

# **MUSIC AS CATALYTIC AGENT FOR CULTURAL ARTS EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: THE SOUTHWEST EXAMPLE**

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## **Introduction**

In many African societies, as soon as a child is born, he or she is introduced to the society and orientated about the living phenomenon germane to the society by the mother. The mother, being the first contact as the newly born baby arrived to the initial society, indirectly educates the child on the daily procedures and realities of situations in the society and life in general. At this stage, these are mostly carried out through actions, gestures and music. Okunade (2011) affirms that the child development starts from or through music, which could be religious, folk, ritual or ceremonial; and it could at times be an expression of a pattern of social organization, expression of political hierarchy, history, events or mythology.

Odunuga and Ogunrinde (2015) assert that music is one of the oldest valuable artistic forms in the traditions of Nigerian societies. In the homes, it is often believed by the Yoruba people that cultural transmission begins immediately after birth. As the child grows, he/she learns to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. Music is also an aspect of the culture of the child, which he/she grows up with. In this way, the culture of the people is transmitted from one generation to the other. In line with Odunuga and Ogunrinde's assertion, Nketia (1974) explained that African mother sings to her child and introduces him/her to many aspects of his/her music right from the cradle. This is true of the Nigerian culture where the

mother trains the child to become aware of rhythm and movement by singing to him/her in non-definite syllables imitative of drum rhythms. According to him, 'when the child is old enough to sing, he sings with his mother and learns to imitate drum rhythms by rote. As soon as he can control his arm, he is allowed to tap rhythms possibly on a toy drum.' (Nketia: 1974)

According to Kwami (1994), the development of Western education in Nigeria commenced in 1842. At the Yoruba mission of the Christian Missionary Society, the curriculum comprised mainly of reading, writing, arithmetic and singing. Since then, teaching and learning in both private and public elementary schools in Nigeria has been corroborated with musical arts and dance as a medium of transmitting knowledge into the pupils. Musical activities in form of choral singing and instrumental performances, forms part of co-curricular activities as well. Apart from the fact that music serving as one of the media through which literacy education is inculcated into the children in the primary, especially public schools in Nigeria, pupils also engage in other musical activities like playing the drums on the morning assembly ground especially for march-past out and in to their various classrooms before and after the morning assembly.

Kiel and Anundsen (2006) while describing a series of teachers' workshops on teaching music to children in Tanzania also suggested that rather than picking up Western nursery rhymes and children's songs, and instruments like piano and guitar, the children should learn songs from their own culture(s), use local instruments. They maintained that after children have known their own basic musical culture, they can move on to other instruments and musical styles, if they wish. The objective of this paper is to examine music activities in public primary schools in the Yoruba rural communities of South-West Nigeria in order to identify and discuss the roles musical activities plays as a catalytic agent for imparting cultural arts education into the pupils of the schools. This hopes to highlight the text contents, various media and devices in which music is used in propagating Yoruba cultural values and ethics among the pupils for them to become responsible future citizens of Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The premise for discourse in this paper rests on Wicke's (1997) cultural theory. The cultural theory as first advanced by Shepherd and Wicke conceived the

understanding of music as a form of human expression. They argue that music is a central, rather than a peripheral activity for individuals and society. Cultural dimension posits that music is the product of people's culture and that all music exists and are appreciated within the context of the culture in which it exists. It seeks to understand any music within a society by considering the principles governing musical practice, ideals and cultural worldview or philosophy of that society where the music exists.

Okechukwu, Ahanotu and Ekezie (2019) opine that music is a culture carrier and unifier through its communication process. They stress that music carries culture wherever it goes and serves as agent of oneness, solidarity and one-voice community. Therefore, music within a society is an expression, symbol and mirror of the culture and the general world-view of the people within that society which is orally transmitted from one generation to the other. Since culture is the product of a society, the schools are located within a society, and the children are also part of the people who constitutes a society, it is very important that children are informed and educated on the cultural values and ethics of the society either informally at home by their parents as well as formally by the teachers, as part of the formal school education to compliment the effort of parents and other elders in the society.

### **Music for Cultural Education in Elementary Schools**

The phenomenon of music as an art is ubiquitous and indispensable in both private and public primary schools in Nigeria in general. Pupils are engaged in different musical activities by their teachers, right from the start of the day till the end of each school day. Apart from the usage of music as a teaching tool in languages, rhymes, arithmetic, and other subjects, teachers as extended or second parents to the children in schools also exploit the use of music to disseminate cultural and moral education to the children. Different songs are taught and performed in primary schools purposely to inform the pupils about the cultural values, ethics as well as other norms of the society.

In the Yoruba society of South-West Nigeria, the musical art has been serving as a conduit for cultural education in elementary school in numerous ways. Annual cultural day, for instance, is organized by each school during which pupils are informed about the cultural heritage of their ethnic group. This is to exhibit different traditional music, costumes and dance. Also, children get involved in different

cultural activities during their schools' annual end of year party or valedictory concerts where the parents and other guests are entertained by the pupils.

Apart from these organized occasions where different forms of music making and dances are used in displaying Yoruba culture, pupils in elementary schools are also culturally educated through the lyrics of the marching-songs, memory songs and other purposely composed songs for cultural education and moral upbringing of the children in public elementary schools. The songs in this category cover different spheres of Yoruba tradition and culture which shall be discussed below.

### **Use of Yoruba Language**

In recent times in Nigeria, speaking and teaching in Yoruba language has been discouraged in elementary schools, especially in private Nursery and Primary Schools. This policy was adopted with the believe that pupils who are taught in English Language will process better understanding in their studies as well as being fluent in English than pupils who speak or taught in Yoruba language. However, apart from Yoruba being part of the subjects in their curriculum, pupils in public or government primary schools are encouraged to speak and sing in Yoruba language. Gbadamosi (Oral interview: 2019) opines that this will enable the children to understand the language and also learn about the Yoruba cultural values and ethical lessons taught in these songs, especially the folk and folklore songs. An examples of such songs is the popular '*Olurombi*'.

### **Yoruba Religious Culture (Belief in *Olodumare*)**

Yoruba people believe that children are gifts from *Olodumare* (God). Children are taught from early childhood to believe and trust in God. Parents make it as a duty for the children to pray to at all time. In elementary schools, teachers also teach the pupils to recite prayers in words while some other forms of prayers are said in song form, especially while resuming in the morning and at the close of each school day. The following song is an example of such songs:

## A MI RE LE

A mi re le o Ba - ba O - lo - jo o - ni o a

A mi re le o Ba - ba Gbo - gbo e - ko ti a ko

ni - nu i - le i - we\_\_ wa ma se je ki e - ye e - su

ko sa wonn he lo - kan\_\_ wa

### Song Title: 'A Mi Rele O Baba'

#### Yoruba

*A mi rele o Baba Olojo oni o a*

*A mi rele o Baba*

*Gbogbo eko ti a ko ninu ile iwe wa*

*Mase jeki eye esu ko sa won je lokan wa*

*Amin*

#### Translation:

We are ready to go home God the creator

We are ready to go home

Grant us retentive memory on our studies

Prevent Satan from making us forget

Amen

The song above is a closing prayer in song form which is sung by all the pupils at the end of each school day before each of the pupils leaves the school for their various homes.

### Parental Culture (Respect for the Elders)

In Yoruba culture, like any other African culture, respect for elders is one of the most important moral education a child is given both by their parents and teachers in schools, starting from childhood to adulthood. Gbadamosi (oral interview: 2019) stressed that the Yoruba culture of respect for elders is one of the most value taught in school in order to make teachers' job easy. Pupils are taught different songs which teach and remind them to respect their parents and other elderly people in the society. The following song is an example of songs in this category:

## OMO TO MO 'YA RE LOJU

The image shows two staves of musical notation in 12/8 time. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of lyrics: "O-mo to mo 'ya re lo ju o o-si yio ta mo na pa I-ya to ji ya po lo ri re". The second staff contains the melody for the second line of lyrics: "O-mo to mo 'ya re lo ju o o-si yio ta mo na pa".

### Song title: 'Omo To Moya Re Loju O'

#### Yoruba

*Omo to mo ya re loju o*  
*Osi nio ta 'mo naa pa*  
*Iya to j'iya po lori re*  
*Baba to j'iya po lori e*  
*Omo to mo ya re loju o*  
*Osi nio ta 'mo naa pa*

#### Translation:

A child who disrespect his mother  
Such child will die wretchedly  
The mother who suffered in raising you  
The father who suffered in raising you  
A child who disrespect his mother  
Such child will die wretchedly

### Occupational Culture (Farming)

Among the Yoruba, farming is one of the major occupations of every family. While we have families who are majorly hunters, blacksmiths, fishermen and others, they also cultivate lands for farming at minimal quantity for their family consumption. Pupils in public primary school are taught different songs which remind and encourage them about this Yoruba's occupational culture of farming. The song below is an example of songs in this category:

## ISE A GBE



I - se a - gbe ni 'se i - le\_\_\_ wa e ni ko si se a  
ma ja le I - we ki ko la i si o - ko  
a - ti a - da ko pe o ko pe o

### Song title: 'Ise Agbe'

#### **Yoruba:**

*Ise agbe nise ile wa  
Eni ko sise a ma jale  
Iwe kiko, lai si oko ati ada  
Koi pe o, koi pe o*

#### **Translation:**

Farming is our cultural occupation  
He who refuses to farm will steal  
Education without farming  
That is not complete

### Cultural Health, Etiquettes and Hygiene

The Yoruba people of Nigeria like other African cultures have their own indigenous knowledge about health, hygiene and medicine. Pupils are directly and indirectly taught by their parents, right from infant to adulthood on daily routine on traditional self-health care, etiquettes and hygiene for child's development and well-being. Teachers also exploit the use of songs in educating and reminding the pupils in elementary schools on this self-health care routine. The song below is an example of songs in this category:

## WE KI O MO



We ki o mo ge e - ka - na re Jeun to da - ra la - si - ko ma jeun ju

**Song title: 'We Ki o Mo'**

**Yoruba**

We ki o mo  
Re ekanna re  
Jeun to dara lasiko  
Ma jeun ju

**Translation:**

Take your bath and be clean  
Trim and clean your fingers  
Eat hygienic food on time  
Eat moderately

**Yoruba Cultural Philosophy of 'Omoluwabi' (Integrity)**

Apart from the strong religious belief in *Olodumare* (Supreme-being), there exists the philosophy of '*Omoluabi*' (Integrity). *Omoluabi* according to Olusola (2018) could be referred to as an individual of truly good moral behaviour; an individual of integrity. According to Oluwole (2007):

*Omoluwabi in Yoruba culture wherein a person is given a deep knowledge, wisdom, and therefore be trained to be self-discipline and to develop a sense of responsibility that shows in private and public actions which earns individual's social integrity, and personality in Yoruba society. And in contrast with eniyan-keyan or eniyan la-san, which means 'caricature person', and omokomo (a worthless child)*

It is the primary duty of parents to train their children good moral behaviour for them to become persons of integrity in the society. Apart from this training received from homes, the school also serves as an agent for enforcing these moral training on the pupils. Pupils in the elementary schools are taught different songs which teaches and reminds them of being person of integrity as demands by Yoruba culture. The following is an example of such songs:

**OMO RERE LEMI 'YO MA JE**

O mo re re le mi y'o ma je O - mo re re le mi yo ma je ya la  
ni i - le e ko ta - bi ni i - nu a - du - gbo



**Song Title: 'Omo Rere Lemi Yio Ma Je'**

**Yoruba:**

*Omo rere lemi yio ma je*

*Omo rere lemi yio ma je*

*Yala ni ile eko tabi ninu adugbo*

*Omo rere lemi yio ma je*

**Translation:**

I will always be a good child

I will always be a good child

Either at school or in my community

I will always be a good child

Other Yoruba cultural philosophies include '*Ise loogun Ise*' (diligence), '*Esan*' (Nemesis), '*Ore lope*' (It's good to be kindness) and the philosophy of '*Iya ni wura*' (Mother and Child) among others.

**Yoruba Culture of Folklorism (for educating norms and moral ethics)**

According to Adedeji and Olusola (2020), folktale songs are used in entertaining children and they are important tools used for a child in learning about his immediate environment. They are meant for structuring people's morals, societal values and beliefs. Nnamdi (2018) opined that folklore songs serve the society in the attainment of its objectives. According to him:

*The present generation can learn a lot about the past life and value of his community by listening to and taking part in folklore. Through folklore, songs and proverbs taught are better appreciated in schools because examples are drawn from the child's immediate environment'*

Awoniyi (1995) also opined that unlike the Western idea of education where emphasis is usually on the cognitive aspect of man and the intrinsic value of knowledge to the neglect of the moral and other capabilities of man, the Yoruba notion of education is guided by moral concern and by the unwritten norms of the society. Pupils in elementary school are taught different folk-stories which highlight different Yoruba cultural ethics and norms. These folk-stories are accompanied with songs in lead singing and chorus responses by the pupils. The following song is an example of song in this category:

## Aja O Ran Mi L'eru

Jan - ja - la - too - fe A - ja - a - ja oooo ran - mi l'e - ru  
Jan - ja - la - too

Bo - o - ba ran - mi l'e - ru maa ke s'o - lo - ko  
fee  
Jan - ja - la - tooo

Bo' lo - ko ba de ooo aa mu e de  
fe  
Jan - ja - la - tooo - fee

### Yoruba

Lead: *Janjala too-fee*

Lead: *Aja aja o ran mi l'eru*

Chorus: *Janjala too-fee*

Lead: *Boo ba ran mi l'eru ma ke s'oloko*

Chorus: *Janjala too-fee*

*Boloko ba de ooo aa mu e de*

Chorus: *Janjala too-fee*

### Translation

*Janjala too-fee*

Dog please assist me with the load

*Janjala too-fee*

If you refuse, I will report you to the farm owner

*Janjala too-fee*

You will be arrested by the owner of the farm

*Janjala too-fee*

The song above was used in accompany the folk-story which narrates how *Ijapa* (Tortoise) and *Aja* (Dog) whom were both friends and there was drought in their town and people were suffering and dying while *Aja* was looking fresh and fat. One day *Ijapa* went to *Aja* to appeal to him to reveal the secret of his well-being. *Aja* agreed and took him to a farm where he normally steals food to feed his family. When they got there, *Aja* took the moderate quantity of food sufficient for his family, but *Ijapa* out of greediness, took very large quantity that was too heavy for him to carry. When *Aja* noticed that the farm owner was approaching the farm, he left *Ijapa*

alone to continue to struggle with his heavy load. When *Ijapa* realized that *Aja* had left him alone, he began to sing the song to threaten *Aja* to come back but *Aja* refused to come back. According to the story, when the owner of the farm got to the farm, he met *Ijapa* with heavy load of the stolen food-stuff and *Ijapa* was arrested and dealt with according to the law of the land.

### **Socio-Cultural Analysis of Music**

For the purpose of analysis in this study, the total number of songs in Yoruba language collected through oral and participatory observation was 20, out of which 18 of them have their poetic forms in short-verse; while the remaining 2 songs are in long poetic form. Apart from the folklore songs which are performed in call and response style in 12/8 time rhythm, other songs are performed in chorus in simple quadruple of 4-4 time of marching beat pattern. This is due to the fact that most of the songs are used for accompanying march-past to and from morning assembly ground on every school day.

Adeleye (personal communication: 2020), from his wealth of experience as a primary school teacher, stressed that 'music has been one of the easiest mode and method of preserving knowledge for quick memorization and for easy remembrance'. Apart from the fact that teachers exploit music as teaching aids in arithmetic, poetry and civic studies, music is also employed daily in documenting and transmitting knowledge about Yoruba culture to the pupils. Pupils are purposely required to sing these songs to remind them of the moral lessons and cultural ethics learnt both at home and at the school. This is at the same time transformed into entertainment culture to avoid boredom while in school. All songs collected are performed in a plain and simple expression in Yoruba language and which all the pupils could easily understand the meaning. Apart from the fact that music is used as an important teaching method in teaching different subjects in elementary school, it also serves entertainment function in making teaching and learning a fun in schools. The lyrics of the songs consist of texts which educate cultural beliefs and values. These lyrics remind the pupils of the societal expectations and the task of having good moral behaviour. The songs are aimed at fostering positive transformation in the society for peaceful co-existence.

## **Conclusion**

Musical arts have been found to be an imperative tool in educating a child formally or informally right from infant to teenage. It has also been exploited by teachers as a conduit for cultural education in the public Primary Schools among the Yoruba community in South-West Nigeria. Apart from formal literacy education in our elementary schools, educating pupils in our traditional cultural values and ethics has been observed to be imperative for the purpose of inculcation of total education in the children for them to become responsible citizens in future. The theme of songs has been observed to consist texts in Yoruba language that educate the pupils on Yoruba religious culture, occupational culture, Parental culture of respect, Cultural health, etiquettes and hygiene, Yoruba Cultural Philosophy of 'Omoluwabi' (Integrity); as well as Culture of Yoruba folklorism for educating norms and moral ethics.

## **Recommendations**

Due to the ubiquitous roles in which music plays in imparting cultural education into the pupils in schools and society in general, this paper therefore recommends that Creative and Cultural Studies should be introduced as a subject in all public and private Nursery and Primary Schools in Nigeria. This will enable the children to acquire knowledge and imbibe their cultural values, ethics and history through this priceless opportunity; and for them to grow to become responsible citizens of their communities.

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## Interviews

S/ No	NAME	AGE	ADDRESS	DATE
1.	Mrs. J. A. Adeleye	46	St. Stephen Primary School Inalende, Ibadan.	23/2/20
2.	Mr. Sulaimon Gbadamosi	52	Methodist Primary School, Ago-Iwoye	14/11/19
3.	Mr. Dare Jejeloye	44	St. Anthony Catholic Primary School, Kobape village, via Abeokuta	20/10/19
4.	Mrs. M. A. Amole	47	St. David's Primary School, Agboyin, Ogbomoso	22/10/19