

ADOPTION OF AFRICAN MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS IN MUSIC PEDAGOGY: TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIAN MUSIC EDUCATION

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Introduction

Nigerians are evidently very musical. Every aspect of their lives' endeavours feature one form of music or another. Suffice it to say that music follows them from cradle to the grave. However, it does appear from practical class room observation cum research findings that music education does not thrive among them in comparison with other fields of study since its inception as a classroom subject. Based on this premise, the researcher delved into a critical assessment of music education in Nigeria with the view to suggesting an adoption of African musical instruments to aid Nigeria's music education study for a sustainable development.

Every Nigerian pupil or student like every other child of the African stock is essentially prone to a very high level of musical intuition. The earliest form of this music education commences during the pre-school stage with African musical instruments and music made by the traditional indigenous people. Parents, siblings, friends, relations and peers remain the acknowledged initiators, perpetrators, cum transmitters of musical knowledge at this level. These teachers consciously and unconsciously take it upon themselves to expose the new entrant to virtually all forms of music and music making activities available in the community to which it belong. No stone is left unturned in this act. This is because music in its entirety is a very serious business, an activity that must be undertaken for the sake of necessity and cooperative human existence. This is borne out of the fact that Nigerians especially and Africans generally truly understand in principle and in practice music's power to permeate the human person and cause a change in behaviour beyond measure (Ikemerike, 2015). No wonder they regard music as an all-purpose -elixir that could effectively be applied for information, transformation, entertainment and harmonious co-existence.

Through traditional music education, Nigerians, avail the young novel opportunities to come to terms with the socially acceptable and desirable norms, values, attitudes, habits and even skills. In fact, music education in one's youth regulates inclinations to applaud and embrace the noble and the generous as well as observe decorum, temperance and regularity (Glenon, 1980). Perhaps it was in line with this that Vidal (2000:1) remarked that 'music over the ages has proved to be one of the indispensable arts cultivated by men for the growth, nurture and transfer of his institutions and values to future generations.' Suffice it to say that Nigerians live in testimony to the fact that the aboriginal African traditional system makes room from musical training of the child through adulthood (Agu, 1990). This is done in consonance with the socio-cultural norms and values of the society.

Consequent upon the attainment of school age bias sets in. The Nigerian child is suddenly exposed to an alien music education in a totally new environment with unfamiliar teaching/learning materials. The local musical instruments, familiar teaching and learning agents plus resources (local songs and music) which constitute the child's previous knowledge are swept under the carpet with an alarming speed. No form of bridge is built between the child's entering behaviour and the new learning materials cum environment. As the child grapples with the challenges of the new form of music education, the problems that come with it increase from strength to strength owing to acute shortage of human and materials resources. This entirely upsets the mental and emotional status of the pupil or students. However with urbanization as a strong force in the influence of Nigerian child/student, the need for serious thought on the introduction, adjustment and emphasis on African music instruments as well as the use in the classroom has become very essential.

Concept of Sustainable Development

Brundtland (1987) defined sustainable development in a UNESCO report as development that satisfies the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to satisfy theirs while Wikipedia (2014) sees it as a process for achieving sustainability in any activity that uses resources and where immediate and intergenerational replication is demanded. Panacea is viewed by Oxford (2015) as something that will solve all problems. Adoption is seen by the Oxford English Dictionary as the choosing and making that to be one's own which

originally was not so. African musical instruments are indigenous, local or traditional musical instruments made by Africans for use in the performance of their traditional music. In sum, the entire concept implicates that the choice of making local or indigenous African musical instruments an integral part of Nigerian music education could guarantee long lasting remedial measures cum sustainable development.

Genesis, Status and Problems of Nigerian Formal Music Education

The genesis status and problems of formal Nigerian music education have severally been discussed in Fafunwa, 1971; Nketia, 1979; Omibiyi, 2006; Vidal, 2008; and Okonkwo, 2012. They affirm that the Christian missionaries introduced western music education into Nigeria in the 1840s with the Wesleyan Methodist as the pioneers. The music education of the western format that was introduced alongside other subjects/courses was primarily conceived with ulterior motives. Igboabuchi, Ilorah and Nwuzor (2010) reported that the missionaries cardinal objectives were:

- a. To convert the “African pagans” (infidels) to Christianity;
- b. To suppress the existing social ills like slavery and slave trade, cannibalism, superstitions and ignorance;
- c. To produce relevant manpower useful to the mercantile houses, colonial administration and the church; and to make the adherents fit into the colonial economy and also be loyal to the British Empire ((Igboabuchi et al, 2010:48)

By implication, the objectives of western music education ab-initio clearly leave the interest of the learners or beneficiaries out of the picture. The learners are prepared for life as Europeans (Ezeocha, 1985). Reacting to the scenario, Vidal (2008) highlighted that the objectives of the missionaries were in two folds. Firstly, it aimed at propagating Christian religious system as well as spreading the Anglo version of the European musical tradition and culture. Little wonder then, that its onward entrenchment and practice resulted in total relegation of the African traditional music educational practice. In consonance with Vidal’s submission, Adeogun (2006) noted that:

The Christians missionaries saw the role of music as a means of propagating the imperialistic religion of Christianity and the school as its main agent. Music formed a necessary instrument for

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evangelization. It was imperative that some sort of training program was instituted to train teachers to memorize songs, train agents to assist in the church services and in the schools. Literacy in music was emphasized so that ex-slaves could develop the ability to read western music, hymns and songs in the schools. (Adeogun, 2006:281)

The status of the content of the western styled music education practiced in Nigerian primary and post primary schools for several decades after inception remained alien and in total exclusion of local content. Although several attempts were made at revamping the contents of several subjects through the Phelps-stroke commission of 1922 which recommended the need for local content and adaptation of needs to individual communities (Igboabuchi et al 2010) western music education has been and still is the priority and preferred course of study leaving African music as an inconvenience study. Consequently upon the spirit of nationalism and Africanization that enveloped the country slightly before during and after independence, several curricula based conferences were held but none yielded the much desired revolutionary effect as recorded in other fields of study. This has placed music education in a precarious situation that calls for very urgent attention. Ikemerike (2001) identified lack of qualified, lack of music text books, lack of music instruments, lack of infrastructure and poor attitude occasioned by high dependence on foreign teaching and learning materials as factors negating music education in Nigeria.

In the same vein, an analytical review of Nigerian music education in the last century by Vidal (2008) revealed that music education in Nigeria has not witnessed a sustainable development because:

1. *The type of music education introduced was alien to Nigeria culture and tradition.*
2. *Formal music education was institutionalized in the schools at the beginning to serve the interest of the missionaries.*
3. *Research was not carried out into the content and teaching methods of the music of cultures and societies of Nigeria.*
4. *Necessary structures were not put in place to concretize the new ideas on music education.*

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5. *Attempt to correct this, though successful with other subjects did not yield much success in music, thus making music lag behind other subjects such as literature...*
6. *“Failed” efforts were again made after independence to make education including music education functional and relevant to the needs of Nigerians and the African child.*

(Vidal, 2008:9– 10).

The question that should arise and persist in the minds of every right thinking and music loving Nigerian in the light of all these is whether we should allow Nigerian music education wallow in utter neglect forever. Again, what efforts or steps could be taken to effect positive changes and sustainable development?

An Advocacy for Local Musical Content

A critical assessment of the factors militating against sustainable development of Nigerian music education as already advanced by Omibiyi – Obidike, 1987; Okafor, 1988; Adegbite, 1999; Nwokenna, 1999; Faseun, 2001; Ikemerike, 2001; Ajewole, 2008; Vidal, 2008 and Okonkwo, 2012) indicate summarily that high dependence or reliance on foreign teaching-learning resources may have formed the launching pad for other negating factors. For instance, if Nigerian music education has not relied solely on foreign musical instrument, the sorry state that has arisen as a result of lack of funds to procure and maintain these instruments should have been averted. Observations reveal that musical instruments which appear to be the most indispensable teaching and learning aid is grossly lacking in all Nigerian institutions of learning concerned with music education. This implies that no meaningful teaching/ learning exercise could take place in these institutions without requisite music instruments since music is a practical oriented course of study. Even when musical scores and literatures are made available, such must be made to come alive via performance on musical instruments.

Overcoming the shortfall occasioned by inadequacy of this essential teaching/learning aids no doubt call for a serious strain on the institutions lean financial resources. Perhaps it was in line with this high rate of financial involvement that music education as an enterprise has been left to its fate. It is in the light of these persistent problems that the researcher therefore suggests an adoption of African musical instruments considering also their added advantage

over their western counterparts. It is hoped that the following reasons in advocacy for African musical instruments will help to drive home the need for local content for a sustainable development of Nigerian music education.

1. Low Cost

One of the greatest handicaps encountered in Nigeria's music education is acute lack of funds fuelled by high dependence on foreign music instruments. Music education generally is a very capital intensive enterprise. It involves a never ending injection of funds for purchase, repairs and maintenance of equipment or teaching aids. This becomes unbearable when one considers the fact that the funds expended are in hard currencies as the musical instruments are all imported. Procurement and maintenance of western musical instruments is truly a great financial burden which is essentially unbearable to the Nigerian tertiary and primary plus post primary schools concerned with music study. The monetary involvements is a far cry when local musical instruments come into play as exemplified by the metalophones manufactured by the likes of Bond Osinimumu, Humphery Nwafor and Philemon Okoye plus other African musical instruments. Ezegebe's figured organographic composite notational system which is a notational system for local instruments is another local content of great value. It stands to reason that the money expended for the procurement and maintenance of an upright piano alone could put in place a large number of African musical instruments of various classes. This is because no singular African musical instrument has exorbitant costs. The implication is that with the adoption of African music instruments a great percentage of the money required for procurement and maintenance of foreign musical instruments goes into the production and maintenance of locally made musical instruments. The economic advantage can be best imagined. African musical instruments are very inexpensive and affordable. To this end, if all the monies spent for procurement and maintenance of foreign musical instruments is set aside for production of indigenous African musical instruments, there will not just be enough for effective and efficient teaching and learning but also for export.

2. Functionality

Current trends reveal that the musical taste and attitude of the Nigeria public tilt more towards performances on African musical instruments. This implicates

that music students and graduates equipped with performances skills on African musical instruments may stand better chances of job opportunities than their counterparts who are essentially western oriented. Undoubtedly, the content of the music curriculum does not meet the out of school need of the students (Omibiyi – Obidike, 1985). Therefore, an integration of African musical instruments will create necessary balance that will foster functionality and sustainability. Functionality which appears to be a litmus test for proper musicianship is the hall mark for proper training on African musical instruments. Like pregnancy proficiency in the use of African musical instruments remains unobstructed and is a clear manifestation of effective teaching and learning. Every student equipped via African or indigenous musical instruments study and performance is evidently prepared to cope with the current realities of the ever changing world because of the versatility and easy adaptation that come with their training.

Owing to that fact that they are trained in line with societal needs they appear to possess the ready skills of the labour market. Such ones therefore stand no risk of unemployment as several occasions and events world over demand a high ratio of skilled instrumentalists. They need not walk the street with heads full of knowledge and little or no practical skills. After all, Achu, (2011) maintained that African/traditional music instrumentalists and technologists are provided ample sources of earning as they engage in traditional music practices.

3. Methodology and Sequence

The curricula for Nigerian musical education is literature driven and must therefore present musical materials from familiar to unfamiliar from the most common to least common, from simple to complex (Feierabend, 1997). This underpins the fact that learning must be structured from concrete to abstract and not otherwise. In the playing of African musical instrument, these learning principles are made manifest in varying degrees. For instance learners are primarily exposed to the manipulation of simple melodic instruments and simple melodies so as to gain rich tonal experiences. It is noteworthy that the manipulation of African melodic instruments like drums (Igba), flutes (oja), horns (opi) as well as singing of simple melodies connotes the simultaneous development of the audio, visual and tactile sensibilities of the learner. This calls for readiness in line with the learner's maturation. Significant and meaningful

learning actually come into play only when the learner is psychologically, physiologically and biologically ready. Performance with African melodic instruments makes it abundantly clear that African music education technique acknowledges readiness and maturation in every way hence it moves from simple to complex. Methodology of African instruments' teaching and learning keys into Feierband's three readiness skills which are: Comfortable and accurate singing skills; comfortable and accurate moving skills (with the beat in materials grouping of 2 and 3) and expressive sensitivity (Feierband, 1997)

4. Durability

A very special attribute of African musical instruments are their long lasting nature. African musical instruments are very durable and capable of lasting over a long period of time. In the event of wear and tear, very minimal cost could be used for its repair as materials required are easily sourced locally without resort to importation as is the case with western musical instruments. The fact that African musical instruments are not only durable but are also subject to minimal maintenance costs is a great advantage that could go a long way to provide sustainable development in Nigerian music education.

5. Perpetuation and Protection of Cultural Heritage

Neglect and underuse is the greatest form of injustice that could be meted on our cultural heritage and traditional music education. Music to the African generally and Nigerians particularly is an all- purpose elixir. It is extensively applied for education, entertainment, sensitization and mobilization of the human person in the norms, ethics, values, attitude and even skills acceptable in the immediate environment. No wonder, Mkpa, (1987) remarked that Nigerian indigenous music be made the basis of music education for the Nigerian child. Perhaps it was also in cognizance of this that Aninwene, (2005) highlighted that through music education a solid foundation for achievement of rich cultural heritage, sustainable democracy cum expression of ethics and norms is within reach.

Nigerians are evidently aware of music's power to reach the innermost recesses of human person in order to cause a change per excellence. However total harnessing of this latent power which culminates in the promotion of cultural

heritage and proper music education may remain unattainable without an integration of African musical instruments. This is because the instruments constitute adequate means of impression, expression and communication of feelings, emotions and attitudes.

Conclusion

An adoption of African musical instruments amounts to teaching the students and pupils in the language they understand, with the instrument they are born and bred with and in an environment they are familiar with. This implies meeting the learners in their own terms. In fact, this is home advantage, a term which implicates success based on familiarity with the environment of activity. Reputable music educators like Suzuki emphasized mother tongue approach which holds that every child (learner) have the ability to learn faster and easier with familiar language, people and materials. Meki Nzewi in his musical philosophy advocates generation of content and pedagogies of Nigerian music education from indigenous African tradition because he believes it makes for easy learning. In fact, formal system of music education should have more indigenous content and pedagogy so as to reflect a pragmatic approach necessary for proper socio-cultural base (Nzewi, 2001).

Truly, great composers and founding fathers in art music such as Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig Van Beethoven and Franz Schubert were noted as musical geniuses who began to compose and perform at very early ages in life. Some were even said to have taught themselves music. However, one wonders how attainable these lofty goals would have been if these music giants were compelled by circumstances beyond their control to study and perform music in an unfamiliar environment like Nigeria with foreign and obsolete music instruments cum materials. Albeit many will die trying to realize their goals and optimize their talents for the sake of frustration.

At this juncture, it is important to note that the author do not in any way advocate a total ban on the use of western musical instrument in Nigerian music education but a cooperative integration of both western and African in order to create a balance and make room for versatility among the learners. To this end, institutions of learning concerned with music literacy programmes are urged to

borrow a leaf from the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, University of Ilorin, Obafemi Awolowo University Ile, Ife and Ibadan Polytechnic plus Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe for creating room for local content in their music education programmes. The sincere effort of Alvan-Ikoku Nwamara in this aspect is yielding wonderful results as some of his students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka have made unprecedented in-roads in indigenous instrument technology and performance. It is pertinent to note that if our sincere desire as music educators is to ensure a sustainable development of music education in Nigeria then we must begin by using what we have to get what we want. Our local musical instruments could take our music education to its zenith here and now.

Recommendations

In view of the above discussion, it is here by recommended that:

1. There is an urgent need for the organization of workshops and seminars by seasoned scholars and advocates on adoption of African Musical Instruments. These seminars workshops should be geared towards equipping music educators and teachers with requisite skills on performance with African Musical Instruments. These teachers and music educators are expected to take home the acquired skills for enhanced teaching of performance techniques using African Musical Instruments.
2. Professor Meki Nzewi has instituted this form of workshop in south and East Africa under the auspices of the Centre for Indigenous African Instrumental Music and Dance (CIIMDA) with great success and should therefore be emulated.
3. Functional African musical instrument technology programmes should be included in the curriculum/course content of the colleges of education and universities in Nigeria so as to ensure production and maintenance of local musical instruments.
4. All Nigerian tertiary institutions, secondary schools and even primary schools concerned with music study should be encouraged to establish functional African Musical Instrument Orchestras with metal phones, xylophones, or drums as is the case with Jamaican Steel Band Orchestra.
5. Nigerian schools and institutions that deal with music education should be encouraged to organize and attend social events like music festivals and end

of the year celebration as avenues for sensitizing the public on the essence of music education generally.

6. Every institution concerned with music education must be allowed to create avenues for fund raising so as to cushion the effect of lack of funds.

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