COGNITIVE APPRENTICESHIP IN INDIGENOUS *BALUU* AND *KENGBE* MUSICAL ARTS OF ILORIN PEOPLE IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Introduction

Over time, different and divergent learning methods such as the Kodaly method (1941), Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (1987), Gordon's Music Learning Theory (1989), Pratt's Apprenticeship Perspective (1998), McPherson's Self-Regulated Learning in Music Practice (2017) have been postulated by scholars and musicologists alike in relation to the learning and practice of music in formal education. However, little study has focused on learning and apprenticeship methods for indigenous musical arts and practice, partly due to the informal context of indigenous music arts and practice in most cases. Hence, this study interrogates cognitive apprenticeship in indigenous African musical arts using two indigenous music styles: *Baluu* and *Kengbe* of Ilorin people in Kwara State, Nigeria as examples. This study is underpinned with Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory and relied on ethnography as the design. Using oral interview and non-participant observation of learning process, training, rehearsals and band performances of *Baluu* and *Kengbe* musical arts, this study identifies the stages of learning, development and professional practice of the practitioners. Learning by imitation, rote, articulation, reflection, exploration and improvisational skills were methods of skill acquisition. The study therefore recommends cognitive instructional strategies as an effective model in learning and apprenticeship as it stimulates the thought process of trainees and cognitive skills such as problem solving, social charisma, human relations, improvisation, enquiry, self-expression and self-esteem are developed through this model.

The context of music education has often been restricted to the formal education environment. Ironically, several popular and successful musicians have no formal music education background. Vitale (2011, p. 2) argues that "many pop musicians are self-taught and have engaged in a plethora of unstructured learning scenarios and environments typical of garage band practices". However, lack of learning in a formal music environment did not hinder their strides in the music industry. But, emphasis on music education has always been laid on the formal setting of academic learning. For this reason, most learning methods and theories are often postulated for and related to the formal academic setting which seems stereotypic. Peradventure, the reason for this bias is the fact that researchers in music were formally trained. Folkestad (2006, p. 135) states:

> *Most research in music education has so far dealt with music training in institutional settings, such as schools, and is accordingly based, either implicitly or explicitly, on the assumption that musical learning results from sequenced, methodical exposure to music teaching within a formal setting. . . Consequently, in order to realize and understand the multidimensional character of music teaching, musical learning should be considered in a much broader context than it typical of much contemporary research literature.*

It is on this premise that this study interrogates the points of convergence between the learning of informal indigenous music forms and the formal Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory (CAT). The study interrogates the models and tenets of Cognitive Apprenticeship within the contexts of teaching, learning, knowledge acquisition, and practice of *baluu* and *kengbe* music.

Indigenous Musicianship

On musicianship, Idolor (2002, pp. 14-15) cited in Emielu (2008, p. 96) defines the musician as 'one who performs music regularly on stage and on records'. Ikibe (2014, p. 1) simply defines musicianship as the 'art of music making'. Ibitoye (2020, p. 334) notes that indigenous music which can sometimes be termed as traditional music, is a type of music that celebrates and portrays the culture of the people. Indigenous musicianship can therefore be said to be the professional art and practice of the indigenous music forms on stage or on records. The practitioners of these indigenous forms are professional indigenous musicians. The indigenous

musicians observed in this study are: Iyabo Awero, a professional *Baluu* musician and *Egbe Onikengbe* of Magaji Nda Family house in Ilorin.

Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory

Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory (CAT) is a model of instruction that goes back to traditional apprenticeship but incorporates elements of schooling. This model, "cognitive apprenticeship" was postulated by Collins, Brown, and Newman in 1989. Cognitive apprenticeship (Collins et al., 1989) is a combination of two terms from different areas that was developed on constructivist approaches to learning and supported by situated cognition theory and the theory of modelling (Bandura, 1997 cited in Bruin, 2019, p. 263). The first strand, cognition theory is an educational theory. In educational theory, a cognitive approach to learning is dominant. In this approach, learning is a question of processing information, and the relationship to the surrounding world becomes a question of placing, processing, storing and retrieving information (Nielsen, 2006, p. 2). Understandings of cognition are based in the processes of knowledge acquisition. The second strand of the theory, apprenticeship "is the interaction between an expert and a novice learner, in which the expert assists the learner to become a master of skills through "modeling, scaffolding, fading and coaching" (Collins, Brown, & Holum, 1991, p. 6).

Cognitive apprenticeship is an instructional design model which is based on current understandings of how individuals learn (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). Cognitive apprenticeship is syncretic in nature as it integrates academic and vocational education so as to enable learners construct their own understanding of academic standards and internalize the thinking processes used to do so (Ghefaili, 2003, p. 2). According to Bruin (2019, p. 264), the utilization of cognitive apprenticeship structure in teaching and learning brings with it special and unique benefits for students and the teacher practitioners as a student learns through association and collaboration with a master who provides advice and expertise.

Bruin (2019) has earlier interrogated Cognitive Apprenticeship with the learning of improvisation in jazz music practice. This is because studies on jazz musicians typify the situated and inductive learning by doing as indicative of an apprenticeship environment (Bruin, 2019, p. 262). To Bruin, the employment of Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory as a theoretical underpinning in the learning of jazz and improvisation is an appropriate way to understand the teaching and learning

experience of participants whose learning undergoes negotiation, interaction and support from a significant mentor, practitioner or teacher (Bruin, 2019, p. 263). Collins, Brown, & Holum (1991, p. 6) state that apprenticeship derives many cognitively important characteristics from learners being embedded through having continual access to models of expertise-in-use against which they refine their understanding of complex skills.

There are seven instructional strategies that encompass the notion of cognitive apprenticeship: Modelling, Scaffolding, Articulation, Coaching, Reflection, Exploration, and Fading. These strategies shall be interrogated in the course of this study in tandem with the learning and acquisition of the indigenous *baluu* and *kengbe* musical arts.

On Apprenticeship and Music Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship can be premised on the acquisition of practical skills within a situated learning environment (Smilde, 2009, cited in Bruin, 2019, p. 262). Apprenticeship represents a broader perspective to learning, where the focus is on how the apprentice learns not only from the master's performances, but also from the other apprentices, or journeymen (Nielsen 2006, p. 2). Succinctly, the crux of apprenticeship is to learn and acquire skills, especially in a traditional informal context. A learner going through this process of acquisition of knowledge from a master, teacher or expert in that art is known as an apprentice. An apprentice mentored by a master garners knowledge and skills to grow into an expert level. The master acts as a mentor through which the learner evolves. Brockbank & McGill (2012) cited in Bruin (2019, p. 262), posit that mentoring is best understood as an evolving teaching and learning process that recognizes the interdependence of personal and professional development. As a “responsive guide”, a mentor offers “supportive and procedural information or practical examples” (Viilo et al., 2011, p. 55), aiming to “assist the learner to integrate as a fully functioning person within the society they inhabit” (Garvey, Stokes, & Megginson, 2009, p. 21).

Learning is a question of understanding how information is transformed and transferred from the external, concrete world to the internal and cognitive. Nielsen (2006, p. 2) notes that “learning is a question of internalizing information from the external world to the internal”. Having internalized information to expert level, it is expedient to retain expertise. However, there are different types of knowledge

required for an expert to retain expertise. Bruin (2019, p. 264) notes that knowledge of the domain (concepts, facts, procedures), heuristic strategies (techniques and approaches for accomplishing tasks) and control of learning strategies are pertinent for expertise retention. One of such learning strategies is the Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory (CAT) which is "designed to help students acquire an integrated set of cognitive and meta-cognitive skills through processes of observation and of guided and supported practices" (Collins et al., 1989, p. 18).

Therefore, studying apprenticeship is important in understanding how creative skills are learnt and developed. Nielsen (2006, p. 2) rightly submits that the study of apprenticeship offers a way of understanding how people learn without being formally taught. In this sense, to investigate apprenticeship learning is also to reflect on a traditional way of understanding what learning is about.

Practical skill in the musical arts is one of such skills learnt over time through a master-learner apprenticeship process. Musical art in and of itself has been proven to be a cognitive skill. Music improves cognitive and non-cognitive skills more than twice as much as sports, theater or dance (Hille and Schupp, 2013, p. 1). Scholars such as Barron et al. (2000); Felfe et al. (2011); Pfeifer and Cornelissen (2010); Stevenson (2010) have affirmed that the effect of music on cognitive skills is more than twice as large as the effect of sports, an activity which has been found to be an important input for skill development. Schellenberg (2011, p. 283) documents that music induces brain reactions that stimulate the development of cognitive skills.

However, acquisition of the skills is not vague. It is a product of conscious, strategic master-learner mentoring. Austin and Vispoel (1992, p. 12) suggest "students must believe that musical knowledge and skill can be improved through instruction and experience, and teachers should not only encourage effort, but also provide specific instruction in learning strategies to focus and maximize the benefits of increased effort". Internalization of strategic processes in learning is crucial to the retention of knowledge acquired. Dweck and Master (2008) further suggest that students who focus on processes attach value to effort, and develop a repertoire of study strategies that they can utilize to support their learning beyond the lesson.

Interrogating Cognitive Apprenticeship within the learning and practice of *Baluu* and *Kengbe* Music

Baluu and *Kengbe* musical arts are female oral musical arts identified with the Ilorin people and performed within the secular context of the Ilorin culture. Abiodun (2012, p. 64) affirms that 'Baluu music is a female oral musical art in Ilorin, a Yoruba speaking community located in the middle belt of Nigeria.' The name 'Baluu' is a Yoruba word derived from the English word, 'Aeroplane'. Ibitoye (2020, p. 335) asserts that "the music was named 'Baluu' as a product of the type of dance movement that opens the musical performance which is synonymous to the aeroplane's taxiing movement on taxiways and runways before flying". This dance, called the *Baluu* dance, which serves as the opening glee, is the source through which the music got its nomenclature 'Baluu'.

Kengbe music, on the other hand, is typically associated with royalties and royal family marriages. *Kengbe* music derived its name "Kengbe" from the main musical instrument used in the musical performance. *Kengbe*, literally, "a water pitcher" is a calabash used as the only instrument of accompaniment for the songs in *Kengbe* musical performances. The instrument is a directly struck idiophone. It is placed between the two legs and struck directly with a mallet (which may be padded or unpadded depending on the intended sound effect) or simply by direct application of the hand. While one hand covers the hollow part of the *kengbe* playing intermittently, the other hand strikes the body of the *kengbe*. In some cases, the *kengbe* could be filled with some small stones creating more resonating effects. In Ilorin, interested young girls from 5-6 years old are introduced and trained in the art and practice of *Kengbe* and *Baluu* as a skill set. The apprenticeship processes are intentional and strategic. The instructional strategies of cognitive apprenticeship found inherent in these musical arts include: Modelling, Scaffolding, Articulation, Coaching, Reflection, Exploration, and Fading.

Modelling: This describes the learner's observation, imitation and absorption of a conceptual model of requisite processes demonstrated by the expert. The master shows the apprentice what to do. In *Baluu* and *Kengbe* music, after the approval of a parent/ guardian who gives out his/her daughter to learn the profession as an apprentice, the apprentice starts from observation. The apprentice observes the band during all rehearsals and performances to see how it is being done. Such

an apprentice will be made to sit and watch the band during rehearsals and performances.

Fig 1: The picture above captures the modeling stage in Kengbe music where learners are made to sit and observe an expert player.

Coaching: At this stage, the master observes and facilitates while the apprentice performs a task. Through this, the master can detect problems, challenges and propose solutions. This stage forms a spine of development which runs through the entire apprenticeship experience. In *Baluu* music, the apprentice's first task of performance is the learning of the dance repertoire, a core component of *Baluu* music. Ibitoye (2020, p. 343) notes that "without learning the dance, she cannot proceed to other stages". The apprentice trains on waist flexibilities, flat back posture, waist twirls and other movements in the dance. Here, the apprentice is referred to as "*Omo Ijó*", that is "trainee dancer". As an experimental performance and confidence training, the "Omo ijós" (trainee dancers) open all performances with their pre-rehearsed choreographed movement. The success of this stage signals the promotion of the "Omo ijós" into the Chorus section of the band.

Similarly, in *kengbe* music, the expert trains the apprentices in *kengbe* dance during rehearsals. She observes critically and gives corrections and

recommendations where necessary. While they learn the dances (Coaching), they follow the band to performances for observation (Modelling). They further learn simple and basic rhythms of accompaniment on the *Kengbe* instrument

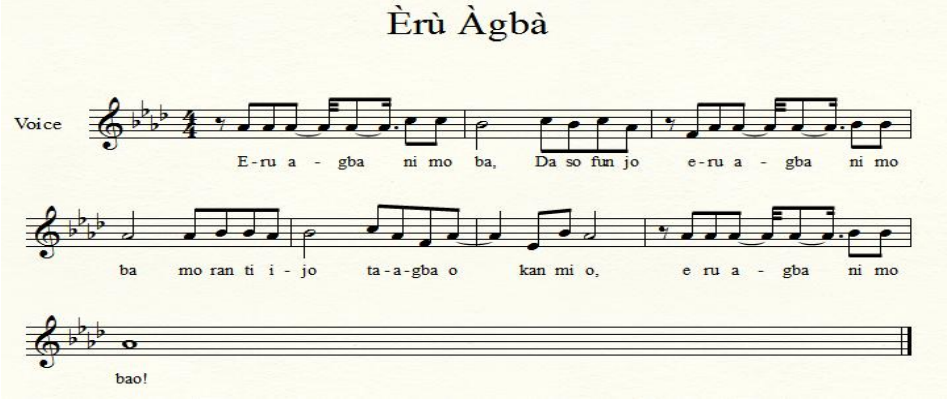
Fig 2: Young girls in the age range of 6-7 years being trained in the art of Kengbe music and dance at the Magaji Nda family house, Ilorin. Source: Researcher.

Scaffolding: This entails the provision of support by the Master to help learners perform a task. Quintana et al. (2004, p. 337) opine that scaffolding can help support sense making and inquiry. Reiser (2004, p. 275) affirms that eliciting greater student reflection and personal inquiry is also a significant aspect of scaffolding. Scaffolding plays out in the Chorus section of *Baluu* music band and in the Dance section of *Kengbe* music band. Having graduated from "Omo Ijó" to the Chorus section of the *Baluu* band, the trainees in the chorus sing monophonic melodic lines to set the mood for the entrance of the band leader in at the beginning of performances. Trainee *kengbe* dancers are made to dance in ecstasy, twirling the waist to the music created by the rhythms of the *Kengbe*.

Articulation: This is the clear verbal expression of knowledge, reasoning, or problem-solving processes from the learner. The master encourages students to verbalize their knowledge and thought process. Here, the trainees learn and

internalise simple basic melodies through the rote method by repeating the melody over and over again, thereby internalising song texts and contexts. In Baluu music for example, apprentices learn melodies like:

Eru agba ni moba o,	I respect the elders
Dasofunjo eru agba nimoba o	
Dasofunjo,	I respect the elders
Mo ranti'jo, taa'gba o kan mi o,	I remembered the day that I will also become an elder
Eru agba ni moba o	I respect the elders



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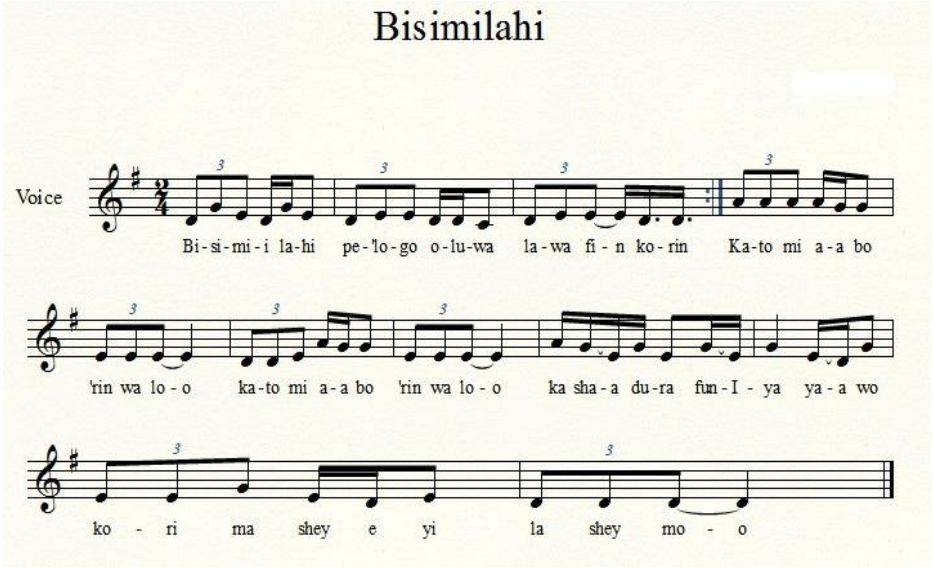
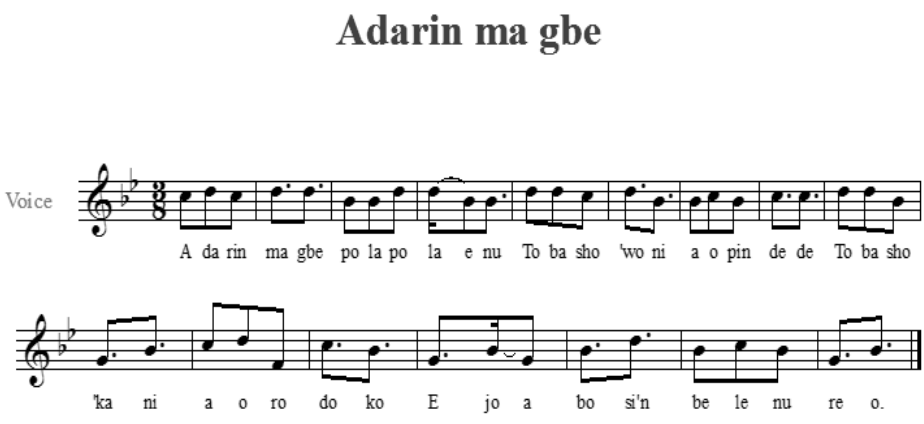
In *Kengbe* music, apprentices internalise basic melodies with cultural and religious undertones with a sense of purpose.

Bisimilahi pel'ogo oluwa lawafin Korin	With the help of God we sing
Bi moto tin nlo, ni keke tin nbo niwaju Alimi	as vehicles pass in front of Alimi, so do bicycles
Kato mi a borin wa lo	Before we proceed with the songs
Ka sadura fun Iya'yawo kori ma seyi lashemo	Let's pray for the bride's mother that this would not be her last one



Another of such verbal expression of knowledge is a humorous conscious song used to imbibe discipline in the members of the band:

Adarin ma gbe pola pola enu.	You with big mouth, you picked a song and refused to back it up
To ba sho'wo ni a o pin dede	We would have shared it equally if it is money
To ba shoka ni, a o ro doko	We would have had equal share, had it been it is food
Ejo abosi nbe lenu re o.	Such an uncouth person



This is used to train apprentices that discipline amongst band members is germane and cannot be taken for granted. Trainees are taught to avoid distractions and side attractions from their professional purpose.

Reflection: This enables students to compare their performance with others such as peers and experts. This includes recording learners while in action, replaying it for them and comparing it with that of others. It might also be a conscious comparative competition between trainees of an art and another. In an interview with Nurudeen Mariam, an expert Kengbe musician in the Magaji Nda family house in Ilorin, she reflected on the indigenous music and dance held in Akwa Ibom State in 2012 while she was still a trainee; Kengbe music was used as the entry for Kwara State during the competition. Eventually, Kwara state returned 5th position amidst the 36 states. The picture below was taken after a kengbe music performance exemplifies a process of reflection.

Fig 3: Picture taken after a Kengbe music performance at Queen's Secondary School Ilorin.

Exploration: This involves pushing learners into a mode of problem solving on their own. Though, they may be inexperienced in exploring a domain effectively. Here, apprentices may be required to perform at less elaborate mini-events that the band leader believes they are capable of handling very well. In this case, the mini band will be led by a senior apprentice who is the most experienced. In some cases, learners are made to build up the performance from the beginning while the master observes. As soon as the performance builds up to its climax, the leader takes over from them. Here, they consciously develop improvisation skills as a way of solving problems.

Fig 4: A shot taken after an "exploration" process in a band performance with Kengbe musicians and the young trainees with the researcher at Magaji Nda family house, Ilorin.

Fading: Fading is a significant aspect of Cognitive Apprenticeship. According to Collins et al. (1991, p. 2), fading is the "notion of slowly removing support, giving the apprentice more and more responsibility". This is final stage of apprenticeship where the master starts reposing some level of confidence in the apprentice. The master can confidently send an apprentice or a team of apprentice to represent her at a performance. This stage is very important for confirmation and affirmation of professional musical service delivery of the learner cum expert. It is also important for the sake of continuity in professional practice.

In an interview with the understudied Baluu musician, Iyabo Awero, she affirms that ninety percent (90%) of the women in her band presently are her own daughters who have learned and mastered the professional practice of the indigenous *Baluu* music under her. This is the stage of fading where the practice of the indigenous music skills has been honed and can be performed with or without the master. At this point, an apprentice can decide to proceed and own her band or start performing as a band leader after the approval of the master.

Conclusion

Learning to be an expert in these musical arts occurs in different stages and phases that correspond to the cognitive model. Learning to be an expert in these musical arts occurs in different stages and phases that correspond to the cognitive model. The minimum period of apprenticeship is six months and can span into years of honing skills with the master. The knowledge of rhythm, dance and songs are intrinsic in the learning processes of indigenous *baluu* and *kengbe* musical arts. As dance in inextricable from music, music is inextricably linked to dance.

Hence, the developmental stages of apprenticeship begin with art of dance. Through modelling, scaffolding, articulation, coaching, reflection, exploration, and fading as observed in this study, the thought process of trainees are stimulated and cognitive skills such as problem solving, social charisma, human relations, improvisation, enquiry, self-expression and self-esteem are developed while being trained into expertise in the art of *baluu* and *kengbe* music.

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