

EARLY CHILDHOOD MUSIC AS PANACEA FOR PRESERVING YORÙBÁ MUSICAL CULTURE IN NIGERIA

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Introduction

Music is part of young children's growth and development as children from birth are naturally enthusiastic concerning music; singing, clapping, dancing to rhythm, listening, creating, and playing of musical instruments. It is a truism that early childhood education is a viable tool in the teaching and learning activities of cultural values globally; such that of all the beautiful things in the world, few surpass images of music in childhood. Music plays a prominent role in the life of Nigerians. Intuitively and naturally, young children respond to music as they communicate through it as part of their process of enculturation. Music is undoubtedly distinguished as one of the creative arts of indigenous African societies by which people express their culture and belief system through sound. The church also has a strong influence on children's musical lives. It exposes children to gospel music using western intonation to teach them music. Meanwhile, children rarely discuss the music in which they are exposed to. For all the children, music is fun, especially when shared with others.

First and foremost, what is culture? Culture is a way of life that affects all aspects of human behavior. In Nigerian traditional societies, all of the traditional structures of family life in Nigeria are that the child is regarded as the responsibility of all members of the family. Neighbors were also expected to show interest, care and love towards children within the neighborhood. So, in the past, relatives were always at hand in many Nigerian cultures to care for and educate children on how to live a healthy and sustained life. Given the communal level at which indigenous musical cultures are disseminated, specific songs for children such as those incorporated into stories and rites for children and children's games, particularly

counting or number games, language games and games involving dancing and movement (Nketia, 1966) abound. There are rhymes or songs for grown-ups to recite to children, distinctly between lullabies and ordinary adults songs (Finnegan, 1970). Afolayan (1970) corroborates that the more accurate a child's knowledge is of his/her own language, he/she understands that speaking of English becomes a second language. Yoruba as one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria is rich with relevant cultures, which are embedded in its music, carvings, vocations among others that need to be preserved; and one of the easiest way through which this can be done is the inclusion of musical culture in the early childhood program.

Today urbanization and modern transportation have brought foreign musical influences nearer to the growing youths some of whom might have been born and natured in foreign lands, thus lacking in the traditional indigenous music of their own area. It is clearly evident that early year experiences have a significant influence on all round development and the later lives of children. The influence, which may be either positive or negative, has been emphasized across interdisciplinary research (Awoniyi, 1991). As the present generations of old traditionalist pass away, it is feared that the traditional music culture that may form part of the basis for our Pan-African identity may be heading for oblivion. There is, therefore, need for an enabling environment to experience, propagate, and practice African music at all levels, local and national, regional and Pan-African. In this wise Vidal 2008 opined that studies on Yoruba vocal and instrumental music show that its creative process is based on certain behavioral patterns which he listed as follows: listening, imitation, improvisation, and modeling. Bush (2001) states that the years between birth and age five are the foundation upon which successful (or otherwise) lives are built.

At the global level, this fact is recognized and every nation is working assiduously towards providing quality early years education and care for the very youngest children. Nigeria, in accordance with the Jomtien Declaration on Education for All (EFA) in Thailand in 1990, signed up in order to provide quality and comprehensive early childhood education and care for all. Nigeria had early childhood centers prior to this but it was left to the private sector, which either provided a sub-standard service or charged high fees. The Federal Government of Nigeria is now responsive to early childhood education by virtue of its inclusion in the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programs and even moved a step further to

inaugurating early childhood education policy. This constitutes a step in the right direction in the provision of good early childhood education. Moving forward in this learning, it is imperative to appraise cultural interplay for responsive education. Focusing on Yoruba culture of Nigeria, this paper examines early childhood music as a panacea for preserving musical culture at the elementary school (aged two to seven). Using socio-cultural theories, it discusses the Yoruba musical culture in tandem with early childhood education using specific songs such as those incorporated into stories and rites for children, children's games, language development, muscular co-ordination, body awareness, rhythmic proficiency, auditory discrimination, particularly counting numbers and games involving dancing and movement. It identifies prospects, problems and proffered possible solution to them, thereby enriching teaching and learning. In achieving its objectives the study adopts participative, conversational, and dialogic methods.

Purpose of the Study

This study explored essential elements to be considered when teaching Nigerian pupils music, as a panacea to preserve Yoruba musical culture in elementary school (aged two-seven years) classroom, thereby provide answers to the following researched questions; (1) what are students' perceptions of Yoruba musical culture (2). How can music educators successfully implement Yoruba musical culture lessons to promote pupils creativity, learning and how socio-cultural musical backgrounds of these pupils relate? (3) Highlight possible ways by which musical culture can be incorporated into the curriculum in accordance with social-educational trends. It is pertinent to point out that the work described here cannot be generalized to all elementary music classrooms in Nigeria. Samples for this study were taken from selected schools within Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky (1978) believed that parents, relatives, peers and society all have an important role in forming higher levels of functioning, that every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level. The main focus of this paper is the preservation of Yoruba musical culture to the Nigerian society using early childhood music to reflect and shape values, beliefs, and aspirations, thereby defining people's identity and integrity. This cannot be adequately discussed without looking at the sociological

and cultural premise of music as an art and its relevance and implication to the society. This paper is a pivot on the Socio-cultural theory as cited in Borg (2003) as a response to behaviorism. The main thrust of the theory is how people interact with each other and how the cultures they live in shape their mental abilities. This means that the skills children learn first are related to interactions with others and they take that information and use it within themselves, learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality. Teachers should be engaged in the critical evaluation of pedagogy to implement a musical culture in a changing world to the music education curriculum. As Masemann (2003) suggests, education is more than information transfer, it contains cultural component. Most cultural researchers would agree that education involves cultural transmission; the direction of the cultural transfer, however, is crucial in terms of power relations between cultural and ethnic groups. Children who are socialized within the dominant cultural values and norms at school will most likely be more successful than children who are not socialized within this culture.

Methodology

This study employs survey method which is part of a descriptive study. It is a study design to depict accurate ways of collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to represent the entire population. This entails that only a part of the population is studied and findings from this population are expected to represent the entire population. Using a participative, conversational, and dialogic method which is achieved through question and answer while interviewing the students to understand what they know and to provide them with opportunities to describe their culture.

Procedure

To comply with ethical research standards, prior approval was obtained from the selected elementary schools. The classrooms used in this study were also selected using purposive sampling method based on their location, age of students and their willingness to participate. Charmaz (2002), explains the target population as members of the specified group to which investigation relates, while the accessible populations are those elements in the group within the reach of the researcher. Creswell (2003) corroborates the assertion above, that for purposeful sampling, individuals and sites are selected purposefully to learn about the central

phenomenon to be examined. Questionnaire content was inspired by the California Survey of Music in Early Childhood (Nardo, 1996) and was adapted to the educational reality of the specific population. The questionnaire began with a section on personal information of four (4) selected schools and four (4) teachers at random, (respondent's name, sex, position, socioeconomic status, years of experience working with children, the extent of music education, the estimated level of musical knowledge. Discuss the number of schools and the participant expected. The next section contained dialogic questions for the children (aged 3-7) at the elementary class, grouped into five types of activities addressing the following musical aspects. Songs: 1) western nursery rhymes, 2) local nursery rhymes 3) popular music 4) church song.

Instrument for Data Collection

Structured interview was used to elicit data on the perception of the students:

(1) What are the pupils' perceptions about Yoruba musical culture?

(2). How can music educators successfully implement Yoruba musical culture lessons to promote pupils creativity, learning and how socio-cultural musical backgrounds of these pupils relate? Because participants were young, the interview took place during activity time to reduce the artificiality of the interview. For instance, there was a provision for a quiet room with an audio to create a natural context for the interview, and the researcher acquaintance with students, thereby asking them to sing folksongs with their local parlance.

Analysis of Data

Data were analyzed using Spradley's (1979) four-step 'Ethnographic Analysis Model'. Although this is not an ethnographic study, questions and students' responses were rich with cultural implication. Listening to and making music are cultural expressions; a classroom is a place of cultural interactions; and education itself. Spradley (1980) Opines 'Because language is the primary means for transmitting culture from one generation to the next, much of any culture is encoded in linguistic form.

Statistical Analysis

Schools	No. of Teachers	Rates of Returned
I	1	1
II	1	1
III	1	1
IV	1	1
Total	4	4

Fifteen participants were selected in each class as follows:

S/N	Schools	Participant Expected (15)	Participant Expected (15)	Participant Expected (15)	Participant Expected (15)	TOTAL
		CLASS A	CLASS B	CLASS C	CLASS D	
I	Budding kids Nursery & Primary School	9	11	14	10	44%
ii	Hettyfields Nursery and Primary school	12	7	13	15	47%
iii	Future Kids Nursery and Primary school	13	9	9	13	44%
iv	Ireyemi Nursery and Primary	9	14	15	13	51%

For the pupils' involved in the interview at different category:

Schools	Western Nursery Rhymes 100%	Local Nursery Rhymes 100%	Popular Music 100%	Church Songs 100%
Budding kids Nursery & Primary School	25	8	24	17
Hettyfields Nursery and Primary school	25	7	20	15
Future Kids Nursery and Primary school	25	10	15	10
Ireyemi Nursery and Primary school	25	12	25	25
TOTAL	100	37	84	67

Results

According to Vidal (2012) children's folksong repertoires are part of the oral traditions existing in the Yoruba society which constitute part of the modes of cultural transmission. By oral tradition, we have the verbally preserved oral records of the ancient past and experiences of the people that were handed down from one generation to another. The repertoire collected and used for the purpose of this paper can be classified into music transcription and textual contents. It was observed that children's favorite music represent distinct genres that today's children enjoy. All their known rhymes were western and they listen to songs made popular by Nigerian popular musicians. Children interviewed listened to western rhymes often from crèche. They listen to danceable lullaby tunes, rhythmic nursery rhymes which constitute important parts of their musical lives.

Discussion of Findings

From all responses of the respondents, it is evident that some of the early childhood educators know little about the rich culture of Yoruba. And only a few of them could communicate with Yoruba language as they are yet to see it as a

viable tool in preserving Yoruba musical culture in their teaching and learning activities. In the findings Ayo was not confused about the dominant perception of race and music. She identifies herself with the music that was created and popularized by social factors. She was eager to attain musical ownership for her culture so that she could secure her cultural and religious identity. It also suggested that children negotiate their music and religious identities. The church has a strong influence on children's musical lives, which exposes children to certain music using western intonation to teach them songs; as children rarely discuss their musical experience.

Singing and music play an important role in our culture. Music is present in many aspects of our lives: theatre television, movies, worship, holidays, celebrations, and government and military ceremonies. At home, music can become part of our family culture – a natural part of our everyday experiences. From birth, parents instinctively use music to calm and soothe children, to express their love and joy, and to engage and interact. Parents can build on these natural instincts by learning how music can impact child development, improve social skills, and benefit kids of all ages. Every nation is an embodiment of culture, and culture is seen as a people's way of life. It describes the several influences on a group of people or a community which had to do with their knowledge, character and learned behavior.

In order words, every society and nation has a culture which they are known for and which defines them. For example, the Western cultures, Eastern culture, Middle Eastern culture, are all rich. Each of these cultures is defined by the values, traditions, social habits, behaviors, language, dress codes, belief system; food and even music that distinguish them from other nations. The cultural knowledge serves as a significant tool to be passed on. Nigeria as a nation is an embodiment of ethnic groups and tribes, and each of these groups and tribes is very rich in culture. The Yoruba as one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria are, according to Isaac (2009) achievement-oriented people, egalitarian and hardworking, serious-minded and fiercely competitive people; the majority of them are professionals in various fields of life, and not many of them are farmers. "One important and fastest way this could be done is through music in early childhood education" . The preservation of Yoruba music is important as other intrinsic cultures communicate with it. To this, Olaniyan (2001) affirms: The whole point

about music in Yoruba culture is that it is integral with life and closely related to the other art forms. Under these circumstances music plays a double role as a medium of cultural transmission and as music itself. It is a lifelong as well as comprehensive activity. Every Yoruba person is expected to make music or perform at a certain point in life; it is an activity in which one participates in childhood. All life rites have musical implications and involvement so that at any point in time, somewhere, somebody is making music or dancing in Yoruba land.

The foregoing shows that music is integral to everyday life of the Yoruba and it is embedded in the culture. Okunade (2010) affirms that the Yoruba child is a product of nature that comes into the world encompassed with natural traits. The child is influenced by the prevalent social habits of his time and place. Like culture, the child is largely characterized by his environment, and is therefore, attuned in the musical processes and products of his community. Ekwueme (1976) further opines Yoruba names are not mere tags of identity or appellations but very deep expressions of attitudes, sentiments, aspirations and straightforward commentaries on life's experiences. Vidal (2012), in his affirmations of the centrality and importance of the Yoruba child further noted: In Yoruba land; children are the pride of their parents. Consequently, great affection abounds between them, especially between mothers and their sons. A man with many children is regarded as rich and blessed. Hence childbirth is regarded as a blessing and an honor from God. And that is why most traditional Yoruba families do not resort to either abortion or artificial family planning methods.

Yoruba Folksongs

The indigenous cultures of the Yoruba have song repertory for phenomenon or rites, like naming, wedding, death, art, taboo, warning, proverbial, idioms etc that are embedded in it. These include norms and tradition, belief system, folksongs, cultural philosophy, religion and literature. All of these constitute and form the way of life of the Yoruba people. The traditional folksongs of the Yoruba cannot be separated from their cultural value, identity and historical antecedents. Vidal (1986) asserts, putting into consideration the perspective of the significant role, function, its applicable method(s) and relevance in the society; one will conclude that Yoruba folksongs span from birth to death. The above song "**Omo ton' moya re loju**" reveals it as a channel used in disseminating information, correcting, admonishing, impacting educational knowledge, (both formal and

informal) and sustenance of culture. Cradle folksongs create rooms for divisional segments with the act of singing a quiet song to lull a child to sleep. While the second category of folksongs falls under the games and social activities of the children in the Yoruba society. This type of folksongs is used to entertain children during their sports activities.

However, the structural form of this song usually goes in form of call and response. The folktale category falls under a different section where the narrator spices the traditional story line with some folktale song. The fourth category falls under the occasional folksongs used for ceremonies, festival and divers' dance occasions. So many Yoruba songs abound that are embedded in *Yoruba* culture which communicates respect for elders, dress codes, and encouragement to work hard among others. One is a song advising the child to respect both parents and elders. The other one shows the punishment a disobedient child takes when he disobeys and a song for encouragement to work hard. The first song teaches, offers advice and encourages the child to be obedient; the second song serves as a deterrent to breaking the law. The rhythmic organization of the songs may be duple or triple divisive or additive, which is always "unilineal" and does not involve any complexity at the "multilineal" or vertical level even when claps are added. Looking at the contextual nature of Yoruba musical culture in the example of the Cradle song '*Omo to mo' ya re loju* (Rebellious child will suffer).

Example I: Cradle Song

OMO TO' MO YA RE LOJU REBELLIOUS CHILD

SCORE BY MICHEAL BAKARE

O MO TO MO YA RE LO JU O E BI NIO NA' MO NA PA_____

O MO TO MO YA RE LO JU O E BI NIO NA' MO NA PA_____ I YA TO JI YA NI

TO RI RE I YA TO JI YA NI TO RI RE O MO TO MO YA RE LO JU O

E BI NIO NA' MO NA PA_____

Text in Yoruba

Omo to moiyareloju
Ebini o naomona pa/2x
Iyatojiyanitori re/2x
Omotimoiyareloju
Ebini o naomona pa

English Translation

The child that disobeys his/her mother
Hunger will put an end to is life/2x
The mother that suffer for you to live/2x
The child that disobeys his/her mother
Hunger will put an end to his life.

The folksong above conveys the consequences of any child that is found rebellious, either to his/her parents or to the society. The song stands as a major means of preaching and instilling Moral and respect in a child amidst the Yoruba society, stating the consequences that a child will face if a child should indulge in. The textual content further recounted and reminded children generally of the irrevocable and sacrifices that mothers pay during and after the childbirth. This song further complements and emphasizes the importance of good character in the life of every child. The Yoruba society believes that good character stands as the foundation of any child that wants to succeed in life. This is supported by the popular proverbial phrase among the Yoruba that '*Iwarereniesoeniyan*' (Good character is the treasure of life).

Example II: Occasional Songs

EWURO'LAGBA IGI

Bitter leaf tree is the sweetest

SCORE BY MICHEAL BAKARE

The musical notation consists of two staves. The first staff is in 6/8 time and contains the melody for the first line of lyrics. The second staff is in 6/8 time and contains the melody for the second line of lyrics. The lyrics are written below the notes.

E WU RO LA GBA I GI — E WU RO LA GBA I GI GBO GBO I GI E

6
BO' WO FE' WU RO E WU RO LA GBA I GI

Text in Yoruba
 Ewurolagbaigi
 Ewurolagbaigi/2x
 Gbogboigebowo fun Ewuro
 Ewurolagbaigi

English Translation
 Bitter leaf is the oldest tree
 Bitter leaf is the oldest tree/2x
 All trees should respect bitter leaf
 Bitter leaf is the oldest tree

The above folksong established that whosoever that is placed or found in the position of authority and leadership should be respected. This single act should be done without undermining of the age and the personality of such person(s) in the placed or position of authority. This is also supported by the proverbial phrase found in the song of King Sunny Ade, which says '*Bose omode lo dadekasekabiesi fun, Bose agbalagbakafiidobalasi*'. Meaning if a child is crowned as a king, that child should be respected

Example III: Idioms Song

MO JAWE' GBEGBE

Plucked gbegbe leaf

Score by micheal bakare

MO TI JA WE I GBE GBE ___ KI WON MA GBE GBA MI ___ MO TI JA WE O NI

6
 TE TE KI WON MA TE MI MO LE O YO NLO ___ KO SE WA I RE ___

13
 O JU ___ I PON RO KO ___ KO GBA GBE I LE ___

Text in Yoruba

Motijawegbegbe
Aye emagbagbe mi
Motijaweonitete
Ki won ma temi mole
Awa de o awa ma de o
Ojukiimaiponrokoroko
Kogbagbeile

English Translation (Literal Translation)

I've plucked *gbegbeleaf*
The world should not forget me
I've plucked *teteleaf*
The world should not trample on me
We have arrived we have arrived!
A stranger cannot forget is home

The above folksong established the feature that calls for the need to have the virtue of patience in the life of every child. The folksong teaches both child and adult in Yoruba society the essentials of patience; as one of the attributes and quality of a person. It further acknowledged that a foreigner will surely remember home.

Conclusion

Yoruba musical culture generally stands as one of the major tools employed in the Yoruba society to imbibe the culture and social norms governing the society.. Inference from some selected folksongs used in this study, "*Omo to ma iyareloju*" "*Ewurolagbagi*" and *Mo ja we gbegbe*"; the songs reveal some cultural values, norms and tradition of the Yoruba culture. Through informal educational activities found in the Yoruba society and as well as other African culture; a child receives his or her first musical foundation from the textual content of folksongs. Furthermore, a child receives first-hand indigenous educational knowledge through participating in folksong performance that is found in divers setting among the Yoruba. e.g. '*Ere osupa*'(The moonlight play). The divers' nature of proverbial phrases found in Yoruba folksong gives a clear understanding of the textual content which brings the social, cultural, historical employ into vast and rich music

cultural teaching and learning. Teachers need to be aware of the musical and cultural contexts they positioned in the society, and reflect on their value system on different musical system and cultures before they can respond to the rapid development in the society. The findings from this study may shed light on teaching and learning ethnic and traditional music in other countries and regions that share a similar issue. The value of learning local rhymes through early childhood should be included in the teacher's education curricula globally for cultural transmission. Limiting merely on western music as the main musical culture can only further limit the understanding of local musical culture. A multi-cultural music education in all school levels as well as tertiary education should be advocated.

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