MUSICOLOGISING AND KEEPING THE NIGERIAN MUSICAL ARTS EDUCATION TAB IN THE ERA OF THE NEW NORMAL

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Introduction

The world has been in a panic mode following the emergence of the deadly plague, a new strain of the SARS-COV-2 Virus, (*Corona Virus Disease*) shortened as COVID-19. The disease was declared a global health pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) in March, 2020 and the number of infected persons, hospitalisation and death recorded continues to soar across different countries (Oyeranti and Sokeye, 2020:17). As at 24 December 2020, about 80 million persons have been infected by the virus and close to two million fatalities recorded across the globe. Nigeria's figure was put at a little above 80,000 reported cases and 1,250 fatalities by the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC, 2020).

The Infectious Disease Centre, Yaba, Lagos State confirmed Nigeria's first case of COVID-19 on 27th February, 2020. The index case was an Italian citizen, male who arrived at the Murtala Mohammed International Airport, Lagos on 24 February, 2020 on-board a Turkish airline from Milan, Italy. After about a period of two weeks, a cluster of cases were detected in Lagos and Abuja, signalling the emergence of the nationwide spread of the virus. As part of the immediate responses by the Federal Government of Nigeria, the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority announced a restriction of international commercial flights into the country effective from 23rd March, 2020 (Onyeji, 2020), the same day the country recorded her first COVID-related fatality in Abuja. About a week later, the Federal Government authorised the closure of all no-essential services, including business and industries by restricting movement of people in Lagos and Ogun states, as well as Abuja. Many other state governors also imposed restrictions on inter-state movement.

Common symptoms associated with COVID-19 are quite similar to common cold, including fever, cough, shortness of breath, loss of smell and taste among others. The complications are however of much greater degree than its symptoms. It could lead to pneumonia, viral sepsis, acute respiratory distress syndrome, failure of internal organs such as the kidney and liver among others, and subsequently death (WHO, 2020). From research, medical experts suggest that the virus is not airborne but can spread in several ways, especially through close contact with an infected person. This could be in form of droplets that fall on surfaces which a person could touch unknowingly. It is difficult to identify an infected person without conducting a test because the symptoms are irregular. As a result, there are silent carriers whose activities are responsible for the wide spread of the disease. Silent carriers could be asymptomatic (persons who carry the active virus in their body but never develop any symptoms), presymptomatic: infected persons who are just incubating the virus but yet to show any symptoms, and very mildly symptomatic (persons who feel a little unwell from a COVID-19 infection but continue to come in close contact with others). A strong advice on method of control is to keep a safe distance from an infected person; by extension, for everyone to embrace the principle of social distancing since transmission may occur inadvertently. Other measures include frequent hand washing with alcohol-based sanitizers or soap and wearing of face masks (NCDC, 2020).

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, virtually all spheres and sectors of the world: health, economy, education, social, political, religious, security and so forth, have been greatly impacted. The risk of community transmission forced many countries to adopt various measures including stay-at-home order (lockdown) to restrict movement of persons with a view to flattening the curve and curtailing the ravaging disease. The consequences of the response of closure include disruptions of unprecedented degree in human living and security, education and vital areas of the world economy (Samuel et al, 2020: 348). Indeed, the economies of many countries, including Nigeria, are reported to have been recently forced back into recession as a result of the pandemic. By extension, Nigeria's musical landscape has been largely reshaped by the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is evident on many strands, both positive and negative, including low patronage of musicians who engage in live performances owing to government restriction policy in respect of social gathering, limited avenues for music exchange in form of teaching and learning, as well as

pragmatic movements on the part of musicians, and music educators leading to an expansion of new platforms for music production, transmission and distribution.

Conceptual Clarifications

Musicologising, which is the act and art of systematising knowledge of the music of an area as practised by the musicians of that area, is advancing in Nigeria. The level and rate of its growth is still a subject of debate among scholars and this is due to a number of factors.

As far as music education is concerned, we need not reiterate how the three domains of learning are interlinked with music, since the issue is well articulated in previous scholarly works. Existing works have clearly shown how mental knowledge is involved in compositions and interpretations of music and musical instruments, especially realization of African complex rhythms, which require much calculation and full concentration by the human brain (cognitive). The affective domain is paramount in music performance and meant to assist in developing social skills for interactions and maintaining relationships. This can be seen in ensemble playing as each member is assigned distinctive role and responsibility to ensure successful performance. Similarly, interdependence of members of the ensemble is very important in achieving harmony within performers and music. The last but not the least is the psychomotor, which involves physical manipulation of instruments and dance steps to music, and seen in practical exercise to the body.

Nzewi (2003) articulated the philosophy that predominate African musical arts when he affirms its involvement as an engagement of structured sound, aesthetic/poetic stylization of body motion, measures stylization of spoken language, metaphorical reflection of life and cosmos displayed in action, as well as symbolized text and décor embodied in material objects. According to Nzewi, each branch resonates and reinforces the logic, structure, form, shape, mood, texture and character of the other. To this end, in a typical musical arts matrix, the music reflects the dance, language, drama, and or costume; the dance bodily translates the music, language, drama and costume/scenery; the poetry and lyrics narrate the music, dance, drama and material objects; the drama enacts the music, dance,

language, costume and material objects, while the material objects, costume and scenery highlight music, dance, drama and/or language.

Viewed from the perspective of musical arts education, cooperation with and acquiescence to regulations and measures put in place by the Nigerian government in order to bring COVID-19 pandemic under control, the affective domain appears to be the most affected and disrupted. This is not unconnected with the nature of music as a social phenomenon. The normative in public music performances privileges performer-audience interactions, while physical contact is almost inevitable in terms of teacher-learner interaction for Applied Music or Ensemble/Orchestra Workshop classes.

Musicianship, Musicologising and Music Education: A Synthesized Triadic Movement

Music practitioners/performers make music, they possess knowledge about music and deploy the knowledge through their musical arts (creating a new form and expressing themselves) musically. Such music practitioners are social commentators, image makers, teachers/moulders, cultural ambassadors (Okafor, 2005; Samuel, 2014), to mention but a few. A musicologist, on the other hand, is preoccupied with eagerness to erudition through a careful and purposeful study of music, its contents and contexts, adoption of well structured procedure to unearth facts and thorough investigation of data for meaning and drawing logical conclusions on the subject matter. All these are done with a view to systematising knowledge and abstracting theories. Put differently, musicianship deals with music making, while musicologising refers to music criticism and scholarship.

Vidal (2012: 215) delved into some of the challenges associated with Nigerian music scholarship, especially predicaments in the field of music lexicography as he decried a lack of dictionary of musical concepts, terms and phenomena. In addition, Vidal raised a number of questions which immediately elicit the debate bordering on aesthetic universalism as opposed to cultural relativism. For instance, he sought to know how the concept of beauty in each geographic area is defined and how to recognise it or scholarly describe it in contrast to music of other cultures. Another important concern that attracted Vidal's attention is the process of communicating research findings such that they become acceptable to peers (peer review process), which is a vital component of music scholarship.

In order to properly problematise the issue, it is expedient to return to the subject of training, outlook and the level of exposure of music scholars in Nigeria. In other words, what is the capacity of institutions responsible for producing music intellectuals in Nigeria? By global convention and practice, higher educational institutions are somehow synonymous with knowledge since their primary mandate is anchored to a three-fold stance – knowledge generation (as evidenced in research), knowledge transmission (in form of teaching), and knowledge sharing through town-gown engagements (community service). This is why ivory towers are intrinsically engines of growth and development, centres of innovation and excellence, and agents of transformation and wealth creation in all ramifications. It also explains why world class institutions of higher learning are measured by outstanding outputs arising from cutting edge researches, solution-driven projects and technology transfer and so forth. Aina (2019: 141) emphasised the point when he noted that the level of knowledge explosion in the twenty-first century remains unparalleled judging by the rate and scale of transformation in science, technology, communications, culture, politics, human mobility and migrations.

Higher institutions in Nigeria are built around a tripod, namely universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. Each institution is designed to perform its role of providing specialised set skills (music) and equipping its products for the tasks required on them. For instance, the mandate of CoEs largely revolves around producing teachers who would lay the foundation of music training at the basic educational level (primary and junior secondary). The polytechnics also are unique in the type of training they offer and this is remarkably different from the goals of universities responsible for training music graduates and postgraduates in Nigeria. While the training of music specialists, educators, practitioners of diverse areas is done at all the three levels, it is unarguable that it universities possess the requisite orientation, philosophy and specialised curricula to produce the type of manpower required for rigorous research and peculiar intellectual engagements expected of musicologists, especially those whose training extends to a higher degree level.

Issues to Ponder

The crux of the matter speaks, first, to the relevancy of university music training including at postgraduate level. It is important to ask some vital questions: What do the curricula look like? What philosophy governs and propels the training

at different institutions offering music of diverse nature? How frequent are the course contents adjusted and aligned through periodic reviews to respond to contemporary realities such that the products of these institutions become competitive with their counterparts globally? What type of research projects are being conceptualised, designed and carried out in these institutions of learning? To what extent are the researchers' works responding to societal needs? All these questions require serious introspection devoid of any sentiments.

Additionally, it is expedient to ponder and address a fundamental question: How equipped and prepared are Nigerian music educators to adequately respond to the challenge brought about by the post COVID-19 experience, especially in delivering music programmes online? Samuel et al (2020) lamented the lack of preparedness and technical competence of instructors and students alike in embracing the new normal, while Mohamedbhai (2020:1) asserts that when teaching materials are not prepared by a professional instructional designer or when a facilitator (lecturer/tutor) is not properly and pedagogically trained for delivering the programme or in a situation that students are not equally exposed to the pedagogy of online learning, the quality of online education will be compromised and adversely impacted. Similarly, a significant impact of COVID-19 is disruption of research activities and academic mobility of postgraduate students and emerging scholars in the country (Samuel et al, 2020, 348). The closure of institutions interrupted the research progression of postgraduate scholars particularly those in the experimental, data-gathering or analysis phase of their research. How can Nigerian musicologists harness the various technologies at their disposal to turn this challenge into opportunities?

Practical Steps in the light of Paradigm Shift in the Era of COVID-19

Positive responses by musicians and musicologists to the COVID-19 pandemic can be seen on many fronts. First, it opens up a new site for research on how citizens can cope and relax when forced to stay at home. Thus, interested musicologists can engage in scientific enquiries into new forms of music making in emergencies, including efforts in the area of promoting home-grown solutions and enhancing Africa's indigenous knowledge system. Secondly, it provides opportunity for musicians to document and historicise the events about the pandemic. This includes music compositions, recording and production in audio-visual format for public enlightenment and adequate information dissemination

about the virus. One of such compositions is a song entitled *Koro* produced by Jubal music. In addition, many musicians have explored alternative platforms, especially the new media through numerous social media applications such as the Instagram, Facebook and Youtube for packaging and distributing their musical products. They have been able to maintain the loyalty of their patrons and fans, expanded their musical boundaries, but most importantly, they are able to reach and gain more patronage of members of their audience. By so doing, they are able to keep their business afloat during the pandemic and beyond. These new platforms will remain relevant and continue to form part of the realities of the 'new normal'.

In what follows, I attempt to discuss practical solutions available for exploration by music educators during and beyond the pandemic. Specifically, I examine six available technology-enhanced learning (TEL) models which can be explored. There is no gain saying that TEL is not a new form of teaching method since it has been in use for many years with many educational institutions adopting it to deliver their programmes globally. Several attempts were made within the last two decades in Nigeria to introduce other forms of teaching aside the traditional methods. Examples of such initiatives include the SAIDE project (sponsored by a South African-based agency), STEP-B project for Education enhancement and most recently, the (PeDAL). Efforts were made in the foregoing projects to introduce both academic and non-academic staff members to a number of alternative learning platforms, including video conferencing and other learning enhancement processes. Some drawbacks were witnessed because not many staff and students in Nigeria's higher educational institutions showed much enthusiasm in embracing technology or blended teaching and learning modes. Many still prefer the traditional face-to-face method, which they claim is well tested, successful and adjudged as popular by students.

However, in an era where the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted every fibre of human life including higher education, the reality of adopting modern technology in learning and teaching can no longer be ignored. Utilizing TEL as a viable alternative learning platform goes beyond mere 'dumping' of contents digitally on students. It is, however, to ensure that learning is facilitated and knowledge delivery/facilitation is highly interactive to allow experience to compensate for lack

of face-to-face interaction between the students and their teachers and also amongst the students themselves.

Building Blocks for Change

Given that learning must continue and educational institutions are opened in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is understandable that many higher education institutions have decided to either switch completely to the online (remote) teaching delivery (virtual education) following the national lockdown imposed in March 2020, or opt for the blended learning mode. The sudden shift or switch to online delivery was accompanied, understandably, with a number of challenges. These range from students' inability to cope with the huge amount of contents (documents, videos etc) and a loss of interactivity and social interaction, a key element between themselves and the teachers on one side, and among themselves on the other. As observed earlier, music ensemble (choral and orchestral) demonstration workshop studies and applied music are examples of such classes most affected. Besides, there is the issue of infrastructure deficit, including slow or unstable Internet connectivity.

Nonchalant attitude on the part of music students to remote online teaching with the complaint of finding the mode unlively (unreal) is one of its numerous possible drawbacks. This is evident in their short attention span or outright loss of interest after joining one or two live sessions or after watching recorded lecture videos. As a result, unless a class teacher creatively finds a way to engage the students and win back their attention, they may be disengaged for the remaining period of learning in the semester or year. To this end, it is essential for the teacher to explore an alternative route for a more effective delivery in addition to avoiding the pitfalls identified above.

Making Preparations

- Music educators must be very familiar with the tools they use with online education, and must avoid trial-and-error and guessing when using these tools.
- Also, they need to know the extent of the tools and their capabilities and to utilize every possible feature without

complicating things for music students.

Music educators must choose the most appropriate device and platform they are confident with and use tools and software that are easily available to the students as well.

Model 1 – Modified Traditional (Face-To-Face) Teaching

The traditional face-to-face mode of teaching will continue when each institution calls students into residence. However, adequate arrangements must be made to ensure that all lecture halls and classrooms are arranged in such a way that conforms to the laid-down COVID-19 safety protocols. There should be adequate labelling of seats (with adequate distancing) and provision of wash-hand basins in front of each lecture hall, teaching room and auditorium/hall for practical music classes or concerts. For a start, the following items will be required: a) Wash hand basins with provisions for running water, b) automatic soap dispensers and c) automatic hand sanitizer dispenser.

Model 2 – Live Video Interactive Sessions
Video conferencing for teaching

Live streaming, in particular, is a very useful technology for distant learning and is now a well-established method of disseminating information during COVID-19 lockdown. Video allows for real-time interaction and a virtual classroom-like feel. Capturing lectures also gives lecturers the ability to save and upload the videos for students to playback if they missed a session or need to go back and re-watch part of the lesson. In order to bring live streaming classroom to life, there is the need to invest in proper video conferencing. As much as possible, it is recommended that each department identify a sizeable area or lecture room and designate such for proper video conferencing. In addition to the live video interaction, pre-recorded lectures may also be relayed to the students.

Model 3 – Learning Management Systems (LMS)
Moodle platform

Many LMS have been simplified to ensure smooth and convenient operation by staff and students, with a modified user-friendly interface. It also ensures that all elements of good and acceptable teaching and learning standards are followed. An example of an LMS link is as follows: https://www.ui.edu.ng/university-ibadan-e-learning-using-moodle

In order to activate it, each lecturer is required to complete a template (shown in the link above) for account and course page creation. When the account is created, the user is notified. Thereafter, s/he receives a guide on how to navigate. This is quite simple.

Model 4 – PowerPoint Presentations with Voice-Over

This may also be integrated in the LMS, but can be done as a stand-alone mode of presenting information. The Microsoft PowerPoint offers features to record audio narration and export as a video. The steps to take are not complex: User to design his/her PowerPoint (Use images and limit text to better engage viewers/listeners). Click the Slide Show tab (Do not add audio under Insert and Record Audio; this method will not allow you to save your PowerPoint as a video since it does not synchronize timings to automatically move the slides with the audio).

Click Record Slide Show (Note that audio may start recording automatically if you have an older version of PowerPoint. It will still work, but this version offers reduced functionality. Select Record from Current Slide or Record from Beginning depending on your needs.
(NOTE: Any PowerPoint slide can be re-recorded by clicking Record Slide Show and Selecting Record from Current Slide).

Model 5 – WhatsApp Platform

Another digital platform that is considered under-utilized and which can provide new impetus for digital education is WhatsApp. The WhatsApp is primarily a communication application that shares a number of features with other social media applications.
The advantages of WhatsApp include:

- Its cost-effectiveness and easy to use, giving it a competitive advantage over other social network platforms.
- Comparatively, it is also considered a safe application due to the inclusion of end-to-end encryption (E2EE) protocol.
- Its users can check if messages have been received properly and read by the receiver when two blue marks appear next to the sent information.
- The instructor can also use the application for one-on-one text

exchanges to address individual students' expectations and needs.

- Content discussions and lecture updates, assignment instructions and submission deadlines, as well as changes in mid-semester continuous assessment tests, can be communicated via WhatsApp.

- In most cases students can contact their course instructor via WhatsApp regardless of time differences, physical distance or office working hours and this can reduce delays in feedback.

- Finally, using WhatsApp can enrich the learning experience and make it relatively easy for lecturers to make contact with learners at their own convenience.

On the downside, however, WhatsApp groups limit the number of users, which prevent the formation of groups of learners exceeding 256. Thus, an ensemble class of about 300 performers cannot be accommodated on the platform.

NOTE: WhatsApp may also be integrated in the LMS platforms for better performance.

MODEL 6 – Google Classroom For Teachers

Google Classroom is a free application designed to help students and teachers communicate, collaborate, organize and manage assignments, go paperless, and much more! For a step-by-step tutorial on how to start using google classroom, please visit https://edu.google.com/teacher-center/products/classroom/?modal_active=none

- There are several online platforms and models in existence. However, cost benefit analysis is critical for a resource-limited setting in determining an appropriate model of choice.

- Each music department ought to have a ready and functional video- conference room for optimal performance.

- Above all, it is expedient for all music educators to receive adequate training on the aforementioned models.

Conclusion

Diversified 21st-century compliant platforms are sine qua non for musicians, musicologists and music educators at this critical period of COVID-19. Such platforms include e-learning and e-classrooms for facilitator-learner interactions and opportunity for knowledge transmission at emergency situations when institutions are adopting measures to forestall community transmission of the deadly disease. Serious minded educators are conscious and open to embrace blended teaching/learning modes. They also take advantage of digitally-mediated pedagogies and strive to get adequately trained and well-equipped to utilise them. Musicologists also can seize the seemingly precarious situation of the pandemic to engage in serious researches on the subject, develop new research skills for their studies and much more. Moving forward, the various agencies responsible for training, equipping and producing music personnel, by and large, require unusual creative approaches propelled by disruptive knowledge to break barriers and explore new frontiers during the pandemic and beyond.

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