

# **TERTIARY MUSIC EDUCATION IN A RECESSED NIGERIAN ECONOMY**

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## **Introduction**

Music in Nigerian societies is conceived as object of aesthetic contemplation as well as a socio-cultural phenomenon that plays multi-dimensional roles in every aspect of culture. Whereas the nature and scope of music-making depends on the purpose for which it is intended; it varies in type, style, instrumentation and performance from one culture to another.

On the other hand, music training from pre-school through post-secondary education is common in most nations where music is considered a fundamental component of human culture and behaviour. Music education as introduced by the Christian missionaries alongside Western system of education dates back to 1843 when mission schools emerged. Cases were made for proper balancing of theory and practical applications of both Western and African music, to provide total package of general musicianship for the learners; and also to promote bi-musicality as a concept that stresses musical literacy in both African and Western musical cultures.

Whilst a good deal of rhetoric has been expended at various conferences/symposia, the resultant effect remains unclear until we judiciously employ a very effective and practical approach to the study of music as it relates to diverse Nigerian musical cultures. Until such a program emerges, it would be difficult to develop an authentic and functional music education framework in Nigeria. The paper tries to take a look at the present situation in Nigeria's music education, as well as the curriculum and the proposed review guideline by

National Universities Commission in relation to funding and government's 60/40 policy on science and humanities-based courses. Findings show a bleak future in the music education sector that calls for immediate and proactive measure to remedy the situation or we risk music-less future Nigeria.

### **Concept of Music Education**

The term, music education refers to the teaching and learning of formal music making and listening. Mark (1978) informs that:

*the aim and objective of music education is to develop the aesthetic potentiality possessed by every human being as well as to enrich the musicianship of students and to strengthen the profession. (p. 3).*

Music education touches every aspect of learning/educational taxonomy. These include the cognitive domain (the acquisition of knowledge), the affective domain (the learner's willingness to receive, internalize, and share what is learned), and the psychomotor domain (the development of skills). Music education has often been defined by various Nigerian music scholars to be the sum total of all skills, knowledge, principles, and strategies which a music practitioner needs to acquire in order to be effective and efficient in his/her job as a professional. Okonkwo, (2009) sees music education as a field of study associated with the teaching and learning of music. According to her;

*it is generally accepted that the incorporation of music training from pre-school to post-secondary education is common in most nations because involvement in music is considered a fundamental component of human culture and behaviour. Whether music education is taught in the first world or third world of this planet, the objectives have revolved around the same issue (p. 40).*

Omolara (2014) further defines it to be "the body knowledge in music a professional needs before he/she is considered 'registrable' by the professional bodies in charge of music profession" (p. 76).

Tracing the story of music and music education from the primitive to modern, one would observe that its objectives are varied. Hence, Okonkwo (2009) noted that the usefulness of music education "has at different times been categorized as soul rejuvenating, part of *quadrivium* (by the Romans), doctrine of ethos (by the

Greeks), a strong church worship instrument (by the Christians), a subject of subjects and generally important” (p. 40). This notwithstanding, it is quite evident the present government’s educational policies are majorly in favour of core science and science-based disciplines. This is a significant issue that will continue to, not only affect the recognition of music as a core subject in the junior and senior secondary schools but will as well make the government agencies pay lip-service to the National Policy on Education (NPE) recommendation on music education. Okonkwo (2009) and Omolara, (2014) pointed out that government agencies bias on music education has also affected the establishment of new departments of music and adequate funding of the existing ones in tertiary institutions.

### **Concept of Recession**

Recession is a general downturn in any economy. It is associated with high unemployment, slowing Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and high rate of inflation. The National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), according to Noko (2016) in <http://educscinfo.com/economic-recession-nigeria>, recession can be defined a significant decline in economic activities spread across the economy, lasting more than a few months, normally visible in a real gross domestic product (GDP), real income, employment, industrial production and wholesale-retail sales. The website also has it that:

*Economic recession can also be defined as a negative real GDP growth rate for two consecutive quarters (say first and second quarters). Judging by the above definition Nigeria is experiencing economic recession currently, since her first and second quarters growth in 2016 are -0.36% and -1.5%. Although, the second definition might be mis-leading because recession can quietly begin before the quarterly Gross Domestic Product report are out.*

Recession as a usually a period of hardship and difficulty in the economy of a country/nation, when there is less trade and industrial activity than usual and more people are unemployed.

### **Music Education in Nigeria**

In Nigerian traditional societies, music education had been in existence before the coming of the whites (Western education). Traditional music education starts with folklore, which embraces early knowledge of traditional folk stories, clan

mythologies, music and dance, cookery, simple crafts – which begins from childhood. Children, for example, learnt through the folktale, the dos and don'ts of their communities. They equally learnt, through mnemonics and simple game songs, complicated subjects, numerology or numeracy, even to compose words and use their languages. Musical performances are usually folk-conceived and folk-owned since they are predominantly community based. In other words, these performance practices take place in society of the learner.

**Developmental stages:** Several authors/writers have in the past discussed extensively the advent of formal music education in Nigeria. These include OmibiyiObidike (1987), Idolor (1992), Omojola (1995), Okafor (2005) and Vidal (2012). All these authors, according to Okonkwo (2009) gave vent to the fact that it was through the missionaries and colonialist that formal Western music education was introduced. She also informs it took its root from the Church to Western classical music of diverse forms in the classroom. No wonder Omolara (2014) asserted that our educational system from its inception was a major consideration of the Christian Mission. The missionaries saw education as an important tool for evangelization, hence they dictated and fashioned out the 'sort of education' with regards to both form and content that would suit their evangelical objectives.

Through the establishment of mission schools, formal and informal music education were introduced; songs (music) were developed for Christian Church services. The content of the brand of music education developed by the missionaries was based on European culture, taught by the missionaries and African immigrants at the primary, post-primary and teacher training colleges, dating back to 1843 when mission schools emerged. Corroborating this, Vidal (2012) specifically noted that "it was clear that early music education in West Africa was meant to serve the interest of Western European Missionaries rather than African interest. Hence, it was patterned after the European music system and its legacies continued till today" (p.186)

Music education in the Nigerian educational system advanced to its tertiary level between 1960 and 1961; when certain four pioneer students, namely: Meki Nzewi, Felix Nwuba, Samuel Ojukwu and Michael Okoye got admission for their university degree program in music at the first indigenous university in Nigeria, the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN). At the UNN, they were trained formally in

Western music education. Although the ideas of the above mentioned pioneer students were broadened under this system but, as Okafor, (2005) noted, “it drove them further away from their roots” (p.196).

**Present situation:** It has been observed that the major challenge of general music education is that teachers pay more attention to theory than practical. Theory and practical, as a matter of fact, should go hand in hand. Most times, teachers bombard students with a lot of information on Western music history and theory with little attention to the practical aspect. The indigenous African music history and theory seem to be more emphasized as well that the actual practice; hence the proliferation of half-baked music graduates. To this end, it is the view of the researchers that a balance should be struck between theory and practical applications of both Western and African music. This will enable the provision of a total package for general musicianship and bi-musicality for our students.

Poor training of teachers is another major challenge of Nigerian music education in recent times. Most teachers came into the music profession by virtue of opportunity cost; and not that they are convinced of being teachers by choice and interest. Such teachers are cheaters as they lack the basic qualities of real and committed music teachers. It is a popular parlance that ‘one cannot give out what one does not have’. Some music teachers are very weak in practical musicianship and lack the ability to impact practical musicianship in their students.

By virtue of Nigeria having been colonized by Britain from 1861 when Lagos became a British colony up till 1st October, 1960 – when Nigeria became an independent nation, the issue of bi-musicality with its attendant paradox of alienation and enculturation continually confronted both local and educated Nigerians. As Emielu, (2011) rightly pointed out, “colonialism and European contact brought in its wake a dichotomy of systems: the traditional versus the modern; oral versus the printed; educated versus uneducated which has broken down the culturally unified schema of African traditions” (p. 365).

Reclaiming the African consciousness or better still, forging this dual identity into a composite whole has been a major issue in African arts, politics, economy and education. This phenomenon has produced a crisis of perspectives or what may be described as ‘perspective tangle’. It is within this nexus of dual cultural

identities that the issue of bi-musicality can be truly located and discussed in the light of our colonial history in Nigeria and music education in traditional African society.

The introduction of the Western system of education in the nineteenth century brought new dimension 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. An example of this development is the predominant use of Western classical music as resource material in teaching school pupils; this of course, has some negative implications. One fact that has come to stay is that music education is an acceptable subject which if systematically and discreetly handled in synergy with indigenous musical practice, would give both the learner and teacher a better understanding of a sound mind. In addition, music and music education would enable learners know more about their culture, tradition, norms, societal values and identity. Music education is also a skill acquisition oriented area of study.

### **Bi-Musicality in Music Education**

Bi-musicality stresses musical literacy in one's own culture in addition to a borrowed foreign culture (Western or any other musical culture of the world). Although this is represented in music curriculum of many institutions, the truth is that its implementation seems to be poorly executed. Adedeji (2013) notes that;

*it has been observed that music education in Africa generally has not attained a developed status, especially when compared with its Western counterpart. Also, African music education needs to be made relevant to the needs of the society, for it to be more embraced. Our music education still prepares students to be focused on Western music at the end of which they never outshine their white counterparts on Western music. Sadly enough, they only possess a little or no understanding of their own music where they have better chance of demonstrating superiority. One of the ways to correct these anomalies is to re-examine the place of African music theory in the curricula of our Universities (p.35).*

Consequently, various Nigerian scholars have stressed the need for bi-musicality in our music education programmes, and sometimes suggesting frameworks within which the system can work. For example, Sowande (1967) outlined a model which combines field research into Nigerian folklore, traditional music, poetry and dance with publications of music books derived from such researches, as well as a synthesis of formal and informal processes in the training of musicians. Nzewi (1988) stated categorically that 'our traditional music heritage offers immense possibilities for original approaches to the study of theory, compositional forms, musical structures and developmental techniques' (p. 21). In the same vein, Omibiyi-Obidike (2001a) laments that, 'the modern school system has not been able to provide an alternative way of imparting traditional musical knowledge'. To her, "the alternative way lies in comprehensive and documentation of traditional music" (p. 3). She further harped on a re-education that will make traditional musical idioms a significant part of the vocabulary of the compositional and performance techniques of music students. (Omibiyi-Obidike, 2001b: 150). Emielu (2011), while extolling the need for bi-musical curricula at various levels of education in post-colonial Africa, notes that this need has continued to be re-echoed at various regional and national conferences and symposia. Notable among them, he said, are:

*the conference of Music Association of Nigeria held in 1965 at Nigeria's first indigenous University, University of Nigeria, Nsukka; International Conference of Music Education, Lusaka, Zambia in 1971; Symposium on African and Afro-American Music held at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana in 1972 and the 1st National Conference of Nigerian Association of Music Educators hosted by the Department of Music, College of Education Awka, Nigeria in 1987, among several others (p. 366).*

To this end, Adedeji (2013) cautions that "while Western music theory cannot but be used as a reference point or as framework for understanding African music theory, we should stop infusing more Western music than African music into the heads of our students". (p.42)

Furthermore, the need for bi-musicality in our music education programmes was re-echoed during the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual National Conference of Music Educators in Nigeria held at Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education in 2014 as well as the 14<sup>th</sup> Association of Nigerian Musicologists international conference held at the

University of Lagos (UNILAG) where the former President of the association, Professor Femi Adedeji emphasized on the need for synergy with other musical bodies so as to make greater impact in our music making. Thus he said, 'when we work together with for example a maker of local xylophone or drum, we propound a knowledge (theory) that would enable one know whether the instrument we constructed sounds well or not'.

Arising from the afore-mentioned conferences in the past, as a matter of fact, bi-musicality was given an official government stamp in Nigeria when it was incorporated into the curricula for music at both the secondary and tertiary levels of education in the country as reflected in the documents of the regulatory bodies like the West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Council for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and the National University Commission (NUC). But the big question is whether this is being well implemented.

### **Implication of Formal Music Education**

The term, music education has earlier been referred to as the teaching and learning of formal music making and listening, while Mark (1978) also had earlier summed up the aims and objectives of music education as to develop the aesthetic potentiality possessed by every human being, to enrich the musicianship of students and to strengthen the profession.

Generally, music constitutes an important educational forum through which members of traditional Nigerian society learn to live together as well as cope with the ever-changing challenges of life. The educational significance of musical activities/performances in the various Nigerian societies can never be over-emphasized. Fafunwa (1983) puts it that "education is the vehicle by means of which the cultural heritage of a given society is transmitted to the younger generation" (p.48). He further stated that education helps to "produce an individual who is co-operative and conforming to social order of the day" (p.48). Suffice it to say that with adequate music education being given to individual music practitioners, the society at large would be saved of some embarrassing activities of some psychedelic youths and adult psychopaths who jump to any untoward music and assume having got a true, real or genuine musical experience. Temidire and Thompson (2014) giving full vent on the above stance seek to know if it is not madness to hear that a music and dance culture now exists in night clubs as



strippers dance; such that girls or ladies dance on stage naked. There is no gainsaying the fact that most of these crops of musicians were never properly educated hence they took music to be jokes and fun making. By all indications, their music productions permeate all kinds of bad behaviour, bawdy and uncouth utterances instead of addressing serious socio-economic and national issues.

Nevertheless, it is believed that with adequate training in music, such a maladaptive behaviour which, as a matter of fact, is uncommon with most adequately trained musicians would be avoided. The contention here is that music as a discipline helps to drive away boredom from the minds of young undergraduates. It further helps them to inculcate the mind of self-actualization, importance and well-being, the opposite of restiveness and self destruction. With proper music education in our various music schools and universities, a class of strong-willed, independent, enterprising and self-disciplined musical beings would be graduated each year.

### **General Apathy in Choosing Music as a Course of Study**

In the recent past, many musicians in some parts of Africa, especially in Nigeria were treated with disdain, regarded as belonging to the lowest echelon of the society hence they are most often given various derisive tags/epithets such as beggars, never do wells, and people not to be seriously associated with in society. Those who chose to study music as a course of study in higher institutions in those early days were not left out as most of them were caricatured.

Albeit, events of recent years are beginning to correct those past erroneous impressions about music, musicians and musicologists; nevertheless, those commonly held views of music and musicians may have rubbed onto music and its usefulness as a career and a worthy course of study by pupils. Hence Fafunwa (1971) opined that:

*There is much truth in the saying, a cultureless people are hopeless people. The teaching of music and art in African schools is still considered as a frill by many an educator. Yet there is hardly any other subject through which the artistic and creative genius of a people can be more easily expressed and perpetuated. Art and music touch the spirit and soul of the child*

Ezekiel Obiesie & Alvan-Ikoku Nwamara: *Tertiary Music Education in a Recessed... and African art and music form the focus of the African culture* (p.74).

The above captures the essence of inadequate propagation of music education in Africa and how music is a spiritually knitted art to the Africans, which enhances and develops artistic and creative minds. However, Vidal (2008) analytically reviewed some of the major problems confronting music education in Nigeria within the last century as follows:

- That formal music education was institutionalized in the schools at the beginning to serve the interest of the missionaries and colonial administrations.
- That the type of music education introduced was alien to Nigerian culture and traditions.
- That attempts to correct this though, successful with other subjects did not yield much success in music, thus making music lag behind other subjects such as language, literature, drama, in terms of cultural development and orientation.
- That research was not carried out into the contents and teaching methods of the music of cultures and societies of Nigeria.
- That effort was again made after independence to make education, including music education functional and relevant to the needs of Nigerian and African child.
- That necessary structures were not put in place to concretize the new ideas on music education.

### **Recessed Nigerian Economy and Music Educational Challenges**

Economic recession, as earlier stated, is a period of general economic decline and is typically accompanied by a drop in the stock market, an increase in unemployment, and a decline in the housing market. This has many effects which are outlined below:

**Effects of a Recession:** i. A slump in the stock market. This is when goods and services are difficult to sell when consumers' purchasing power is reduced. Therefore, business earnings fall along with their stock market price.

ii. An increase in unemployment is another recession effect. Businesses reduce production because consumer spending slows. Therefore, employees lose their jobs as businesses cut back on production.

iii. Possible depression is another effect. Specifically, a recession can become a depression if it persists for a long time.

iv. Additionally, during a recession period, money spent by the government does not bail out businesses. Such increases national debt which in turn reduces what the government use for developmental projects.

The resultant effect of the above situation no doubt pose enormous challenges to music education; such as on the provision/procurement of musical equipment. For instance, musical instruments that were hitherto recession sold at between ₦25,000.00 and ₦30,000.00 may increase to about ₦80,000.00 and even ₦100,000.00 or more in the open market, thereby making it impossible for some indigent parents/guardians to buy one for their children/wards that study music. Institutions are equally affected, as procurement of teaching equipment is affected.

Another effect of recession is on what is known as Reduced Real Wages. This refers to wages that have been adjusted for inflation. Falling real wages means that a worker's paycheck is not keeping up with inflation. The worker might be making the same amount of money, but his purchasing power has been reduced. In such situations, manpower development is hampered, as the salary/wage earner finds it difficult to develop further; not to talk of developing another person. Recession also has effects on many self-sponsoring learners, who find it difficult to acquire their training equipment as a result of high cost of living during recessions. Recession has a general effect on physical, moral, social, psychological, etc. aspects of Nigerian musical practice.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has delved into some areas of interest in music education and recession in Nigeria. It was discovered that whilst a good deal of rhetoric has been expended at national and international conferences and symposia. While some of these have been documented, much has not been achieved in practical terms in form of evolving a truly Nigerian music education framework. The concept of bi-

musicality is still lopsided because Nigerian music is still being studied from a Western perspective. The study uncovered that until significant musical theories and conceptual approaches emerge from extensive field work into Nigeria's diverse musical cultures, it will be difficult to develop an authentic and functional music education framework in Nigeria. Recession was observed as a cankerworm eating deeply into the very fabric of successful and meaningful music education in Nigeria. It was noted that amidst recession, provision of equipment and conducive learning situations would not be easily accessible.

To this end, we suggest/recommend that more efforts should be put in place by music practitioners and professionals towards parental re-orientation. Parents need to be better and properly enlightened on the usefulness of music education so as to allow their gifted children/wards to pursue a career in music since music is talent-driven. The mass media should be utilized by stakeholders for the promotion of music education oriented programmes. By so doing, the society at large would be disabused of the hitherto erroneous impression about music and musicians, and as well be educated on the usefulness of music education and its benefits to society.

The need for a paradigm shift in government's 60/40 policy on science and humanities-based courses is important also. The arts pre-date science; the humanities is the mother of science. Government educational policies should reflect the natural endowment and comparative advantage of its people rather than pursuing an imported agenda which in true sense of development leaves much to be desired.

Finally, the curriculum planners should also take a closer look at the contents of music curriculum and incorporate more indigenous content that would make music education more relevant and meaningful to society. The federal government's hasty pronouncement that the country is out of recession is not only politically motivated, but hoax; let us further invoke the creative ingenuity in us as a panacea to the unabated biting recession. Going back to indigenous knowledge systems would be the sure way out of recession permanently.

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