

# NIGERIAN MUSIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM: CONTENT AND IMPLICATION

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## **Introduction**

Curriculum programmes are designed to address specific developmental needs of society. According to Dashen, (2004), “education, culture and curriculum are the tripods on which curriculum as a course is vested.” (p.7) He further stressed that these three concepts (education, culture and curriculum) are linked through an umbilical cord that thinking of one without reference to the other will be suicidal to any educational system. This implies that the purpose of education is basically to transmit culture, socialize the individual and to produce people who will be reconstructing society for the better. (Dashen, 2004). Therefore, for a curriculum to be considered worthwhile, such curriculum must be planned to meet these societal developmental expectations. And to achieve this, specific fundamental factors must be considered while planning the curriculum. Continuing, Dashen (2004) outlined four fundamental factors which must be considered to include, “the learner, society, knowledge and the teacher.” (p.92)

The Western concept of formal education was introduced in Nigeria by the missionaries and subsequently by the colonial government. The purpose of education during the colonial period was mainly for religious conversion, economic exploitation, and the assimilation of Western cultures, values, and practices by Africans. “This eroded Nigerian ethnic communities’ indigenous learning structures; a condition that denied individuals their cultural identity and sense of the past” (Woolman, 2001:4). Dei (2002) informs that:

*the Western curriculum undermined African values, cultural practices, and imposed Western capitalist mode of production,*

*disrupting to a large extent indigenous African commerce, industry, technology, and social fabrics (p.7).*

Dei, further reiterates that:

*colonial education was far from giving people the confidence in their ability and capacities to overcome obstacles or to become masters of the laws governing external nature as human beings and tends to make them feel their inadequacies and their inability to do anything about the condition of their lives.*

The formal Western oriented education system inherited after independence cultivated among the elites, a sense of denial to their indigenous heritage. Okafor, (2005) opined that the available curriculum is too European-music oriented. It does not tackle effectively the concrete needs of social development in Nigeria. Students are being taught the music for which there is no sufficient market or taste in the Nigerian economy. After independence, the government of Nigeria has continued the struggle to reconstruct the country's formal curriculum in order to incorporate the multiple indigenous ways of knowing into the formal school system. This is aimed at helping students develop sense of self-worth grounded in their own authentic cultural systems of knowledge construction. However, the effort still failed as the educated elites then, were already sufficiently being colonized by the Western ideology and mentality.

It should be noted that Western education, came through the Christian missionaries in collaboration with the British colonial government. In the early part of twentieth century, the curriculum of the missionaries was geared towards literary education as they focused on the arts including, music, drama, and poetry among others in their efforts to evangelize to the "natives". In this way, the awareness for formal music education was raised through the inclusion of music in school curriculum (Olusoji, 2015). More so, in the field of music education, the curriculum designed for formal school system in Nigeria was conceived from the background of Western music, with little or no concern to African or Nigerian indigenous music.

### **What is Music Education?**

Several scholars have attempted defining music education in their opinion in different ways. Akponome, (2011) observed that:

*as an educational process, music education entails the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitude in music which will foster the interest and ability of the learner to be useful to himself and his society musically. It is a process through which the learner is equipped with desirable changes in behaviour that will prompt him to become a sure prompter and upholder of musical heritage of his people and society (p.29).*

Effiong, (2009) observed that;

*music education is seen as that aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge to enable one adopt him/herself successfully in the society as well as contribute immensely to the development of the society.” (p. 114)*

According to Ogunrinade, Adeyemi, and Oluniyi, (2012),

*music education can however be defined as a process by which musical knowledge and skills are developed through learning at school, colleges and university and the informal traditional setting. In another perspective, music education is regarded as aesthetic education, and aesthetic education is related to the general education of the students in secondary schools. Music plays multifarious roles and functions in the teaching and learning processes among the different categories in all human endeavors where the art is used (p.393).*

Music education is a field of study associated with teaching of music. More than merely teaching notes and rhythms music education seeks to develop the whole person (Adeleke, & Adeyera, 2011).

### **Objectives of Music Education in Nigerian Curriculum**

In general, curriculum aims are statements that describe expected life outcomes based on some value schema either consciously or unconsciously borrowed from philosophy (Ogbonna, Ogbulafor, Lubis, Mangvwat, Torkaa, and Buhari 2000). Akponome, Johnson and Boyi, (2013) argued that “there are two principal aims of music education; to read music and to sing music acceptably...” (p. 4). According to Akponome (2011):

*The ultimate aim of music education is to train people in learning and character. That is, music education should edit students' behaviour and attitude by exposing them to good virtue and moral music. Moreover, music education aims at the vocational, physical, economic, technological and social development with the aim of manipulation of skills in areas of vocal and instrumental performance (p.29).*

Ogunrinade, Adeyemi, and Oluniyi, (2012) maintained that:

*The objectives of music inclusion as a subject in the school curriculum are to provide opportunity for each child to participate and grow in all aspects of music singing, instrumental rhythmic, listening and creative, to provide experiences which are truly musical and maintain integrity of the music. Additionally, to develop in a child the skill and understanding necessary for satisfying and rewarding experience both as performer and as a listener, to stimulate interest in music as part of life and culture, instilling into children a genuine love of music, imparting the knowledge and appreciation of Nigerian traditional musical culture into the children, to develop musical literacy and to appreciate the music of other countries (394).*

The various views of the authorities above explain vividly that the objective of music education curriculum in Nigeria is to instill in and train a child to musically become useful to himself and his society. It is aimed at helping the child recognize the potential skills and ability he needs to possess in order to function well in music and develop the socio economic, cultural and political demand expected of him in his society. The educational system and advice we receive from our neighbors looks positive from the surface. But, only those who blink their eyes do not see early.

### **Questions that Need Answers**

**What, which, how, where, when, for who, by who and why** is the Nigerian educational system? The question “**what**” seeks to know about the content of our educational program? Thus, the content of our educational program seems to lay more emphasis on historical and theoretical studies of the Western (foreign) foundation and tradition rather than indigenous historical and theoretical issues. As

a result, the learning materials seem to be far from the learners. The learners are not familiar with its usage. This is because the learning materials on which the content is based are not commonly found within and around them, and thus difficult to be comprehended and translated into meaningful results.

The question “**which**” seeks to know about the subjects that a learner is expected to cover during the course of his studies at various levels of his educational pursuits. The system also lays emphasis on compulsory subjects and borrowed courses a learner is expected to cover. Mathematics and English are made compulsory for all students in Nigeria.

The question “**how**” seeks to know about the expectation the country demands an individual to possess before he is considered qualified to take any responsibility in his career. Nigerian educational system lays emphasis on certificate, not minding the practical (functional) ability of an individual.

The question “**where**” seeks to know about the learning environment. The system allows for permanent structures specifically built for teaching and learning unlike the traditional system in which the whole community serves as classrooms (Balogun & Ariya 2005).

The question “**when**” seeks to know specified periods for instructions. These are times, days, weeks, months, semesters, sessions, and years prescribed for learning with weekends and vacations for resting, unlike our traditional system in which learning instructions are received at any time of the day, any day of the week and throughout the year (Balogun, & Ariya 2005)

The question “**for who**” seeks to know about the Nigerian students.

The question “**by who**” seeks to know about the Nigerian educational planners, organizers, and the implementers. The foundation of the system is laid on the advice of our neighbors (the colonial masters) and implemented by their pawns.

The question “**why**” seeks to now the reasons why our educational system is the way it is. Perhaps, it is organized in such a way that could hinder us from having indebt knowledge of what we study.

Note: we are not ignorant of the fact that there is no country in the world like Nigeria that serves as a profitable market for every rubbish product. Hence, if the secret of “a productive education” is disclosed to the Nigerians, and if the result is thus realized, Nigeria will have a functional and practical education that could lead to positive and high productivity. And, if Nigeria is productive, then where will our neighbours find market for their own products? We are not ignorant of the attitude of the Western world towards the Africans. From the period of slave trade, to colonialism, down to the post-colonial administration in Nigeria, till date, the influence of the so-called colonial masters on the political administration and policy implementation in Nigeria is still alarming. The net effect of colonialism was that it foisted negative changes on the traditional educational system in Nigeria. Osuala, (2012) supported this claim when he asserted that:

*the people became dazzled and stupefied by the event such that their response became mimetic rather than analytic, thus, they despised their emerging civilization and technology for similar foreign made paper qualification and end in itself.” (p. 17)*

Here, every indigenous art was considered inferior to the European products. More so, the colonial education emphasized clericalism and neglected artisan and technical training which could lead to positive economic change and national development. Now, the dysfunctional nature of the system had adverse effects on the traditional milieu of the people. This view is supported by Walter (1977) in Osuala (2012) when he maintained that “it was not an educational system that grows out of the African environment or one that was designed to social source” (p.16). He further averred that “it was not an education designed to give the young, confidence and pride as members of African societies, but one who sought to instill and inculcate a sense of difference towards all that was European and capitalism.”

Summarily, it is evident that colonial education system created no link with traditional occupations and skills; rather, it tended to divorce the recipients from these traditional skills. More so, they are considered dirty work and evil inclined.

However, to secure a better educational system and opportunity for national development and growth in Nigeria, all hands must be on deck in re-examining the country's education system for the good and benefit of the country.

### **Content and Implication of Music Education Curriculum in Nigeria**

In order to get clear explanation on the content and implication of music education curriculum in Nigeria, it is necessary to get a critical look at some of the major curriculum contents designed for secondary up to tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Thus:

#### **Music Curriculum for Junior Secondary Schools in Nigeria (Federal Ministry of Education, (2010)**

TOPICS		
Theory of music: fundamentals of music	History of Music	Uses of music
Ear training and harmony	Music practices	Creating music
Rudiments of music	Uses of music	
Playing an instrument (Recorder)	Creating music	
Use of music		

#### **Music Curriculum for Senior Secondary Schools in Nigeria (Federal Ministry of Education, (2010)**

Intervals	Western harmony
Triads	Ensemble (Western)
Notation: staff and tonic solfa	Nigerian dance styles
Transcription	Western dance styles
Scales	Diatonic intervals
Cadences	Punctuation in musical language
Transposition	African music (colonial and post-colonial)
Identification of tones/pitches	Baroque period (1600 – 1750)
Sight reading	Classical period (1750 – 1820)
Melody dictation	Western music (forms and analysis of
Rhythm dictation	Baroque and Classical periods)
Diatonic intervals (Melodic)	Music dictation
Musical instruments (study skills)	Listening and appreciation
Melody writing	Trends in Nigerian music (post independent till date
Ensemble playing (African)	Music of the Romantic period (Western

Musical instruments (Western)	period) Western music (Modern period)
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## Diploma Music Education Programme

Year 1	Year 2
TOPICS	TOPICS
Rudiments of Music I	Application of Music Notation Software
Introduction to Ear Training	Elementary Composition I
African Music: Music and Society I	Aural training
Introduction to popular music	Outline History of Western Music I (Baroque)
Principal Instrument Study I (Western)	Principal Instrument Study III
Performance Workshop-Western Ensemble I	Outline History of Western Music II (Classical and Romantic)
Performance Workshop-African Ensemble I	African Music: Theoretical Study I
Minor Instrument Study I (African)	School Music Methods
Introduction to Music Notation Software	Applied School Music Methods
Theory of music	

## Course Contents for NCE Programme (FRN, 2012)

Theory of music African Music & Appreciation Ear-Training and Sight-Reading History and Appreciation of Western Music Applied Music Ensemble Music Studies Elementary Technology of Music	Music Education Outdoor Practical Experience Elements of Dance Choreography Elementary Keyboard Harmony Conducting & Ensemble Management Ensemble Music Studies V Orchestration Fundamentals
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## Course Contents for Standard Four-Year Degree Programme

Course Title	Elementary Keyboard Harmony
Music as an Art and Science	Teaching Methods in Music
Rudiments of Music	Conducting and Performance Management



Foundations of Musicianship I	Introduction to Musical Instrument Technology
Tonal Harmony I	Orchestration
African Music: Music and Society I	Music of Other Cultures of the World
Introduction to Popular Music	Research Method and Preparatory Studies in Music
Primary Instrument/Voice I	Composition
Performance Workshop – Western Ensembles I	Criticism and Musical Scholarship
Performance Workshop – African Ensembles I	Analysis of Tonal Music
Secondary Instrument I	Analysis and Analytical Method for 20th C. Music
Survey of History of Western Music	Keyboard Harmony and Accompaniment
Popular Music in Nigeria	African Music: Historiography, Theoretical Issues and Contemporary Development
Basic Keyboard Studies	Acoustics of Music
Music Business and Media Practices	Fugue
Computer Music Application	Modern Compositional Techniques
Western Music before 1750	Project
Afro-American Music	

The form of music education in traditional African settings is practical oriented. Contrarily, the current content of the formal music education curriculum in Nigeria as seen above is set on Western theoretical, historical and practical ideology which does not reflect the socio economic and cultural values and aspirations of the Nigerian or African person. In Nigeria, too much emphasis has been placed on the acquisition of knowledge through theoretical approach to education. This has also taken its toll on music education. A situation where there is high level of education without a corresponding skill acquisition is prevalent not only in music but also in other disciplines. This is more or less issues relating to the value system of Nigerians, which will need to improve to expect a positive growth (Osuala & Abolagba 2012). Though skill and knowledge can be acquired through

theoretical approach to education, but acquisition of skills and knowledge are better facilitated through practical approach to teaching and learning of music. The introduction of the Western system of education in the nineteenth century brought new dimensions to the Nigerian tradition of music education. Of particular significance is the change from the informal nature of the pre-colonial system to a formalized system, typical of the Western tradition. A feature which accompanied this development is the predominant use of Western classical music as resource materials in teaching school pupils. This feature has some negative implications on the socio economic and cultural development of the country. The predominant emphasis on Western music characterized the programmes of the early Western type (largely British) schools in Nineteenth century Nigeria. (Ogunrinade, 2013)

Ogunrinade, Adeyemi and Oluniyi, (2012) observed that;

*The problems of music as a school subject in Nigeria started with the curriculum. Curriculum which, is a formal system of learning experience and organized for the purpose of integrating the growing child into adult society is not properly prepared. Before independence, people became critical of the type of curriculum at that time; they stressed that the curriculum was foreign oriented. They wanted the local history and geography to replace foreign one. It was after the independence that curriculum was geared towards the need of the society. (p. 393)*

Unfortunately, necessary structures were not put in place to concretize the new ideas on music education. The Nigerian elites visualized Western education and Eurocentric modernization as having potential for economic development and a way forward to industrialization and economic progress. Thus, the Western mode of economic development was accorded preference over indigenous modes of economic development by ensuring a continued reliance on macro planning. This approach ignored local conditions, local developmental needs, and the role of indigenous knowledge in developmental activities. Moreover, most elites did not wholly embrace their cultural heritage, given their enculturation of Western values that influenced their focus towards nationalistic perceptions of cultural development rather than solving economic problems at the local and communal levels.

Since the Nigerian curriculum has failed to sustain the nation's economy and the seeming resultant effect is the present itch that has plagued the nation's economy to a stand-still. Hence the need for an urgent shift in the nation's curriculum is paramount; a shift from theoretical curriculum implementation to better practical based curriculum.

The objective of curriculum reconstruction has been to explore alternative solutions by utilizing local resources as a way towards addressing socio-economic and political problems that face Nigeria as a country today. Hence, the importance of curriculum reforms, education, and training policies aimed at integrating indigenous content of knowledge into the school system cannot be overstated. This view is supported by Olusola & Abolagba, (2012) who asserted that "for music education to meet its goal realistically in Nigeria, much still needs to be done in overhauling the curriculum to meet specific goals of the society." (p. 4)

According to Ogunrinade, Adeyemi, and Oluniyi (2012);

*Insignificant priority is given to the study of African music in the school curriculum. Little time is allocated to the subject on the timetable with few facilities (both Western and indigenous musical instruments) for its practical teaching. Music in the secondary school system is alternate to Fine and Applied Arts, meaning that students are denied the opportunity of studying the two together. The two subjects that complement and fulfill each other in the world of entertainment were optional. Furthermore, music curriculum of secondary schools pays more attention to examination requirements rather than developing the musical talents of the students. A look into the syllabus used in Nigerian primary, secondary and tertiary institutions shows a very powerful dominance of Western musical history, literature, and theory and harmonic concepts. Meanwhile, the purpose of education is to help students to achieve their potential musically (p.395).*

The focus of education reforms since independence has been to reconstruct the curriculum at all levels of the education system to reflect the diverse indigenous ways of knowing, and to promote social change and the empowerment of Nigerians. Reclaiming cultural identities rooted within the authentication of

indigenous traditions has been perceived as a way forward to decolonizing Western dominated school curriculum. The objective of curriculum reconstruction has been to explore alternative solutions by utilizing local resources as a way towards addressing socio-economic and political problems that is facing Nigeria as a country today. Hence, the importance of curriculum reforms, education, and training policies aimed at integrating indigenous knowledge and Western knowledge into the school system is a necessity. Curriculum reconstruction process involved the inclusion of Nigerian diverse cultures, histories, geography, oral literature in high schools, and innovation in teaching that would incorporate indigenous knowledge and methods into the curriculum. Mudimbe, (1988) observed that positively integrated education reforms in Sub-Saharan Africa should entail a reflection in the school curriculum that includes the history, principles, and concepts of practices, tools, and technology of communities from within the African countries. The philosophy of African Socialism was based on the premise that all planning including education in post-independent Nigeria must draw on the best of the African traditions and must be able to adapt to new and rapidly changing circumstances of the communities. Therefore, integrating African indigenous knowledge and ways of teaching and learning has been perceived as necessary in de-emphasizing the current curriculum that has been viewed to be too abstract, not relevant, and more examination oriented. (Owuor, 2007)

## **Conclusion**

Compared with what we ought to be, we are only half awake. Fires damped, our drafts are checked. We are making use of only small part of our possible mental and physical resources (James William), talk more of the natural ones. We know we are designed to perform tasks and produce far better than we have performed to date. We know we have the ability to move beyond our present self-imposed limitations. However, because we believe in the advice of our overlords (colonial masters) and their Western ideology, we do not choose the path of excellence.

In Nigeria today, it is so easy to accept the status quo than to venture out. Yes it is. It is also easier to enjoy long, non-productive lunches, and attend seminar after seminar on “how to do it,” than “to sit down and get the job done”. Although, this paper may not examine the exact truth about the recommended issues required of the country, however, to separate the educational system of any

country from its traditional occupations and skills is just as it were to cut off the umbilical cord binding mother to her unborn child.

This paper therefore seeks to recommend the need for every Nigerian to be conscious and agree with the fact that the existing educational system is based on a wrong philosophy... “a problem identified is the problem half solved.” The paper also recommends that government should implement what is worth implementing. This is because policy implementation is the only avenue that could solve the problem of long, non-productive lunches. Ministries of Education as well as curriculum planners should emphasize African music content in music in Nigerian education at all levels. There is urgent need for a paradigm shift from theoretical teaching and literary application to a practical application of knowledge necessary for employment and skill development.

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