lectures. The lecturers who dared query the students' lateness were always entertained with all kinds of flimsy excuses such as waking up late, lack of water for bathing, no breakfast to eat, no means of transportation, etc.

- **Indifference during lectures**

Even when students finally get into lecture halls for lectures, the level of indifference displayed is always amazing. Some enjoy dozing during class, some others prefer tuning off completely no matter the efforts of the lecturer to capture their attention, or even the duration of the lecture. The litmus test to this observation is asking some of the students to repeat a mentioned point in the course of the lecture and the difficulty in responding appropriately exposes the indifference. Indifference to lectures defeats the idea of a lecture and discourages the lecturer no matter how prepared and enthusiastic he or she is to be productive.

- **Operating phones in class**

The height of students' negative attitude to learning is manifest in their latest attitude of operating cell phones in class during lectures. Even after repeated warnings from the school authority and lecturers they still brazenly engage their android phones during classes. The male students usually get busy with online trading with their phones while in class while the female students get absorbed with taking selfies, chatting on different online social platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, snapchat, tik-Tok, etc., when lectures are on. This development is terribly worrisome for the future of musicology.

- **Indifference to assignments**

Very few students now make out time for their assignments. Assignments are part of general assessment and evaluation of teaching but the idea is defeated when students ignore it completely. When students snub assignments the feedback system of teaching and assessment is blocked and this is very discouraging for the system and to the lecturers involved.

- **Indifference to group rehearsals**

The same crop of students who snub class assignments have also been found to renege on group rehearsals which is statutory to their improvement, performance, and graduation. Many of them have even dared to fight against the group leaders and group members without cause.

- **Exam malpractice**

The end point of late resumption, lateness to class, indifference to lectures and rehearsals is examination malpractice. It is disturbing that the crop of students who have rejected lectures and learning etiquette have perfected the art of exam malpractice through phones, ear piece, blue tooth, manual copying, etc. Despite all the punitive measures stipulated against malpractice these students still brazenly engage in the game.

- **Indifference to grades**

It is expected, under normal circumstance, that grades should serve as motivation or deterrent to both serious and unserious students but the idea is not working at all on the lackadaisical students. One expects them to become sober and seek for solution but they care less about their grades. So many of them even jettison the idea of repeating a course out of pride. It is quite disturbing where these crop of students are headed.

Report from the Students

Several students were interviewed in the course of this research regarding their rising apathy to learning and their responses are presented here:

- **Forced admission**

Seventy-five percent of the interviewed students mentioned that they were actually ‘forced’ to study music as an alternative to admission hassles. The popular aphorism amongst them is that ‘music chose them and not them that chose music’ The argument is that many of them found themselves in the department of music by default and not by design. The truth of this revelation should not be ignored since university admission has been comprised into forced admissions which negates the core principles of education which should be by choice. When individuals are coerced into studying courses that they are not passionate about the outcome is usually disastrous hence the unprecedented apathy we are currently witnessing and interrogating.

But in fairness to this university strategy which tries to engage the youths in university education in the interim instead of leaving them frustrated and turning to the streets, the practice is somewhat justifiable. The challenges of getting admission into popular courses such as medicine, pharmacy, Engineering, law, and computer science are enormous and are not something that could just be solved by rule of thumb particularly with the recent thronging and yearning of thousands of youths for higher education.

Prospective candidates for university admissions have been severally enjoined to engage seriously with their studies to beat the prevalent competitiveness but the fact remains that even when most of the candidates perform well for admissions, the criteria for the final admission is always flawed by nepotism, cronyism, and favoritism.

- **Attitude of lecturers**

Students have unanimously voiced out that the attitude of some of the lecturers is inimical to their studies ranging from superiority complexes, methods of teaching, insensitivity to the students’ challenges, harshness in class, poor motivation, and incompetency in delivering some of the courses. These developments need to be handled with some sense of urgency because they sit at the base of the apathy in question.

- **Teaching methods**

Students lament that they crave for interactive and learner -friendly approaches to teaching from the lecturers. According to them, the usual instruction to ‘go and read up and go and

practice' by some of the lecturers has left them wondering what they actually came to do in the university. Music is very much a practical subject with all the concomitant practices, rehearsals, and performances in singing and playing instruments and so should be handled with a more interactive method for the students to cope. A situation also where a course is not taught for an entire semester and yet students are coerced to take the exam is worrisome.

- **Financial difficulties**

The students lamented heavily that the weight of financial difficulties upon them is enormous and heavily impinges on their studies. The high cost of hostel accommodation outside the school, school fees, medicals, transportation, feeding, course works and assignments, fieldwork, etc., are just some of the issues they must grapple with every semester. The prevalent economic downturn in the country has also worsened the hope of reviving the affected students towards their studies.

- **Health challenges**

Most of the students live with several severe health challenges such as panic attacks, ulcer, seizure, kidney problems, hypertension, diabetes, hemorrhage, hemorrhoids, chronic malaria, fibroids, hernia, etc., and these ailments take a toll on them and cut their concentration from studies. Some are also autistic, some have some learning disabilities such as, dysphasia, amnesia, poor attention span, anxiety, and other cognitive disabilities.

Some students have also been found to be tone deaf which is an auditory impairment of not being able to hear and discriminate notes.

These health challenges invariably drive people to nonchalance to learning.

- **Peer pressure**

Peer pressure remains a formidable force in influencing youths no matter the measures that have been put in place to forestall it. When some students come to school with their self-driven cars and flaunting their car keys, designer wears, expensive watches and phones, and talking very loud and big, the effect on the rest of the students is obvious. The latest slang amongst them is '*school na scam*', '*adulthood na scam*'. The trending gist and news amongst them is online trading, cryptocurrency, e-marketing, yahoo plus, etc. This trending pop culture cannot foster enthusiasm for education.

- **State of the nation**

The current socio-economic situation of the country and the flagrant body language of the ruling elites have all signaled to everyone and to the youths that one should hope for nothing from the government nor the nation. Youths have been labelled lazy and told blatantly that there are no jobs for them even after graduating from the university. These are red flags for apathy in school amongst students. When politicians are looting the treasury with brazen impunity, jobs are not created, the economy collapsing, inflation and unemployment rate rising astronomically, it is difficult to engage the youths to concentrate to study in the midst of the quandary.

Report from the Lecturers

Some of the lecturers were also interviewed for their input on the cause of the students' unprecedented apathy towards learning and their responses are presented here also:

- **Laziness**

Most of the students are reportedly lazy: lazy to school, lazy in class, lazy on assignments and field work, lazy with projects, even lazy with their personal hygiene. Students are noticeably too lazy to take notes during lectures and also too lazy to make meaningful contributions during lecture series. This pervasive behavior is at the root of the general apathy in question.

- **Youthful exuberance**

The desire to explore the world with all the excitements and vanities therein has

vehemently drawn most of the students away from their studies. This attitude is noticeable in their dress codes (half-clad dresses, colored hairs, dreadlocks, tattoos and piercings, restiveness, and inattention to serious academic matters. This youthful exuberance isolates them from the realities of their academic pursuit.

- **Modernism**

So many of the students believe that the present mode of university education is outdated and therefore should be jettisoned. They see their course works, regular attendance to lectures, lecturers, classroom methods as outmoded and not suitable for their generation. This is noticeable in the general attitude of not having textbooks, lecture notes nor taking notes but rather downloading and capturing everything with their android phones. Some have even suggested that a group chat room should be created for each course for lectures and discussions online instead of wasting time on analogue classroom engagement.

Modern approaches to pedagogy are good developments but the place of some of the orthodox modes of education can never be overemphasized. Even most of the students who clamor for modern methodologies never show interest whenever they are set up.

- **Peer pressure**

A good number of the students who got entrapped in the apathy prison started well as enthusiastic students but got reeducated by their peers into trivializing their studies. The power of peer pressure cannot be underestimated in the university setting where several youths from different backgrounds and orientations converge with all kinds of ideologies, pressures, and influences on one another.

- **Utopia**

Many students suffer from utopia: a peculiar delusion of a well-made life free of challenges and problems. Most of them find it difficult to break free from this state of mind and some realize the dilemma very late in their studies. Some fantasize on travelling to the United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, or the United States to complete their studies, some also wallow in the utopia of taking over their father's business empires with or without graduation. Some of the students also have been cut in the delusional web of being geniuses and too intelligent for the department, lecturers, and lectures. One once boasted that his musical compositions are far too high for the standard of the music department.

Utopia impedes on the students' grip on the realities of academic pursuits and readily furnishes them with apathy towards their studies as witnessed presently.

- **Disrespect**

Most of the students fall into the breed of disrespectful youths, showing disregard for the university system, departments, lecturers, and lectures. Learning and disrespect are mutually exclusive. If a learner reserves no respect for his teacher, it is difficult for learning to flow. If there is disrespect for the lecturer, there is concomitant disregard for the knowledge he endeavors to impart.

This pervading disrespect manifests as gum chewing in class, ranting during lectures, chatting with friends online and offline during classes, walking into class when lecture has commenced, challenging lectures and fellow students to fights, refusal to pay school fees and other relevant dues, inattention to assignments and class works, etc. This ignoble attitude finally blossoms into full apathy to studies.

Bringing Piaget's Notion of the 'Critical Period' into Perspective

Okeke (2013), in an in-depth study, found out that the poor performance of some students in the Department of Music, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka was linked to Piaget's concept of the 'Critical Period' which affected their background in music during their formative years of learning. Okeke (2013) submitted that:

Piaget's notion of the 'critical period' as implied in his theory of mental development still raises some concern with regards to music education in Nigeria. Piaget's notion of the 'critical period' posits that every normal person is imbued with the potentiality of forming, organizing, processing, and interpreting concepts starting from infancy through sensitive stages of their development (0-11 yrs) and beyond this 'sensitive or critical' stage, cognitive development could be seriously hampered. Piaget's discovery, doubtless, has immensely influenced modern educational ideology, policy. Formal education and curricula are now designed to commence as early as possible and to pace such factors as age, mental capability, and adaptability of the learner. Kindergarten/nursery pupils, for instance, begin their formal education with educational materials (toys, plastic blocks, colorful counters, etc.) suitable for their sensori-motor and pre-operational stages. In fact, the famous *Suzuki* method of teaching/learning the violin was largely drawn from Piaget's theory. The Suzuki violin method demands the direct involvement and supervision of the learner's mother. The child from a tender age (3 years) learns by direct imitation of the mother whom he sees as a role model. Unfortunately, the Nigerian situation is such that most learners become formally involved in music when they must have passed through primary or secondary schools.

The relevance of this empirical study to the present paper is that students who were deprived or who never experienced formal music education in their formative years will definitely find it difficult to adjust to music at the university level. Although some still wriggle through the difficulties but majority resort to apathy to music at the university level as a result.

The Migratory Syndrome

The increasing disinterest for music has grown to a worrisome dimension, creating a situation where twenty percent of second year music students request to leave the department for other departments every session. It has even become a tradition for many of them to migrate to theater and film studies department which is a sister and closer department to music in the same faculty and sharing similar curricula with regards to performance.

This poses some existential threats to music and puts the department under tremendous pressure to survive each session: losing about twenty percent of students to a sister department every year is quite disturbing knowing that the existence and survival of departments are tied to their student population ratio.

The problem with the migratory syndrome exhibited by students is that those 'migratory students' have never excelled nor demonstrated competency in their new departments. This reveals that the issue is not about changing departments but the preparedness of the student to study.

This revelation also absolves the department of music of some alleged educational maladjustments but rather points to the fact that no discipline is too hard nor easy; what the learner requires is focus and hard work.

Perceived reasons for the Apathy

- **Forced Admissions**

The admission process in Nigerian Universities has been operating on a faulty philosophy for long: that 'any candidate who falls below the benchmark of their choice course can study any other available course'. This ideology has created too many problems for the university education system. Because the most sought after courses like medicine, law, pharmacy and Engineering require relatively very high cut off marks, unsuccessful candidates veer into other available courses out of frustration. The university management, in a bid to mop up the fall out

of unsuccessful students in their choice courses, resort to foisting every other courses on the unfortunate students thereby creating more confusion.

Music Department, for instance, receives more students who were forced to study music than those who actually applied for music. So we have the situation of students who were admitted into the department by ‘default’ and those who were admitted by ‘design’. The popular slogan amongst the ‘default’ students of music is that, ‘music chose them’.

It is difficult to engage and guide students with this kind of mindset into successful learning.

- **Financial challenges**

The prevailing economic crises in the country has laid much financial burden and challenges on everyone including students. Studying music is financially demanding with regards to purchasing of musical instruments, buying of textbooks, buying of costumes for rehearsals and performance, photocopying of pieces for practice and performance, payment of dues, payment of group dues and contributions, etc. students are required to photocopy pieces and pass through about four different ensemble groups in the course of their study and these have several monetary obligations. Many of the students have found these financial obligations too challenging to cope with and have quit the department on account of that and some others remained but with noticeable disinterest.

- **Tone deafness**

Tone deafness is an auditory defect that incapacitates the victim from discriminating between pitches and notes. Since music basically deals with tones and pitches, it would be frustrating to study music with the problem of tone deafness. The study discovered that many music students are tone deaf and hiding it. The consequences are enormous: they fail to grasp on several courses, fail the courses, and gradually lose interest in their studies.

- **‘Critical Period’ in learning**

This has already been highlighted from the foregoing drawing from Piaget’s theory of Critical Period mentioned in Okeke(2013). Students who have not been exposed to music in their formative years (nursery/primary/secondary schools) find it difficult to cope with the subject at the tertiary level of learning.

- **Peer pressure**

The trending inordinate quest for wealth amongst youths has really eaten deep into all fabrics of the society including education. The peer pressure to ‘meet up’, ‘belong’, and the clamor for stardom has conditioned the minds of the youths against the long term benefits of education.

- **Social media influence**

The social media is currently a bizarre world of its own now with the concomitant pop culture, showmanship, body positivity, post-modern ideologies, individualism, etc. It bears such enormous influence on the youths that it has become a problem for them to concentrate on any other thing. No student can stay one minute without their android phones which enables them to get glued to social media the whole of the day eating up their productive hours. Students would rather sleep on Facebook, Instagram, Tik-Tok, WhatsApp, snapchat, etc., than engage in their studies.

- **Pop culture**

Popular culture consists of the cultural elements that prevail (at least numerically) in any given society, mainly using the more popular media, in that society’s vernacular language. It results from the daily interactions, needs and desires and cultural ‘moments’ that make up the everyday lives of the mainstream. It can include any number of practices, including those pertaining to cooking, clothing, mass media and the many facets of entertainment such as sports and literature [Wikipedia, 2023. Culture and Diversity]

- **Culture of Exam Malpractice in Secondary Schools**

Exam malpractice has become a culture in virtually all secondary schools across the country both private and public schools. This malaise usually manifests during the West African Senior School Examination Certificate examination(WASSCE) where students are coerced to pay a certain sum of money for ‘help’ in the examination. The evil is usually masterminded by the principals, vice-principals, school directors, subject teachers, parents, and WASSCE invigilators of the various schools by subtly telling the students that WASSCE examination is very difficult for them to handle without ‘help’ and therefore that they should contribute money for the so-called help. Sometimes these levies are made compulsory for all the students for all the subjects. A stealth investigation of secondary schools holding WASSCE examination across the country has confirmed this filth in the education sector.

The aftermath of this swindle is that the perpetrators make so much money from the students which they share amongst themselves and then push the students to higher institutions where they continue as experts in exam malpractice.

If the foundation of apathy to hard work is laid in these youths from the secondary schools, it is difficult to break it when they move into the university. The number of students caught in exam malpractice every semester examination is worrisome.

- **Online trading**

Online trading offers youths the opportunity to trade online without limitations.

The profits and financial gains accruing in thousands and millions of foreign currencies from this enterprise is irresistible. Several trading windows abound such as Binance, crypto currency, foreign exchange, Amazon, Jumia, Alibaba, etc. When youths discover that they can make millions of money within a week with the touch pads of their android devices, it is difficult convincing them to bend down to the demands of scholarship.

- **Internet culture and issues from mobile learning**

The internet has come as a blessing to the world particularly because of its unification of the world and improvement of human life through networking sharing of ideas, research, visibility, communication, trading, banking, mobile learning, etc. But the internet culture also came with some problems such as addiction to internet media, gaming, gist, and even mobile learning.

Okeke (2020) bemoaned the demerits of mobile in the educational system particularly music: Nevertheless, the emergence of Mobile Learning (M-Learning) in education, that is, learning via digital or technological interface, has completely transformed the nature of teaching and learning music. Students can now learn guitar or piano basics or virtually anything in music through a digital interface or using an application downloaded from the internet. There is no doubt about the advantages of technology in education but the monopolization of education by digital soft wares and applications is worrisome. Most music students now prefer to go online for their studies on rudiments of music and musical instrumentation instead of attending lectures. They believe that those digital tutors and applications are more advanced than the lecturers assigned to teach the courses. However, most of the lessons sourced from these alternative sources have been found to be inadequate and some of them based on unacceptable principles(Pg.1).

When students have taken the position that mobile learning supersedes normal class learning, it becomes difficult to convince them to attend lectures.

Previous approaches towards solution

Several approaches have been engaged in the past by the Music Department to forestall the problem of apathy among music students without success. Some of them are highlighted here:

- **Improved student supervision**

More time has been allotted to teacher–student(s) contact in the areas of Individual Performance Studies(IPS) and project supervision but this has not been successful because only few students keyed into this approach leaving a greater number unattended. IPS supervision creates room for serious interaction between the students and their respective IPS tutors in the area of practical music which involves voice, orchestral musical instruments and general musicianship. More time and days of contact was suggested for this area so that practical music and musicianship studies, which are areas students find more challenging, would be properly handled.

Project supervision also provides the advantage of better interaction in the area of research for project writing but unfortunately most of the students prefer to commence their project work a week to the date of defense.

- **Online Teaching**

This approach was explored during the COVID-19 period to help students cope even from the comforts of their homes but it was rebuffed. Lecturers discovered to their amazement that only about two percent of the entire students in the department keyed into the online lecture palliative. The students returned to school with some flimsy excuses about high cost of data, poor internet connectivity, faulty phones and devices, no electricity, etc. on the contrary, it was discovered that they were actually busy with their phones throughout the pandemic period running comedy skits, social media mania, and online trading.

- **Reduced lecture and examination time**

The university management magnanimously reduced lecture and examination durations in all departments to enable students grapple with the stress of multiple lectures during the pandemic but this also was counterproductive.

Majority of the students, as observed from the Department of Music, took the gesture for granted by trivializing lecture and examination sessions the more.

- **Simplified Examinations**

Examination questions were also simplified across all faculties of the university during the pandemic attack in order to ameliorate the pressure on students to cope but this almost ruined the university system because it completely lowered the standard of education. Examination questions became so simple and few that the system almost nosedived to standards below secondary school standard.

The lessons from the forgoing experience are grave and are highlighted to enlighten this paper:

- Improved student supervision can help to some extent in winning students over towards learning but it does not entirely solve problem of apathy because there will still be students who would not align with the gesture.
- Online teaching is, more or less, a wasted adventure because only about two percent (2%) of the students key unto it.
- Reducing lecture and examination time for students is counterproductive because it encourages indolence among students.
- Simplifying examination questions for students erodes the core values of education no matter the difficult situation it desires to ameliorate. It portends grave danger for Nigeria’s standard of education which is already in limbo.

The Apathy Cycle

Students’ attitude to learning also affects the lecturers in more negative ways. Education is a two-way system of feed-in and feed-back: the responses from the learner(feedback) conditions the next line of action from the teacher, either to reinforce, reduce, or retract initial efforts

completely. When students demonstrate lack of enthusiasm towards learning for a long period of time, the law of diminishing returns sets in as a consequence.

In the face of students' nonchalance to studies some lecturers brave the situation and continue putting in the best of their energy and mental resources as if nothing ever transpired but to the majority of the lecturers, it is tiresome and wearying.

Some of the dispositions observed from lecturers in response to students' nonchalance to learning are listed below:

- **Reduced appearance to lecture and lecture duration**

More lecturers are increasingly reducing their lecture appearances and duration since very few students turn up for lectures filled with inattention.

- **Reduced supervision contact**

Students' unseriousness towards supervision and contact for Individual Performance Studies (IPS) has pushed lecturers towards reduced supervision time and contact. It is frustrating waiting for a whole day for students who care little or nothing about the essence of teacher-supervision.

- **Lack of interest in teaching and further research**

When students show apathy towards learning, the zeal for teaching and further research by the lecturers dies gradually because the essence of teaching and research is to impact on receptive learners.

All these developments invariably feed the apathy cycle to overwhelming point. It is amazing how one disruption from one end of the educational continuum could affect the entire system. It is foolhardy to think or believe that the students' apathy towards their studies remains their problem; it spreads affecting the lecturers, departments, faculties, the entire University, and the educational system of the nation.

The Blame Game

It is not out of place for this kind of research to witness heated blame games between the opposing sides of the conflict: that is, students versus the lecturers; or students pitted against the university management. The blame game has also been extended to the government as being complicit in the ravaging apathy in universities. Seventy percent of the students whose opinion were sampled heaped all the blame on the lecturers, the university, and the government, completely absolving the students from the chaos. The lecturers, expectedly, blamed the prevalent apathy on the students' unprecedented nonchalance towards their studies.

The blame game could go on for ages without any solution emanating from it. But the solution to a broken system most times lies hidden within the system and that is why we have gone back to the system (students, lecturers, and the University) to seek and sample opinions towards a solution to the problem.

Breaking the Music Apathy Syndrome

Opinion of students, lecturers, and some educational consultants were sampled to proffer solution to the apathy syndrome as interrogated in this paper and their respective suggestions have been put forward here:

Suggestions from Students in breaking the Apathy syndrome

Interviews granted to students yielded these suggestions:

- The university should lessen the burden upon students by reducing the number of courses expected of each student per semester and session.
- Lecturers should adopt a friendly approach in interacting with students to make them relax and win them over for renewed zeal towards studies

- The current methods of teaching should be completely overhauled and replaced with learner friendly ones
- Students should be allowed to choose their musical specialties from the first year, whether some should choose performance, composing, instrumentation, or just singing without the rigors of the Individual performance studies (IPS) as it is designed now.
- The current grading system which is harsh and discourages students with too many failures should be reviewed and replaced with a pragmatic one.
- Students should be exempted from the regular command performances and shows within and outside the University which usually distract them from their studies.
- The department should take cognizance of the fact that most of the students found their way into the department by default and not by design and therefore should be nurtured to stay.
- The curriculum and contents of the courses should be redesigned to accommodate students who missed music education at the ‘critical periods’ of their learning.
- The department should, at the point of admission and orientation, give students a clear and lucid direction on what music, as a course of study, holds for them after graduating.
- The university should employ lecturers who can really be meaningfully impactful on the students’ lives and studies.

Suggestions from Lecturers in breaking the Apathy syndrome

Some lecturers were also interviewed and their collective suggestions are listed below:

- Admissions should be based on merit and choice. The practice of packing all sorts of prospective students into the Department of Music and hoping they will improve or love music over time has proven to be counterproductive. Only students who have passion to study music, gifted in music, and enthusiastic about music should be admitted into the music department.
- Students should break free from the shackle of laziness which has hindered many of them from facing the realities of life and their studies. There is no degree of professional teaching that can sensitize a lazy learner unless the cloak of laziness is shredded off.
- Students should also break free from the youthful utopia that life works out well with or without hard work. The utopia that there is a greener life outside school, abroad, and on the streets has completely misguided many of them from concentrating on their studies for just four years to graduate.
- The Department of music should be adequately equipped with state-of-the-art gadgets, musical instruments, sound systems, concert halls, computers, and manpower to make the department more efficient and attractive to prospective students of music.

Recommendations

These are the recommendations of this paper:

- Students should not be admitted into the Department of music by ‘default’ rather by ‘design’.
- The rot of exam malpractice ravaging the secondary schools should be stopped immediately so that the trend of shipping malpractice-driven and malpractice-infested students into the university system and the department of music would end.
- Musical instruments should not be assigned to students haphazardly but rather with consideration to their physical dispositions and choice so that the problem of frustration and apathy to music would be solved.
- The idea of reducing lecture time, exam time, and the curriculum content should be jettisoned without delay because of the damage it has caused already.

- The Department of Music should be sufficiently equipped to meet the demands of the time so that it can become rewarding and fulfilling to students.
- The Department of Music should devise modalities of arousing students' interest in their studies and also engaging their potentialities in creative ventures and financially profiting adventures such as performances, concerts, shows, music recording, music contracts, etc. This approach would give them some sense of self-realization and self-actualization in music and through music.
- Lecturers should, as a matter of urgency, review their approaches and methods of teaching to make it more learner-friendly.

Conclusion

It is possible to break off students' unprecedented apathy towards music that is gradually ravaging the Department of music of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka if the solutions proffered in this paper are carefully employed. The situation is very worrisome and should not be ignored. Invariably what sustains a department and the entire university system is the students' population base. When few or no students find a given department interesting due to some of the reasons raised in this paper, the affected department suffers extinction. Many departments of study in various institutions have also closed down because they neglected the impact of students' apathy as highlighted in this paper.

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