

INTEGRATING YORUBA FOLKSONGS INTO THE MUSIC CURRICULUM OF NIGERIAN SCHOOLS IN THE SOUTHWEST, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This article presents an analysis of the integration of Yoruba folksongs into the music curriculum of Nigerian schools in the Southwest of Nigeria. Drawing on fieldwork conducted in Yoruba communities in Nigeria, the authors examine the effective and appropriate use of Yoruba folksongs into the curricula in terms of methods and benefits, suggest a plan for using Yoruba folksongs in the music curriculum of Nigerian schools, and discuss the methods of incorporating Yoruba folksongs into the curricula of Nigerian schools. This study relied solely on oral tradition, written documents, personal oral interviews for information, and experiential knowledge in its approach and methodology. This study makes use of published and unpublished library and archive materials. This involved reading through printed materials, which are relevant to this study in libraries and archives. Such materials include books, articles in journals, newspaper reports and documentation, dictionaries, and encyclopedias, among others. These materials were consulted, reviewed, and analyzed for testing and validating the position of this study. The citations provided in this study are taken from a scholarly article that analyzes Yoruba folk songs from a musicological perspective, offering insights into their cultural significance and musical characteristics. The overall outcome of this study revealed that incorporating Yoruba folksongs into the curricula of Nigerian schools enhances students' educational experiences, promotes cultural awareness and appreciation, and fosters a deeper connection to Nigeria's diverse cultural heritage. By embracing Yoruba culture and traditions in the classroom using cultural approach, it will enhance effective learning as schools contribute to the holistic development of students and the promotion of a more inclusive and culturally vibrant society. By incorporating Yoruba folksongs into Nigerian school curricula in the south-west, the teachers and the educators will be able to promote cultural diversity, linguistic proficiency, artistic expression, and interdisciplinary learning among students, fostering a deeper appreciation for Nigeria's rich cultural heritage and strengthening connections between the classroom and the wider community. In conclusion, the learners enjoy the lesson more, and they show more interest in the lesson through active participation in the class activities. The learner most especially in the nursery and primary

schools will show their happiness, joy, and motivation in the learning process through the use of Yoruba folksongs incorporated into the music curriculum.

Keynotes: Yoruba, Folksongs, Music, Curriculum, Southwest

Introduction

Music education plays a crucial role in fostering cultural appreciation, artistic expression, and holistic development among students. In the diverse cultural landscape of Nigeria, it is imperative to recognize and celebrate the rich musical heritage of various ethnic groups, including the Yoruba people. Integrating Yoruba folk songs into the music curriculum of Nigerian schools offers numerous benefits, promoting cultural awareness, language development, and interdisciplinary learning while nurturing a sense of pride and identity among students. Yoruba music is a vibrant and diverse musical tradition that reflects the cultural identity, spiritual beliefs, and social customs of the Yoruba people of Nigeria and other parts of West Africa.

Scholars such as Akin Euba (1979), Adedeji (2012), Awe (2004), Faloye (2006), and Ogundeji (2015) remark that Yoruba music encompasses a wide range of genres, instruments, and styles, each serving various purposes within the community, from religious rituals to social gatherings and entertainment. Here are some key summaries of their assertions on aspects of Yoruba music:

1. Drumming: Drumming is central to Yoruba music and plays a crucial role in religious ceremonies, cultural celebrations, and social events. Various types of drums are used, each with its unique sound and purpose. The talking drum (*dùndún*), bata drums, *gbedu*, and *sakara* are among the most prominent Yoruba drums. Drumming patterns and rhythms convey messages, invoke spirits, and energize dancers.

2. Vocal Music: Yoruba vocal music is characterized by rich harmonies, call-and-response patterns, and expressive singing styles. Songs may be sung individually or performed by choirs and vocal ensembles. Lyrics often reflect themes of love, praise, storytelling, and spiritual devotion.

3. Traditional Instruments: In addition to drums and vocals, Yoruba music incorporates a wide array of traditional instruments, including:

Agidigbo: A large wooden thumb piano with metal keys, played by plucking the keys with the thumbs.

Omele: A set of metal gongs of different sizes, played with a mallet.

Sekere: A beaded gourd rattle, shaken to produce rhythmic patterns and percussive sounds.

Shekere: A larger version of the *sekere*, made from a dried gourd with beads woven around it, shaken or struck against the hand to create rhythmic patterns.

4. Religious Music: Yoruba religious music is an integral part of traditional spiritual practices, particularly in *Ifá* or *Orisha* worship. Ceremonial music accompanies rituals, sacrifices, and invocations to the *Orishas* (deities), with specific songs and rhythms associated with each deity.

5. Fuji Music: Fuji is a popular genre of Yoruba music that emerged in the late 20th century, blending traditional Yoruba music with elements of Islamic music, highlife, and Afrobeat. Fuji music is characterized by its fast tempo, energetic drumming, and improvisational singing, often featuring themes of social commentary, love, and praise.

6. Apala Music: Apala is another traditional Yoruba music genre known for its rhythmic patterns, repetitive melodies, and storytelling lyrics. It originated as a form of Muslim music but has since evolved to incorporate influences from other genres, including jazz and pop.

Yoruba folksongs are an essential part of the cultural heritage of the Yoruba people of Nigeria and other parts of West Africa. These songs have been passed down through generations orally and serve various purposes within the community, including entertainment, education, cultural preservation, and

social cohesion. Yoruba folksongs encompass a wide range of themes, from historical narratives and moral teachings to praise songs, lullabies, and work songs.

Here are a few examples of Yoruba folksongs and their characteristics, according to scholars such as Beier (1975), Ogunfolakan (1983), and Olaniyan (1999).

1. Aroko Songs: Aroko songs are used for communication and convey messages between individuals or groups within the community. These songs often include coded language and metaphors to deliver specific information or instructions discreetly. Aroko songs were traditionally sung by messengers or griots to relay important news, greetings, or warnings.

2. Oríki: Oríki are praise songs that celebrate the accomplishments, virtues, and lineage of individuals, families, or communities. These songs honour ancestors, royalty, heroes, and other notable figures, highlighting their achievements, noble qualities, and societal contributions. Oríki is often recited or sung during ceremonies, festivals, and social gatherings as a form of recognition and reverence.

3. Ijala: Ijala is a genre of Yoruba folk songs performed by hunters during hunting expeditions or celebrations. These songs typically feature intricate wordplay, rhythmic chanting, and storytelling elements, recounting heroic deeds, hunting adventures, and encounters with wildlife. Ijala songs are accompanied by drumming and other percussion instruments, creating an immersive and lively atmosphere.

4. Awon Owe: Awon Owe, meaning "ancestral chants" or "traditional songs," are traditional Yoruba folk songs that have been passed down through generations. These songs often reflect cultural values, societal norms, and historical events, preserving the collective memory and oral traditions of the Yoruba people. Awon Owe encompasses a diverse range of themes, including love, marriage, childbirth, farming, and spiritual beliefs.

5. Lullabies: Yoruba lullabies, known as "omorinmade" or "orin-ajele," are soothing songs sung to infants and young children to help them sleep or calm their spirits. These lullabies typically feature gentle melodies, repetitive rhythms, and comforting lyrics expressing maternal love, protection, and blessings for the child's well-being. Lullabies are an intimate form of communication between parents and children, nurturing bonds of affection and security within the family.

This write-up engaged in the study of integrating Yoruba folksongs into the music curriculum of Nigerian schools in the Southwest of Nigeria. The objectives of the study are stated below:

1. Incorporating Yoruba folk songs into the curricula in terms of methods and benefits
2. Suggest a plan for using Yoruba folk songs in the music curriculum of Nigerian schools.
3. Discuss the methods of incorporating Yoruba folk songs into the curricula of Nigerian schools.

Materials and Methodology

This study relied solely on oral tradition, written documents, personal oral interviews for information, and experiential knowledge in its approach and methodology. This study makes use of published and unpublished library and archive materials. This involved reading through printed materials, which are relevant to this study in libraries and archives. Such materials include books, articles in journals, newspaper reports and documentation, dictionaries, and encyclopedias, among others. These materials were consulted, reviewed, and analyzed for testing and validating the position of this study.

The citations provided in this study are taken from a scholarly article that analyzes Yoruba folk songs from a musicological perspective, offering insights into their cultural significance and musical characteristics. Through contextual musical analysis, the authors offer insights into the integration

of Yoruba folksongs into the music curriculum of Nigerian schools in the Southwest. Nigeria, contributing to the scholarly understanding of African music traditions and oral traditions.

Discussion and presentation of findings

This study examines the integration of Yoruba folksongs into the music curriculum of Nigerian schools in the Southwest of Nigeria. The presentation and the analysis of the data are discussed according to the research objectives.

Objective 1: Incorporating Yoruba folk songs into the curricula in terms of methods and benefits.

Some scholars, such as Omojola (1995), Waterman (1990), and Wilson (1969), discuss the process of incorporating Yoruba folksongs into the music curriculum of Nigerian schools, as stated below:

Methods

Here are some approaches, as suggested by the scholars:

- 1. Music Education Classes:** Integrate Yoruba folk songs into music education classes as part of the curriculum. Students can learn to sing traditional Yoruba songs, study their melodies, rhythms, and lyrics, and explore the cultural significance of the songs within the Yoruba community.
- 2. Language and Literature Classes:** Use Yoruba folk songs as a resource for teaching the Yoruba language and literature. Students can analyze the lyrics of the songs, study their poetic devices, and learn vocabulary and grammar within the context of the songs.
- 3. Cultural Studies:** Incorporate Yoruba folksongs into cultural studies or social studies classes to explore the cultural heritage of the Yoruba people. Students can learn about the historical background of the songs, their role in Yoruba society, and their significance in various cultural contexts.
- 4. Interdisciplinary Projects:** Encourage interdisciplinary projects that incorporate Yoruba folk songs across different subject areas. For example, students can create multimedia presentations that combine music, language, history, and art to explore the themes and cultural elements of Yoruba folk songs.
- 5. Performing Arts:** Provide opportunities for students to perform Yoruba folksongs through choir performances, musical theatre productions, or cultural festivals. Students can collaborate on arranging and interpreting the songs, incorporating traditional instruments and dance movements to enhance their performances.
- 6. Community Engagement:** Foster connections with the local Yoruba community to enrich students' understanding of Yoruba culture and traditions. Invite guest speakers, musicians, or cultural experts to share their knowledge and experiences related to Yoruba folk songs, providing students with firsthand insights into the cultural significance of the songs.
- 7. Digital Resources:** Utilize digital resources such as recordings, videos, and online archives to access a wide range of Yoruba folk songs for educational purposes. Students can listen to recordings, watch performances, and engage with multimedia materials to deepen their understanding and appreciation of Yoruba music and culture.

Benefits

Here are some approaches, as suggested by the scholars:

- 1. Preservation of Cultural Heritage:** Including Yoruba folksongs in the curriculum helps preserve and promote Nigeria's rich cultural heritage, particularly among the Yoruba ethnic group. By exposing

students to traditional music and cultural practices, schools play a vital role in safeguarding Nigeria's diverse cultural traditions for future generations.

2. Cultural Appreciation and Understanding: Studying Yoruba folk songs allows students to gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of Yoruba culture, language, and traditions. Through the exploration of themes, lyrics, and musical styles, students develop empathy and respect for cultural diversity, fostering intercultural understanding and harmony within the school community.

3. Language Development: Yoruba folksongs provide an engaging and immersive context for language learning, enabling students to improve their proficiency in the Yoruba language. By singing and analyzing the lyrics of Yoruba songs, students enhance their vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and comprehension skills, facilitating language acquisition in a meaningful and enjoyable way.

4. Promotion of Multilingualism: Integrating Yoruba folk songs into the curriculum promotes multilingualism and linguistic diversity within Nigerian schools. By exposing students to different languages and dialects, schools foster a sense of linguistic pride and identity among students while promoting the preservation of indigenous languages and cultures.

5. Artistic Expression and Creativity: Studying and performing Yoruba folk songs encourages students to express themselves artistically and creatively. By learning traditional songs, students develop their musical skills, vocal techniques, and rhythmic abilities, fostering a lifelong appreciation for music and the arts.

6. Interdisciplinary Learning: Yoruba folksongs provide opportunities for interdisciplinary learning across various subject areas, including music, language arts, social studies, and cultural studies. By integrating Yoruba songs into different subjects, schools create holistic learning experiences that connect students' academic studies with real-world cultural contexts and experiences.

7. Community Engagement and Collaboration: Involving the local Yoruba community in the teaching and learning of Yoruba folksongs strengthens ties between schools and communities. Collaborating with local musicians, cultural organizations, and elders enriches students' learning experiences and fosters positive relationships between schools and the wider community.

8. Cultural Pride and Identity: Learning and performing Yoruba folksongs instills a sense of cultural pride and identity among Yoruba students, helping them connect with their cultural heritage and ancestral roots. By celebrating their cultural traditions through music, students develop a strong sense of belonging and self-esteem, contributing to their overall well-being and sense of identity.

Objective 2: Suggest a Plan for Using Yoruba Folksongs in the Music Curriculum of Nigerian Schools

This study suggests a plan for using Yoruba folk songs in the Nigerian school curriculum as follows:

1. Overview of Nigerian Musical Traditions:

- Introduction to the diverse musical genres, instruments, and cultural practices across Nigeria's ethnic groups.
- Emphasis on the significance of Yoruba music within the broader context of Nigerian musical heritage.

2. Study of Yoruba Folksongs:

- Exploration of traditional Yoruba folk songs, including melodies, rhythms, lyrics, and cultural significance.
- Analysis of thematic elements, storytelling techniques, and musical structures found in Yoruba songs.

- Hands-on practice sessions for students to learn and perform Yoruba folksongs individually and in groups.
- 3. Language Integration:**
 - Incorporation of the Yoruba language into music education through the study of Yoruba song lyrics, vocabulary, and pronunciation.
 - Opportunities for students to translate, interpret, and discuss the meaning and cultural context of Yoruba song lyrics.
 - 4. Interdisciplinary Learning:**
 - Integration of Yoruba folksongs into other subject areas, such as language arts (poetry, literature), social studies (cultural history, geography), and cultural studies.
 - Collaborative projects that combine music with other disciplines to explore themes related to Yoruba culture, history, and society.
 - 5. Performance and Collaboration:**
 - Opportunities for students to showcase their musical talents and cultural understanding through performances of Yoruba folk songs.
 - Collaboration with local Yoruba musicians, cultural organizations, and community members to enrich students' learning experiences and promote cultural exchange.

Objective 3: Discuss the methods of incorporating Yoruba folk songs into the curricula of Nigerian schools.

Incorporating Yoruba folk songs into the curricula of Nigerian schools requires thoughtful planning and implementation. Here are several methods to effectively integrate Yoruba folk songs into various subjects and grade levels:

1. Music Classes:

Teach Yoruba folk songs during music classes, focusing on learning the melodies, rhythms, and lyrics. Arrange for live demonstrations or performances of Yoruba folk songs by local musicians or cultural groups.

Encourage students to explore the cultural context and significance of the songs through research and class discussions.

2. Language and Literature Classes:

Analyze the lyrics of Yoruba folk songs to study poetic devices, vocabulary, and grammar in the Yoruba language.

Incorporate Yoruba folk songs into language lessons, allowing students to practice pronunciation, intonation, and fluency.

Discuss the themes, symbolism, and cultural references found in Yoruba folk songs as part of literature studies.

3. History and Social Studies Classes:

Explore the historical background and cultural significance of Yoruba folk songs in the context of Nigerian history and society.

Discuss the role of music in Yoruba culture, including its use in religious rituals, social gatherings, and storytelling.

Analyze the themes of Yoruba folk songs related to historical events, social customs, and cultural values.

4. Cultural Studies:

Integrate Yoruba folklore into cultural studies courses to examine the diversity and richness of Nigerian cultural heritage.

Compare and contrast Yoruba folk songs with songs from other Nigerian ethnic groups, highlighting similarities and differences in musical styles and themes.

Organize cultural festivals or events where students can perform Yoruba folksongs and showcase their understanding of Yoruba culture.

5. Performing Arts Programs:

Include Yoruba folk songs in choir performances, music recitals, or theatrical productions to expose students to diverse musical traditions.

Collaborate with local artists, musicians, or cultural organizations to provide workshops or masterclasses on Yoruba music and dance.

Incorporate traditional Yoruba instruments and dance movements into performances of Yoruba folk songs to enhance authenticity and cultural appreciation.

6. Digital Resources:

Utilize digital resources such as audio recordings, video tutorials, and online archives to access a wide range of Yoruba folk songs for educational purposes.

Create multimedia presentations or interactive learning modules that explore the history, culture, and significance of Yoruba folk songs.

Encourage students to create their own compositions inspired by Yoruba folk songs using digital music production tools and software.

Conclusion

Yoruba folksongs continue to play a significant role in preserving cultural identity, fostering community cohesion, and transmitting traditional knowledge and values to future generations. Through their expressive lyrics, melodic rhythms, and communal significance, these songs remain cherished expressions of Yoruba heritage and oral tradition. Yoruba music continues to evolve and adapt, reflecting changing cultural dynamics and influences from global music trends. It remains a vibrant and integral part of Yoruba cultural identity, connecting people to their heritage and spiritual traditions.

Integrating Yoruba folk songs into the music curriculum of Nigerian schools enhances students' appreciation of their cultural heritage, promotes linguistic diversity and proficiency, and fosters interdisciplinary learning and community engagement. By embracing Yoruba music and culture in the classroom, schools contribute to the holistic development of students and the preservation of Nigeria's rich musical traditions for future generations. By incorporating Yoruba folksongs into the curricula of Nigerian schools through these methods, educators can promote cultural awareness, linguistic proficiency, artistic expression, and interdisciplinary learning, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of Nigeria's diverse cultural heritage among students.

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