

AVAILABILITY AND UTILIZATION OF AFRICAN MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS FOR MUSIC PEDAGOGY IN UNITY COLLEGES IN IMO STATE

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Introduction

The identity and pride of any nation is her culture. All nations have their own musical instruments for which they are identified with, and which constitute their culture. It is no longer news that African musical instruments are relegated to the background today in Nigerian Post-Primary Schools. This is partly because of the low esteem attached to these instruments by the Nigerian society at large in preference to the Western musical instruments. This paper tries to examine among other things; the African musical instruments available in the Unity Colleges in Owerri and Okigwe both in Imo State, Nigeria and the extent of their utilization in the teaching and learning of Music in the schools under investigation. The population was made up of six Music teachers drawn from the two unity colleges in Imo state. A questionnaire titled, "African musical instruments and their utilization in unity schools" was constructed and used for data collection. For the analysis, the simple percentage was used. The result got from this study reveals that the Western musical instruments are mostly used in the teaching-learning process and also in school functions in the Unity colleges in Imo State. This study is expected to bring positive changes in the attitudes of Post Primary school authorities, Music teachers and the students in the use of African musical instruments in the teaching-learning process as well as in college functions. The research methods used include: Participatory observation, descriptive survey/case study, library method and electronic search.

Federal Government Unity Colleges

These are Federal Government owned Secondary Schools established in Nigeria to better the academic lots of willing Nigerian Primary School leavers in

their Secondary school academic pursuits. Each State of the Federation has at least two unity schools. Suffice it to say that all these unity colleges that spread across the length and breadth of this nation are model schools with boarding facilities and infinitesimal number of day-students.

The two Federal Unity Colleges in Imo State for this investigation are:

- a. Federal Government College, (FGC) Okigwe, located along Port Harcourt-Enugu Express way.
- b. Federal Government Girls' College, (FGGC), Owerri, located along Okigwe Road, Owerri, Imo State Capital.

Imo State

Imo State is one the five States in the South-East-Geo-political Zone in Nigeria. The State capital is located in Owerri and the people are Owerri-Igbo speaking Nigerians. In Imo State, there are wide varieties of indigenous musical instruments that belong to the people, and for which they are identified. Ibekwe, (2011) asserts that, "the types of costumes and musical instruments used in the process of singing and dancing are all culture indicators. Some instruments are synonymous with a particular ethnic group."(p.79). The indigenous musical instruments for which the Igbo are identified includes, *udu* (Pot-drum), *ogele* (metal song,) *ngelenge* (xylophone), *ekwe* (slit-wooden drum), *ikoro* (giant wooden drum), *okwa* (wooden gong), *igba* (membrane drum), *oyo* (rattle), *opi* (flute), *ubo-aka* (thumb-piano), *ubo-akwara* (zither) etc.

In the pre-colonial era, an average Igbo child was exposed to the use and construction of some of these indigenous instruments by the elders at a very tender age through oral tradition. He was trained to come to grips with his cultural heritage through playing these local instruments thereby retaining and preserving their culture for posterity. As he grows, it becomes part and parcel of his life.

Characteristics of Igbo Traditional Instrumental Music

1. **Percussive:** They are mainly percussive
2. **Improvisatory:** The Igbo expert players introduce improvisatory rhythms e.g. hand clap, etc.
3. **Ostinato:** Standard time patterns also characterize Igbo instrumental music.

4. **Repetition:** Repetition characterizes Igbo instrumental music.
5. **Polytonality:** Igbo traditional melodic instruments are tuned to different pitches, this results in polytonality when they play simultaneously. This blends very well in spite of the different keys that sound at the same time.
6. **Hocket Technique:** As a result of the limited ranges of some Igbo local instruments, two or more instruments can share a rhythmic or melodic line while in action.

Classes of Instrumental Music of the Igbo

- **Igba orchestra:** This is an orchestra of membrane drums (*igba*).
- **Egwu une** (Musical bow): This is an orchestra of the musical bow (*une*).
- **Ngelenge Ensemble:** This is an ensemble of Xylophones (*ngelenge*).
- **Instrumental duet:** This exists when one Xylophone (*ngelenge*) is performed by two persons at the same time. One plays the ostinato while the other plays the melody as well as improvisations.
- **Uhie Orchestra:** This consists of the giant-wooden drum ensemble.
- **Instrumental Orchestra:** This is an Orchestra that comprises all the Igbo indigenous musical instruments
- **Solo-instrumental Music:** Examples include; *opi* solo, *ubo-aka* solo. "Area Scatter" of blessed memory was a renowned Owerri ubo-aka expert.
- **Vocal songs with instrumental ensemble:** A vocal soloist, can be accompanied with few instruments or even the whole orchestra. There are choral renditions that are accompanied by the Igbo Instrumental ensemble.
- **Ogene ensemble:** This is an ensemble of metal gongs.

In general, the Igbo musical instruments are: monotonic, (one tone), bitonic, (two tones), tritonic, (three tones), quadratonic (4 tones), Pentatonic (five tones), hexatonic (six tones), heptatonic (seven tones), and octatonic (8 tones). Predominantly, they have pentatonic melodic instruments.

From the fore-going, an Igbo child has a wide variety of choices in Igbo indigenous music practice. The question is, how many of them can manipulate

these indigenous instruments today? This is food for thought to the Igbo and to all Nigerians in general.

Western Influence

The story has changed in our present dispensation with the importation of Western musical instruments into Nigeria. Such musical instruments include: the piano, organ, guitar, saxophone, trumpet, flute, recorder, clarinet etc. Agu, (2011) laments that, "electronic technology has contributed to our inadequacies in basic knowledge of our local musical instruments and their organology since we tend to pay attention and interest to the foreign instruments" (p.21). The present generation of teenagers does not show interest in learning to play or construct the Igbo indigenous musical instruments. This is partly because they are neither exposed to them by their parents at home nor by their teachers in school. Akpabot, (1986) points out that, "the white missionaries in making their impact felt, the new converts were made to burn their traditional instruments."(p.71)

As a result of the Western influence, the Nigerian society at large looks down on her indigenous instruments in preference to the western instruments. Different performing groups abound in Imo State and in all parts of Nigeria. Today, Pop music bands play their acoustic guitars, trumpets, saxophones, keyboards (piano and organ), to accompany their songs. People pay dearly to patronize them as they show- case what they have in big hotels and plazas. They dance, demonstrate; choreograph purely in Western/ Pop styles. Their acrobatic displays are marked by Western/pop dance styles. . Agu, (2011b) expatiates that, "the foreign instruments such as the cornet, trumpets, trombone, horn, drums, offered opportunities to explore and experiment the potentials of many foreign instruments."(p. 201).

Some Igbo parents dissuade their children from participating in any cultural or traditional activity ranging from singing traditional songs to playing indigenous musical instruments in school and outside the school. They look at such practices with disdain, as unimportant and unacceptable to the society. They erroneously believe that such practices are fetish, satanic and uncivilized. Ekpo (2011) sadly informs that, "there are those who believe that singing traditional songs or participating in traditional dances is satanic, diabolic, and non-Christian." (p.72)

Some of the Igbo parents pay exorbitantly to piano, saxophone, violin and trumpet lesson teachers for their children. There is no known case of parents paying people to teach their children how to play *ubo-aka*, *ngelenge*, *opi*, *ubo-akwara* or *igba*. This indeed is cultural blindness because these children are denied the opportunity of learning and participating in what belongs to them. Agu, (2012), explains that,

In the past, articulation of traditional musical instruments offered the Nigerian child opportunity for demonstrating sense of belonging in his environment. Our inadequacies in playing our indigenous music and inability to identify the folk taxonomies of our traditional musical instruments are glaring.”(p. 1).

Most of the elderly instrumentalists/experts, who displayed with great dexterity their skills in the manipulation of these local instruments, are almost passing on without transferring such skills to the present generation of youths. Very few of them who are still alive are not given the encouragement to show case their great talents in these local instruments let alone teaching the young generation. Is this not a way of encouraging or promoting the extinct of our cultural heritage in our generation? Okoye (2013), decries the fact, that “some of the makers and players of indigenous instruments like *ubo-aka*, have died without the youths who are interested in white collar jobs taking over.”(p. 241). The question of gathering the teenagers at the village square which served as the then amphitheatres to train them for posterity of our cultural heritage is a thing of the past. Parents resist their children from gathering for such “unnecessary” teachings. Ekpo (2011) laments that, “evidence abound where parents and guardians discourage, stop or ban their wards in extra-curricular activities especially those that are traditional.” (p.72).

Secondary schools’ Practical Music Pedagogy

The impact of Western education on our secondary schools cannot be undermined. Ekpo (2011) observes that,

Western Music theory and practice dominate most of their experiences as Secondary School teachers. The attitude and behaviour of teachers and their ability to maintain interest in their students no doubt have great bearing on the final performance of the students. The importance of musical instruments in teaching

and of traditional music cannot be over emphasized. Head teachers have the task of ensuring that whatever materials the teacher needs for effective teaching in the school system is provided as effectively as possible. What happens in most of our educational institutions is the absence of these educational aids. (p.77)

Western musical instruments are mainly utilized in the Secondary Schools' Music pedagogy/ performances in Nigeria than the indigenous musical instruments. Even where the indigenous instruments are available, they are underutilized. Generally speaking, many Secondary Schools do not have enough of these indigenous instruments and many of the Music teachers are not competent in their use, and construction. This is a big handicap. Joel (2011) adds that, "lack of facilities, musical instruments among others poses serious problems to the music teacher and have hindered the full implementation of musical programme in our educational institutions." (p.74). Agu, (2011) advises that, "We should not be misled to sweep away the basic musical concepts of our traditional folk music". (p.21).

NECO JSCE (BECE) and SSCE Performance Requirements in Music

For the Junior Secondary School Certificate Examination (JSCE) according to available National Examinations Council (NECO) syllabus, the students are expected to classify the African musical instruments into the four families, and be able to mention the materials used in constructing some of them.. For the NECO Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE), the syllabus demands that the candidates must play in an ensemble for which they will be awarded marks. In addition, candidates opting for voice will each take an African art solo voice piece with indigenous instrumental accompaniment as stated below by NECO. According to NECO Examination Development Department, Music Unit, the performance test guidelines for 2015 and instructions for the Music practicals/technology is stated below:

VOICE: Two pieces must be performed, one from each section.

SECTION B: (African Solo Piece)

Any African standardized art solo voice piece would be accepted. Such a piece should have a universal appeal and must be scored. Candidates should be engaged in constructing any simple musical instrument or repair faulty instrument e.g. Drum, rattle etc. Candidates are to perform individually alongside a self-organize Pure African Instrumental Ensemble. Performance of African ensemble is accepted if on score. (pp.1, 3, 5).

This is just the situation and therefore the Music teachers need to develop themselves first to be able to prepare their students for this practical examination in Music. They should select some indigenous musical instruments as their instructional materials or media and begin on time to prepare their students for the examination.

Criteria for the Selection of instructional Materials/Media

- Availability
- Suitability
- Instructional objectives
- Cost
- Size of class
- Operating the facilities
- Interactivity
- Content accuracy

Basic steps/Process for the utilization of instructional Media

- Prepare yourself. Be prepared ahead of time.
- Prepare the environment.
- Prepare your class; arouse their interest and arrange the seats so that there would be no problem of visualizing the objects (instruments).
- Use the media (instrument).

Source: Abimbade Salami, (2008): Preparation, Utilization, and Integration of educational media in curriculum.

Methodology of Research:

The research instruments used were observation, participation and an eleven-point questionnaire was constructed for the purpose. The population was made up of the six Music teachers in the Unity Colleges in Imo State. There was no sampling because the population size is not large.

Hypotheses:

The following hypotheses were postulated and subject to testing:

- a. There are more African musical instruments in the Unity Colleges in Imo State than Western musical instruments.
- b. Western musical instruments feature more in the Music teaching-learning process than the African musical instruments in Unity Colleges in Imo State.
- c. Unity College students in Imo State prefer playing African musical instruments to Western musical instruments.
- d. The Principals of Unity Colleges in Imo State encourage the use of African musical instruments in the school programmes.

Result of the Data collected:

Music Teachers' Qualification/ Teaching Experience

School	No. of Music teachers	Qualification(s)	Teaching Experience
1	3	a. Diploma, BA, PGDE b. B.Ed, MA c. B.Ed	33 years 26 years 11 years
2	3	a. NCE, BED b. BED, c. MA	26 years 10 years

The table above shows that the Unity Colleges in Imo State have well qualified and experienced Music teachers.

Availability of Musical Instruments

School	African Instruments Available	Western Instruments Available
School 1	Pot drum, metal gong, rattles, wooden gong, membrane drums, Slit wooden drums.	Keyboard, guitar, recorders, trumpet, drum set, parade drums
School 2	Pot drum, metal gong, wood block, conga drums, rattles.	Piano, guitar, recorders, parade drums.

Testing the Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There are more African musical instruments in Unity Colleges in Imo State than Western instrument.

From the Table above, School 1 has six African instruments and six Western instruments while school 2 has five African instruments and four Western instruments. In all, there are eleven Western instruments and ten African instruments. This nullifies hypothesis 1 because there are more Western instruments than the African instruments.

Hypothesis 2: The Western instruments feature more in the teaching-learning process than the African instruments in Unity Colleges in Imo State.

	Agree	Disagree
School 1	3, (100%)	0, (0%)
School 2	3, (100%)	0,(0%)

The table above upholds hypothesis 2 because 100% of the teachers in both Unity Colleges in Imo State agree that Western instruments feature more in teaching and learning than the African musical instruments.

Hypothesis 3: Students of Unity Colleges in Imo State prefer to play Western instruments to African instruments.

	Agree	Disagree
School 1	3, (100%)	0, (0%)
School 2	3, (100%)	0, (0%)

The table above upholds hypothesis 3 because 100% of teachers in the two Unity Colleges in Imo State agree that students in their schools prefer playing Western musical instruments to African instruments.

Hypothesis 4: The principals of Unity Colleges in Imo State encourage the use of African instruments in the school Music programmes.

	Agree	Disagree
School 1	0, (0%)	3, (100%)
School 2	0, (0%)	3, 100%

The table above nullifies hypothesis 4 because all the teachers in the two Unity Colleges disagree that their principals encourage the use of African musical instruments in their school music programmes.

Discussion of Findings:

- The study reveals that few Western and African musical instruments are available in both Unity Colleges in Imo State though the Western instruments are slightly more in number.
- Students in unity colleges in Imo state prefer playing Western instruments to African instruments.
- Western instruments feature more in Music teaching and learning than the African musical instruments.

- The Principals of Unity Colleges do not encourage the utilization of African musical instruments in the schools music programmes.

Summary

The Igbo (Nigeria) have varieties of indigenous musical instruments they are identified with and which constitute their culture. The elders who construct and play these instruments are all passing on. The present generation of youths has not been guided to develop interest in constructing or learning to play these instruments for which they are identified. Western education led to the importation of western musical instruments into Nigeria and the citizens of this nation have a craving for these foreign instruments to the detriment of the indigenous ones. Teachers in Secondary Schools did not receive any formal training on the construction and playing of these instruments and as such they are handicapped in coping with the aspect of the SSCE NECO Music Technology syllabus which includes the construction of African musical instruments, performance of a traditional ensemble and singing of African art works with indigenous instrumental accompaniment by the examinees.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends a guideline on the utilization of African musical instruments in Music pedagogy for Post Primary Schools in Nigeria which she tags, "**GUAMIMPPSIN**" as follows:

1. Prepare yourself as a Music teacher by going an extra mile to learn to construct and play some of these indigenous instruments to be equipped enough to prepare your students for the practical examination / African Music practicals.
2. Prepare the environment. It is imperative to use the Music resource center of the school (Music laboratory) for the construction and practices of these musical instruments. Practising these instruments generates much noise and as such the classroom cannot be ideal because it will be un-conducive for the other classes going on simultaneously. The Music resource centre is also valuable for storing these instruments after use so that the students will not damage them or do away with them.

3. Prepare your class. As much as possible, arouse the students' interest so that the negative impact of Western education as stated by Agu (2011b) that, "the negative effects of Western education such as loss of interest on participation in the playing of the local instruments" (p.198), will be combated.
4. Use the Media (indigenous instruments). Train the students on how to construct these instruments step by step since it is part of the requirements for NECO SSCE Music Technology. They should also practise their solo folksongs as the other students play indigenous instruments for them as accompaniments. For their instrumental ensemble, prepare them ahead of time to master their lines. Note that NECO syllabus indicates that these pieces are to be notated and the notations submitted to their office. The finale or Sibelius software is a must use for the notations of the Music. This is part of preparing oneself on the part of the teacher. Be conversant with these soft wares in case you are not, to be able to prepare your students. All the pieces ranging from the African solo pieces with indigenous instrumental accompaniment, instrumental ensembles should be notated ahead of the practical examination day to avoid rush and panic. See an arranged example by the researcher in page 14 of this work).

Suggestions

One of the aims of Secondary education as provided in the national policy on education (2013) is, "to develop and promote the Nigerian art and culture."(p.12). It is expedient to teach the teenagers in post-primary schools by getting them acquainted with the use of and the production of some of these indigenous musical instruments. The researcher therefore suggests as follows:

1. Music teachers must develop themselves musically through training and reading, to be relevant in the 6-3-3-4 system of education.
2. Principals of schools should endeavor to provide the required musical instruments to the Music teachers to enhance teaching and learning.
3. Government should organize training programmes for Music teachers.
4. The quality assurance evaluators should visit Colleges regularly, assess each College and ensure compliance to recommendations through proper monitoring.
5. Principals in conjunction with the music teachers should arrange the engagement of indigenous instrumentalists in the locality to come and teach both the Music teachers and the students the technique of playing selected

musical instruments. In the same vein, instrument constructors should be brought in to teach both staff and students the selection of materials as well as how to use them and construct instruments used by members of the community where their College is located.

Uwa Ayaya

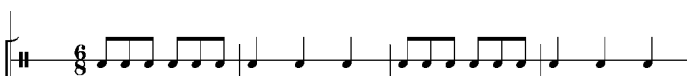
Arranged by Mabel Okpara

Voice

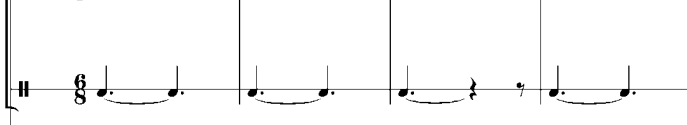


M ga m si anyi gba-la gaa, u- wa- ya

Conga Drums



Pot drum



Excerpt from Mabel Okpara's Uwa Ayaya.

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