

IRONY OF MUSIC EDUCATION IN A RECESSED NIGERIAN ECONOMY

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Introduction

Nigeria in recent years has been experiencing terrible economic recession. This phenomenon has negatively affected all sectors of Nigerian economy, and has brought untold hardship, unemployment, indebtedness, starvation, salary shortfall among others, to Nigerian citizens. The education sector, which houses the pupils, children, students and youths from nursery schools to universities; and forms the greatest by Nigeria population, is equally affected. The state of education in Nigeria during the present crunch of economic recession is deplorable and pathetic. The impediment is so deep; that it makes one to often ponder and ask whether the educational sector in Nigerian economy would ever experience a “sound renaissance” and grandiose flow of resources for thorough display of academic excellence in all its programmes?

In Nigerian education system, especially in public schools, professionally trained and excellent teachers without good payment (salary), without funding of schools, without infrastructural development among others, equals constant strike actions and low graded (half baked) production of graduates.

Concept of Education

Fafunwa (1974) describes education as the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities and other forms of behaviour which are of positive values to society in which he lives. Okafor (1998) sees education as the process of discipline through training and study in the acquisition of skills and knowledge. Effiong (2013) adds that education is the process of teaching and learning in a formal or informal situation with the aim of improving and advancing in knowledge. Summarizing these definitions, Effiong (2013) opines

that “education is a worthwhile venture which is directed to the training of the minds to meet up with the changing and challenging status quo of the world system. Be it formally or informally, the most common factor in education is that there is learning process going on.” (p. 319).

Concept of Music

The term “music” has been defined by many music scholars, educators, writers, musicologists and even music enthusiasts. However, for the sake of emphasis and clarity, the following definitions of music are put forward: Glennon (1980) defines music as expression of sound or the expression of thoughts and feeling in an aesthetic way. Ifemesia (1987) equally sees music as a medium of communication and social unity of recording and documentation, meditation and worship, healing and socialization, recreation and celebration. And Okafor (2005) added that music as “an expression or art that is most accessible to human beings in any situation in their lives – crisis or calm, work and worship, play or war, recreation or reflection” (p. 147)

On a whole, music can be viewed ordinarily as an aspect of education, which is directed towards training a holistic being. Music matters to all individuals. It makes a lively and enjoyable society. It is a universal language of the soul; which gladdens the hearts, encourages the discouraged, soothes the mind, comforts the depressed, and is useful in fascinating and enhancing the process of learning.

Concept of Music Education

Music education according to Effiong (2009) could be 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 adopts him/herself successfully in the society as well as contribute immensely to the development of the society’ (p.114). Music education is a field of study associated with the teaching and learning of music. It touches on all learning domains including the psychomotor domain (the acquisition of knowledge), and, in particular and significant ways, the affective domain (the learner’s willingness to receive, internalize, and share what is learned), including music appreciation and sensitivity. At its inception, the following was aimed at as provided by Mason (1988) thus:

(a) For students/pupils to be able to read and sing musical notations by sight and later be able to perform practically, both vocal and instrumental types of music,

(b) For students to be able to achieve the important aims of responsiveness, through the study of music by using concepts tools in academic discipline.

Philosophy and Role of Music Education in Nigeria

A Nigerian child in particular is born and nurtured in music. He grows and learns in society where he lives with music, and eventually takes his exit from the world of music (Effiong, 2013). Okafor and Maison (1992) reveal that music education is geared towards helping man to be able to express himself deeply. Music education prepares an individual, not just to earn a living but also for life itself. This is so because while the individual is being equipped, trained and groomed by music educators to be useful for him/herself, he or she is at the same time groomed and equipped to render services to his/her society, community, and fellow men. Okafor (2005) agree to the statement above and provides the general aim of music education which is to equip the individual to perform music in the society and to contribute to the economy.

Okafor (2005) explains that music education started formally in Nigeria at the inception of the music department of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1960. 'The University of Nigeria, Nsukka, the first autonomous university in Nigeria, established the first college of music in Africa. It was a great step towards restoring the dignity of music and the musician. One of the pioneers Advanced Teacher Training College (College Education), the Alvan Ikoku College of Education, Owerri, also introduced music in its curriculum and began producing music teacher (trainers) for secondary schools and Teacher Training Colleges

Music education has that ability to encourage, spur and motivate learners into purposeful and resourceful action. In Nigeria, music education assists in the training and development of individuals to be able to express themselves deeply in practical and applied ways and earn a living. Music education thus helps to train the minds, built good character disposition and instill discipline on individuals. It is also a tool to encourage the depressed, make learning/comprehension of subject matter faster, groom and soothe the heart.

Traditionally, Music has been included in the curriculum of schools for reason of citizenship, character development, development of team spirit and health benefits. Ukpanah (2004) gives further reasons for its inclusion thus:

The need to include music as one of the viable teaching subject in the general school curriculum is that it helps to stimulate the brain and discipline the mind, there by serving as incentive for the other subject... Culturally speaking, music helps in the shaping of an individual into an acceptable member of his/her society. Besides, music is a profession which helps one to earn a meaningful living out of it, depending on the level of involvement in its study and practice (p. 21).

Music is pivotal in education because it makes learning faster. Through it, the norms and values of society are made known to its members. Music however, serves as the basis for educating members of society or community. Music education creates, generates and gears up a formidable society, as no society can do without music.

Recessed Nigerian Economy

The National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) sees a recession as a significant decline in economic activity 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 (Noko, 2016). An economic recession is typically defined as a decline in gross domestic product (GDP) for two or more consecutive quarters. GDP is the market value of all goods and services produced within a country in a given period of time. Looking at the lingering economic recession faced by Nigerians, its effect and way out, Maxret (2016) comments thus:

The economic situation in Nigeria is really a pathetic one. The government should wake up to its responsibility; get profound economists involved in policy analysis. The government should make agriculture attractive to the teaming youths, the interest rate should be reduced to encourage borrowing for real investment. A measure should be taken to engage the population in a real sector, manufacturing, mining, constructing, and engineering.

Anderson, and Cambell (1989) had earlier written on economic recession, its effects and way out especially, as it pertains the United States of America. However, Noko (2016) analyses further, thus: Economic recession is seen as a

negative real GDP growth rate for two consecutive quarters (say first and second quarters) Based on the above, Nigeria has been on recession since her first and second quarters growth in 2016 are 0.36% and – 1.5%. Drawn from the lesson from depression of 1981, 1991, 2004, 2008 – 2009 of the global economic recession, the following are causes of economic recession.

- ❖ High inflation – A general rise in goods and services, leading to low purchasing power
- ❖ Accumulation of debt servicing, especially foreign debt
- ❖ High interest rate – This discourages investors
- ❖ Fall in aggregate demand, fall in wages, and income
- ❖ Mass unemployment and general loss of confidence on the government due to economic indices.

Effects of Economic Recession on Nigerian Education

The negative effects of economic recession in Nigeria on the education of Nigerian citizens are so disheartening and alarming. For instance, the danger of the current economic recession has caused many students to drop out school at the tertiary, secondary and primary levels. This is because they could not pay their school fees and even maintain their stay as a result of shortage of money. Also, most students have suffered academically when they are not being taught fully by teachers who themselves, are also suffering for lack of money to meet needs. Most teachers have lost their initial zeal to teach, since (to them), their efforts are not well rewarded. Imotor, Weng and Osakede (2018) add other negative effects of economic recession on the education of Nigeria students, and general civil service thus:

The current economic recession has caused salary reduction and has made the country to find it difficult to maintain the quality of learning. The global economic crisis has effects on Nigeria economy. It has led to the depletion of stock, loss of investment, loss of jobs occasioned by the closing down of many companies, devaluation of the naira, culminating in government inability to fund education... increase in crime rate and increase in unemployment (p.3).

Furthermore, despite the fact that students go to school, yet learning does not have adequate positive change on them. Regrettably, suffice to say that the

standard of education has depreciated drastically due to the present economic recession. Thus, the place of music education which should create self-reliance, provide utilitarian education, information, entertainment and enlightenment has almost become an irony.

On the schools and students, Sunday and Atueyi (2016) write on how Nigerian schools, from primary to tertiary levels are battling the economic downturn. They lamented that when the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and sundry groups deplored the inclusion of all federal government-owned educational institutions in the blanket implementation of the Treasury Single Account (TSA) policy of the Federal Government, on the ground that it was crippling their efforts to deliver on their set objectives, not many thought matters would get from bad to worse so soon. But the economic downturn, which has given birth to a recession, has hastened the doomsday for these institutions. Tertiary institutions are not alone in this dilemma, as the impact of the hard-hitting economy malaise has engulfed the entire education spectrum, in one way or the other. The duo experts also add that its impact in the education sector, has made many parents, educators and stakeholders to be afraid of the possibility of the menace of economy recession to lead to poor quality service delivery in institutions of higher learning; even as some were already lying belly up, owing to multi-faceted challenges. Sunday and Atueyi (2016) further mentioned some effects of economic recession especially on the education of the Nigerian students at the tertiary levels by stating that matters have gone so bad that some private and public universities have stopped capital projects even as worst hit private universities are now paying half salaries to their workers.

The editor of Saturday Magazine (2017) in his interviews with parents, students and guardians got the responses that (1) recession would automatically affect children because parents' output is affected. In the sense that what they are earning before the recession is still the same thing they are earning during recession. What you are buying for ₦5,000 before recession, you can buy it at ₦8,000 during recession, yet, there is no increase in salary.

Another respondent said that (2) the economic recession no doubt is affecting a lot of private schools in Lagos State to the extent that some of the school

proprietors have pleaded with the government to come to their rescue. Others comment that (3) parents are finding it difficult to pay their children's school fees.

The effect of economic recession is not only on students but on Nigerians generally. This is because the economic recession can bring about unemployment, lower wage, high taxation, budget deficit, risen bond yields and untold hardship on citizens. However, the effects of economic recession as outlined here are such as they relate to education of the Nigerian students. During economic recession, students and teachers are often the worst hit victims. This is because parents will be struggling to pay their wards/children's school fees. Olowolagba (2016) supports this statement, and comments thus:

The economic situation in the country is very tough and no doubt, students are not finding it easy to survive and sustain themselves on various campuses. Also, many parents are currently finding it very difficult to pay the school fees of their children and provide other basic needs. The teachers are not also spared; meeting up with daily requirement has been a very difficult thing to them. All these accumulate to our calls on government at all levels to ensure that the economic recession does not affect the standard of education.

Olowolagba (2016) further admonishes that allowing recession to affect the quality of education at primary, secondary, or tertiary levels, is like digging the grave for innovation and building of great minds that will delve into illegal practices.

On a debate, on whether the economic recession is having a big impact on education in Nigeria, 90% of respondents said "Yes" while 10% said "No". Some of the comments are and I quote:

With the recession, money is low, so education is put to the side... When money is low, the bulk of the cash income goes toward bills that do not include education. It is a shame that the first thing to be cut is the most important thing: education. Unfortunately, colleges do not want to hear that you cannot pay your bill because it is a recession.

Another respondent stated that economic recession has a big impact on education in Nigeria comments thus:

Yes! It is because now, schools are running out of money and closing. Teachers are quitting their jobs as teachers and looking

for work elsewhere. Parents who had their kid in private school for years are now sending them to public school. People are just worried about paying their bills than how good their kid is being educated” (James Underwood).

Another respondent remarked thus:

The recession certainly has a big impact on education as evidenced by severe budget cuts. States have been so cash-strapped that funds to preschool, elementary, secondary, and post-secondary schools have been reduced in many cases. At the elementary and secondary levels, this has contributed to many teacher lay-offs and, in some cases, school re-organization and even closings. Class sizes are bigger. In addition, while tuition is going up at many colleges, financial aid programmes are often being threatened by cuts, providing further barriers to low-income students. (childlike Lamar. 56)

The economic recession in summary is really affecting the educational progress of Nigeria. It has affected the overall infrastructural development in Nigerian schools, led to incessant strike actions by academic staff of institutions, and brought about short falls in salaries.

David (2018) provides how the economic recession negatively affecting the education of the Nigerian students; stating that some schools have had to make cuts that affect students more directly. These cuts include:

- Laying off of teachers, which in turn increases class size.
- Cutting extra-curricular activities.
- Cutting subjects not required for graduation.
- Eliminating field trips.
- Cutting instructional programs.
- Cutting professional development program for teachers and staff.

Some schools have managed to trim personnel costs while minimizing teacher layoffs by instituting furlough days, freezing salaries, and reducing other benefits. But the financial handwriting is still on the wall: in upcoming years, more cuts will be necessary.

Problems of Music Education in Nigeria

Music education in Nigerian has been going through series of problems over the years. The problems are vast but the following shall be seen by virtue of priorities.

Motivation of music educators/teachers: Teachers are not well motivated to be effective in their task of effective education delivery and in encouraging salaries. Asiodu (2012) explains that it is ironical that despite Nigeria's oil wealth, she has not been able to deliver qualitative education services even when other neighbouring nations like Ghana, with limited resources can offer a more globalized education. It is ironical because just after independence, till the early 1970s, Nigeria, with limited resources of about 100 million (₦100,000,000) per annum was able to achieve much development including the provision of qualitative education. The issue is that Nigeria with abundance of resources presently cannot manage, maintain and motivate teachers and the educational system, for absolute growth in our educational sub-sector. What an irony!

Continuity of music education: Traditionally, music has been included in curriculum of Nigerian education by reasons of character development, team spirit, citizenship and health benefit. Ironically, there is no continuity of music programmes in senior secondary schools. The fewer junior secondary schools that allow music to be taught do not continue with music in senior secondary schools. Brocklehurst (1996) observes that "the present lack of continuity between music in our junior and senior secondary schools is due to the fact that music education received by children in junior schools varies widely, both in scope and quality" (p.1)

Full implementation and acceptance of music education: Effiong (2013) remarks that "it is a wise thing ...for one to ponder, think and ask why music is not given its right of place by planners and implementers of the school curriculum when it has been accepted as a viable subject in general education and in the junior secondary school system in Nigeria" (p.324). Most schools, especially in the Northern Nigeria, do not see the necessity of teaching music as one of their school subject/courses. Music education is not even in most of the schools' general lesson time tables. Effiong (2013) further opines that "music has been seriously relegated because the government, curriculum planners and implementers have

not given it all a full-fledged acceptance as enshrined in the Nigerian Curriculum of education and National Policy on Education” (p.325).

At the university level, Onyeji and Adebowale (2004) lament that “the department of music in Nigerian Universities, provide a unique contest for the development of musicians and the propagation of Nigerian music ideas amidst implementation betrayals of the Federal Government’s Cultural and Educational Policies” (p.80). The resultant effect of this negligence and partial implementation of music in Nigerian curriculum of education could be devastating especially in a recessed economy nation like Nigeria. Onyeji and Adebowale (2004) lament over some negative effects this negligence and non-acceptance could cause, thus: “As such, music educators in Nigeria are saddled with the responsibility of producing music graduates who cannot only effect the consolidation, redefinition and transformation of Nigerian musical practice but can also play in the same league as their European American and Asian Colleagues (p.80).

Funding/facilities: The study of music both in its theoretical and practical terms is expensive. When music education is not properly funded, the teaching and learning of music become impossible. Music is practical oriented, therefore, for proper understanding, comprehension, performance and application of music in applied skills, musical instruments, music facilities and equipment are involved; and these are so expensive to purchase.

In a recessed economy, availability of musical instruments and appliances are being affected. When they are not made available, the students in institutions/schools will be denied their rights for better practical experience and enhancement. Music is not a course to be taught only theoretically. The theoretical knowledge acquired in the learning of music should be practically harnessed for the betterment of the music learner and the society at large. Gimba (2012) in his discussion on the problems facing the effective learning of music in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, laments that:

Another nagging problem besetting our tertiary education is dwindling funding support. Public higher education institutions in Nigeria are sorely dependent on the government budget, with the low developmental stage of the country. However, the budget allocation is limited and the financial burden of the expanding

Prince Effiong: *Irony of Music Education in a Recessed Nigerian Economy*
system on the government is increasingly becoming unbearable
(p.6).

Inadequacy of trained music staff: The National Policy on Education (1981) totally recognizes that: “no education system can rise above the level the quality of its teachers... all teachers in our educational institutions, from pre-primary to University, will be professionally trained” (p.38). However, the question to ask is: Do we have sufficient adequately trained music teachers/educators in Nigerian institutions today? Of course, the answer is not in the affirmative. For example, in Federal College of Education, Pankshin, in Plateau State, the department of music has only five (5) professionally trained teachers, teaching both in the NCE and B.ED (Degree) programmes. The implication of this is that the members of staff are unduly overworked, and they may not be giving the students enough attention; thereby reducing the productivity rate in the nation’s standard of education. Okafor (2005) vehemently supports the fact that adequate professional music staff or educators should be employed by government to teach music and other upcoming music educators should be sponsored by government thus:

Schools of music should be adequately staffed... talented musicians should be motivated by the award of scholarship into institutions of higher learning both in Nigeria and abroad; especially in such specialized areas as ethnomusicology, instrumental technology and dance choreography (p.204).

Finally, Effiong (2009) summarizes the problems of music education in Nigeria to include among others: ‘Lack of professionally qualified staff, inadequate supply of musical instruments such as keyboards, guitars, flutes, music books; and, lack of interest by the students towards the teaching and learning of music’ (p.118).

Possible Solutions and Recommendations

Having exhaustively looked at the irony and problems of music education in a recessed economy of Nigeria, the following are recommended:

- i. Thorough acceptance, appreciation and appraisal should be given to the study of music from Nursery to the university levels. Parents should encourage, stimulate and sponsor their children/wards that desire to study music as a profession. Leaders at all levels must also realize that music education remains a golden and most cherished asset for Nigeria. They should therefore

do all within their powers to project the worth, value and standard of music education at all levels.

- ii. Music education from pre-primary schools to the tertiary institutions should be properly funded by government with adequate provision of music books, musical instruments, audio/visual aids, theatre halls, concert halls, studios, recording devices and other information communication gadgets. These will go a long way to facilitate and enhance the process of teaching and learning of music. The funding of education sector generally, and specifically, music education, should be increased by government. This shall to a great extent, assist in a furnished and well established formation of professionally trained music educators, with both theoretical and practical proficiencies at graduation.
- iii. The curriculum of music education should be given a laudable acceptance and full implementation by the government, stakeholders, curriculum implementers and planners. There should be adequate attention by the government to the full implementation of music education as enshrined in the National Policy on Education and Nigeria School Curriculum of Education for the benefit of the Nigerian citizens. Music education facilitates learning, trains the minds, aids comprehension, forms character, moulds the mind, soothes the soul, instills discipline and makes learning/retention of subject, faster.

It is therefore recommend that music education should be allowed to be an elective course in all the higher institutions in Nigeria; and it should be considered as a core subject from the pre-nursery to secondary schools in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Nigeria in recent years has been going through economic recession. The recession periods have been moments of hardships, strike actions in institutions, unemployment, starvation, deaths, poverty, crisis, and general economic break down in prizes of goods and services. The recession has brought untold decline in economy and very visible in real Gross Domestic Product (GDP), real income employment, industrial and wholesale retail sales, lasting for years. The recession in Nigeria affected all Nigerian citizens – especially the low class and civil servants, and virtually all ministries. The education ministry is one of the most affected since it covers a greater percentage of the Nigerian citizens from nursery schools to higher institutions. Music education, being a sub-sector of education equally suffers especially in the area of inadequacy of infrastructural facilities,

insufficient professionally trained music educators/staff, salary short fall, poor acceptance and implementation of music education in the curriculum of education in Nigerian schools, among others.

The clarion call for the government to quickly create ways to end the economic recession was raised. For example, Nigerian government should target her expenditure on skills acquisition and empowerment, increase in manufacturing produce and exportation, increase in agricultural produce and export, engage in effective spending and enhance access to credit. The importance of music education to Nigeria citizens is such that should not be toiled with. Music facilitates learning, enhances comprehension, aids in general learning and training of the children, adolescent, youths and other young adult. For effective understanding, comprehension and memorization of subjects in schools and institutions of higher learning, the place of music education which cannot be disputed, should be given greater attention at all levels of education in Nigeria.

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