

PARADIGM SHIFT IN MUSIC EDUCATION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY DURING THE PANDEMIC ERA

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Introduction

Fundamentally, research in music education and ethnomusicology involves the inquiry/interrogation of the ideas, phenomena, problems, claims, *inter alia*, around us with the aim of resolving issues and problems and/or affirming claims. These investigations sometimes lead to definite conclusive answers, but, at other times, the answers are inconclusive creating a *lacuna* thus opening avenues for further research. Scholars, including Osuala and Ihekweba have defined research as “a scientific process of finding out solution to a problem” (2016). Research is, therefore, the systematic probe to established facts, the search and quest for knowledge. Educational research, according to Osuala and Ihekweba, (Ibid) “is a systematic investigation into the problems of education with a view to improving teaching and /or learning.” For this systematic probe to take place, be it in an educational or ethnomusicological research, there is need for data collection, which in fact must follow an organized order. To carry out this systematic investigation in research, certain factors ought to be taken into consideration. These factors include availability of material, the "researchability" of the topic, significance of the problem, cost involvement, competency and interest of the researcher. With these factors in place, researchers collect data, through embarking on fieldwork, that often requires a face-to-face interaction. With the onslaught of the Covid-19 Pandemic, that brought the world almost to a standstill, changing all aspects of life including research, scholars had to begin to find new ways of research interaction in the field.

This paper aims at discussing some of the new ways scholars have created, using new modalities of technology, to enable them collect authentic data for

archiving and publication. Also, it provides some resource materials dealing with new ways and methods of conducting research in a pandemic era.

Research and Technology

Social, educational and ethnomusicological research has often prioritised fieldwork without which scholars seemingly are unable to collect authentic data for scholarly publication. Fieldwork, according to Barz and Cooley, “is the observational and experiential portion of the ethnographic process during which the ethnomusicologist engages living individuals in order to learn about music-culture” (1997 p.4). It is thus evident that fieldwork is a crucial aspect of any authentic scholarly investigation. In order to legitimize indigenous materials collected and used by scholars in the educational system, it is important that these materials are drawn from the authentic source, in this case, an African culture, since the beneficiaries are from the culture. However, the recent happenings in the world struck and ravaged by the Covid-19 Pandemic since 2019 has changed the surface of the world, almost destroying the normal and creating a new normal in all aspects of life. Washing of hands, the use of hand sanitizers, wearing face masks and social distancing suddenly became part of quotidian and everyone’s life. Of all these, the latter, namely, social distancing, affect scholarly research drastically. The lock-down of many countries, cities, and communities’ movement became restricted. With these restraints in both travelling and contact, the world seems to pulsed briefly before embarking on online modalities. Musical events, festivals, performances, *inter alia*, were cancelled. But, there was a proliferation of virtual activities including conferences, meetings, lectures, and the online world became very busy and interactive.

How has this online condensed agenda made provision for fieldwork? Isolation measures to contain the Pandemic means that researchers who traditionally depended on face-to-face ethnographic fieldwork (interviews, focus groups, participant observation, etc.) to collect data, would have to either delay their research or re-invent or create new ideas and methods for avoiding in-person (or face-to-face) interactions by using mediated forms that will achieve similar goals. These new methods revolve around online and phone modalities include: Survey tools, Photo/Video/Voice Tools, Discussion Platforms

Survey Tools

1. These survey instruments include using online survey tools or doing content analyses (Lupton, 2020).
2. Doing ethnographies utilizing existing online interactions as research materials.
3. Conducting interviews by phone, WhatsApp, Skype, Facebook, Telegraph and other such social media handles.

Photo/Video/Voice Tools

Photo, Video and Voice Elicitation are additional tools that are relevant in doing research during this pandemic era. Using these tools involve asking research participants to use a camera or voice recording Apps to take photos and/or make videos and voice memos about their musical performances and interactions. For this to be effective, researchers will have to provide their research participants with necessary questions or prompts to guide the research participants (Ahlin and Fangfang, 2019).

Using Goggle to video some performances such as those of family musicians and/or individual musicians which do not require gatherings that does not violate the Covid-19 safety rules and regulations. Social handles in this section include:

- a) Video-based focus group interviews
- b) Facebook groups: The researcher creates a secret Facebook group with content similar to an in-person workshop. Both the researcher and participants interact actively to achieve the desired results.
- c) The use of Youtube videos and Youtube accordance for analysis

Discussion platforms

Online discussion platforms are often used for literate groups that is, who can read and write comfortably. These platforms can customise an online group discussion that can be moderated in real-time. The researcher uploads his/her questions and check periodically to see the participants typing in their answers. This interaction can take place over a number of days.

All these methods, whose main purpose is to collect data for scholar publication and to improve teaching and learning in a Pandemic era, are relatively new to most parts of the developing world. But the reality is that these

technologies have been in use for over five years in Europe, Canada and the United States of America. The Pandemic, with its isolation restrictions, have led to the development, improvement and sophistications of technologies whose use in research and home schooling have been highly popularized.

Limitations and Setbacks in the Use of these Technologies

As good as these research technological methods and modalities may sound, there are fundamental limitations in their use, especially in under privileged societies such as Nigeria. Among the mirage of issues that litigate against this new way of conducting research, poor electricity systems to power computers, gadgets and phones (when they are available), inadequate internet access systems, high data cost and lack of required funding, are some of the major factors that make the use of these new-normal equipments for research unobtainable. This is not to say that they are not in use at all or anywhere in Nigerian institutions or Africa for that matter. For example, I attended an international conference, Evidence Leaders Africa (ELA), via zoom in December 2020, hosted by the Exchange and Linkage Programme, University of Port Harcourt. To my amazement, the conference was more sophisticated than I could have imagined. One of the workshops, guided by a scholar from the United States of America, was so interactive that one almost forgot it was an online workshop. While these "facendas" are common in Euro-American and Asian countries, they are sparse in African countries, although a few African countries are better prepared and have made these online teaching technologies part of their teaching methods as well as research methods

Decolonizing Nigerian Music Education

The Covid-19 Pandemic lock-down has afforded scholars time to revisit and re-read past modalities that theorized African music in general and Nigerian music in particular. This consciousness and looking back (*sankofa*), coupled with other recent socio-political activities including "Black Lives Matter," now begs for a decolonization of the academia and educational system in non-Western countries.

Colonial and Post-colonial Nigerian educational systems are intrinsically based on models and structures inherited from European colonists and American modern day influences. Nonetheless, this is the time to reconsider the educational curricula and teaching methods in line with Nigerian indigenous ethos and pathos

that are based on the “virtuous humanity disposition vis-a-vis the human cogitations, productions, relations and actions” (Nzewi, 2019, p.19).

Is it not time to de-construct the colonial hegemonic influences that seem to estrange our indigenous educational system from our children, making them not to appreciate and even scorn their traditional cultures, while Euro-America continue to drink freely from the wells of African indigenous knowledge (AIK)?

Conclusion

What then do we, as music educators do to improve or change what we do during research as it affects or resonates with what we do in the physical classrooms and/or web-classes? The truth is that the Covid-19 Pandemic and its subsequent strains have changed the way life used to be. Hence the urgent need to improve the online systems of conducting research, teaching and learning. We could reinforce what we are doing now by tutoring our students in the “new order” direction. These modern or rather new normal research technologies and methodologies can be used to source for African/Nigerian indigenous learning systems and modalities for collecting and documenting data. Indigenous materials, ways of parlance and methods of collecting information (for example the use of proverbs) should be incorporated into our curriculum and learning systems when and if we return fully to the classrooms.

The ramifications of the Covid-19 Pandemic will surely remain in societies all over the world and the effects of its changes on the way scholars conduct research will definitely be long lasting, and may well remain, fully or partially, the new normal. It is, therefore, pertinent that scholars brace themselves with available modern educational technologies. In addition, they should source for and retrieve (sankofa) those African Indigenous Knowledge (AIK) that could enrich and enhance the current Eurocentric curricula used in Nigerian schools today.

Some Resources on Virtual Field Work Methodology

1. Singing the Congregation: How Contemporary Worship Music Forms Evangelical Community by Monique Ingalls (See chapter 5 - Worship on Screen).
2. The Oxford Handbook of Music and World Christianity, Ed. by Suzel Ana Reily and Jonathan M. Dueck, ed. (See chapter by Christopher Hale).

3. Theory and Method in Historical Ethnomusicology, Ed. by Jonathan McCollum and David G. Herbert (See chapter 2).
4. Google doc. Doing Fieldwork in a Pandemic, by Deborah Lupton.
5. Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Method by Tom Boellstorff, Bonnie Nardi, Celia Pearce, and T. L. Taylor.
6. "Virtual Worlds: An Ethnomusicological Perspective" by Trevor Harvey. in *The Oxford Handbook of Virtuality*.
7. "Digital Ethnography Toward Augmented Empiricism: A New Methodological Framework" by Umi Hsu. <http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/3-1/digital-ethnography-toward-augmentedempiricism-by-wendy-hsu/>
8. Network creativity: ethnographic perspectives on chipmusic by Marilou Polymeropoulou (2015).
9. Virtual Ethnography by Christine Hine
10. For interviews, use Google voice. Just press 4 to start recording. Note that to be able to record, your interviewees must be the ones to call you.

References

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