REFORMING MUSIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN NIGERIA FOR ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

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Abstract

This paper highlights the need for reforming music curriculum in the Nigerian system of education. It has been discovered that music is relegated to the background, merging it with two other subjects by the curriculum planners in the Nigerian education system. This is a serious setback on music education. This paper identifies these problems and also highlights the prospects in music practice and proffers a way of harnessing the potentials in them. Data collected show that the major problem music education suffers is hinged on lack of attention to it by the curriculum planners in the education curriculum. The paper suggests that the society, the curriculum planners and the government have much to do so that music education and practice is appreciated as it is already an established fact the music contributes and improves the Nigerian economy to a large extent. This will help a lot in sustaining the music practitioners and also in salvaging the Nigerian economy that is grossly recessed. It proposes as part of its recommendations that the government should endeavor to include music as one of the country's compulsory subjects in its curriculum, and that music education and practice should be provided with the vocational facilities and personnel in order to thrive as a vocational subjects. Parents and the larger society should also become educated on the usefulness of music as a career subject worth pursing by learners.

Keywords: Reforming, Economic Sustainability, Curriculum, Music Education

Introduction

Music education is the formal system of education rendered to learners or candidates interested in music in the different stratification of schools, i.e. primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education, using various methods with the aim of achieving a common goal which is transforming the learners' behavior musically. Just like every other field of study or discipline, the essence of music education is to equip the learner in order to provide him with means of sustaining his financial needs. In other words, he is trained to participate actively in music and earn his living from it. When we talk of music education, we do not restrict it to any particular music type. Music knowledge can be acquired formally and informally, and both contribute in making the practitioner productive. We may not really bother the reader with history of music in Nigeria which started with the coming of the missionaries and colonial masters in Nigeria, mention should be made of the fact that formal music training gave birth to the growth of art music in Nigeria. According to Mokwunyei (2016:.22)

> *Formal music education in Nigeria developed from teaching of signing (basically for use in church activities following colonization) to teaching of rudiments and theory of western classical music to meet with requirements for performance of western musical instruments already acquired (imported). This type of music which is essentially classical is however restricted to a privileged few who are musically aware and therefore in a position to understand and appreciated it.*

Continuing the author further opined that "Formal and informal music education coexist in contemporary African societies where informal music education which is learnt, performed and transmitted orally from generation to generation among homogenous group in rural and urban communities is learnt in schools (p. 27)." Whether acquired formally or informally, the point of discourse here is that music provides a lot and enough sustenance to its practitioners in particular

and the country at large. But then it is disheartening to note that the Nigerian system of education obviously gives no or little consideration to music education as can be ascertained from the mistreatment it gets in the curriculum. Music as an art is not restricted to a particular people or race, it is a universal thing. Although musical practices differ from culture to culture and from generation to generation, yet, it is still a general and permanent thing. So, priority should be given to it by the curriculum planners in Nigeria.

Curriculum can be broadly defined as sum total of all the experiences a learner undergoes under the guidance of the school or institution. According to Rugg in Adeyinka (1988) "Curriculum is really the entire programme of the school's work, it is the essential means of education. It is everything that the students and their teachers do. It is two-fold in nature being made up of activities, the things done, and of the materials with which they are done (Pg. 10)". In this light, how come music as a subject that is recognized and approved by the Nigerian government is not given high priority in the county's curriculum, since it is a universal course just as mathematic and the sciences are? It is rather merged with other arts subjects under Cultural and Creative Arts (CCA). In most cases, music is completely out of reach, i.e. not taught as a subject in most Nigeria primary and secondary schools. This is because of the position it is occupying in the curriculum as cited in Zuhumben, Maikano, & Gokun (2017:60).

Primary Education

The curriculum of this level of education shall contain the following subjects:

1. Language of the area
2. English
3. French
4. Arabic
5. Mathematics
6. Science

7. Physical and Health Education
8. Religious knowledge
9. Agriculture / Home Economics
10. Social Studies and Citizenship Education
11. Cultural and Creative Arts (Drawing, hand craft, music & culture)
12. Computer Education

The listing above is done in order of importance. It is discovered from the listing that out of twelve (12) subjects offered at the primary level of education, music being a universal subject like mathematics – is listed the eleventh (11th). This is also in line with the listing done by the National Policy on Education (2013) which is clear and obvious that less priority is given to it. This calls for reformation in the curriculum planning of Nigeria, so that better results would be achieved. National Policy on Education has equally not been fair to music education by incorporating music under CCA and not listing it as a Compulsory Cross-Cutting Subjects. It would equally have been better if music is listed under Trade/Entrepreneurship Subjects than under Humanities (cf. NPE 2013).

Background

Music is as old as life itself. It existed and played vital roles in human life which cut across the entire universe. It is understood everywhere and performs the same functions everywhere no matter the language of its communication. That is why it is called a 'universal language'. Olisaeke and Olisaeke (2018) had observed:

> *The saying that music is a universal language is a popular phrase and definition which is conversant with and pertains to musical studies, is not contestable. One sometimes wonders which aspect of music studies enjoys this exalted common belief of language universality of music. Is it in the area of lyrics or texts to which music is written or the knowledge of musical notations with its elements and rudiments, or both? We understand*

> *language as a means of communication, and we equally understand that through music communication can take place. Therefore music and language play equal roles in communication. Language in essence is spoken by all irrespective of gender as far as one is able to learn it. Are musical practices in Africa as liberal as language in this sense? "..." (pg: 111).*

If yes, why is music education given such a backyard treatment while languages as subjects were listed 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th in the curriculum of the primary level of education as previously cited? Government, curriculum planners, teachers, and parents need to see the significance music plays in our usual day-to-day activities such as festivals, naming ceremonies, worships, education and entertainments. All cultures, religions, social events and some educational activities in schools are musically accompanied or use music as a major medium of communicating with their fellows. Thus, music practitioners, both male and female, young and old make their living from it. Therefore, music practices in Nigeria should be encouraged and funded by all so as to boost the country's economy. It may be necessary to remind us of the uses and benefits of music to man to enable a better understanding of the discourse.

The Uses of Music in the Life of Man

Uses of music to man has never changed from creation up till today even though there may have been some modifications as man and his needs gets complex. These uses as captured by Johnson-Egemba, Akponome, Nwosu, Boyi, Olisaeke and Effiong (2007) are hereby captured as follow:

1. Protection: The need for protection and safety may be one of the reasons why the early man derived a means of communicating messages among themselves. The presence of rivalry, danger or enemy is made known to members of a community through music. The music in such instance is enshrined in coded language that is understandable

only to that community. This practice is still obtainable today even with modern modifications.

2. Communication: Music has always been used to summon community members to the village square from early time of man till today. It may also be used to announce the death of the village head or an important person in the community. Communication in this direction could be between the living and the dead. To this end, music is also used to commune with ancestral spirit for guidance and protection. Today music in communication has surpassed this level and is used in radio and television communication media in electioneering campaigns, jingles and a lot more

3. Food: The game of survival as the basis for sustenance and perpetuation of future generation is hinged partly to the quality of life. To this end, food supply becomes an important vehicle for the sustenance of the community. The role of music in hunting expedition and food gathering from early time of man to date is worth-while. Music is used to defuse fatique and reinforce zeal. Agricultural ventures are also supported with music, which may serve as a secondary attraction to the daily toil on the farm.

4. Music for Pleasure: The idea of pleasure is inherent in man and dates back to earliest music ever made. The primary purpose of music making is entertainment and relaxation. Music smooths tensed nerves and helps recoup the individual after a stressful exercise. The banging on a hallowed wood or a tune from the flute can be a source of excitement and pleasure to the early man. Today, music is used extensively for pleasure including various types of entertainments, celebrations and festivals. Today people move about with music in their phones, ipads, MP3, MP4, etc. It is easily accessible.

5. For Ritual: The use of music in ritual exercise is a practice that dates back in the life of the early man till today in different shrines traditional religious worship centres. The presence of supernatural being may have caused the early man to look beyond his immediate

environment for solace. This need is the direct outcome of the various ritual observances by the man. Music has afforded the man a means of relating with the supernatural. Today, worship in churches cannot be complete or even hold without music playing major role. This is one of the greatest impact of music to man. The worship of any deity is marked with music. Music provides a medium for interaction among community of worshippers and to express thanks to God for protection and providence.

The contemporary man needs protection, information, communication, food/work, pleasure and interaction with his God in order to be complete, comfortable and happy. All of these mentioned above are characteristics of music in which if fully embraced and utilized, would go a long way in solving Nigeria's challenges.

Economic Sustainability of Music to Man

Music as a vocation and occupation had sustained the Nigerian economy in the past. As any other vocation, it has provided job opportunities for individuals in various milieus such as the church, club, television and radio stations, etc. Technicians who do not directly perform music have made money by producing musical instruments both local and foreign. Even marketers and those in music business also enjoy a lot from the works of these artistes by pirating on their works, even when it is vehemently frowned at. However, that practice equally sustains them. Apart from what Nigeria may benefit from music economically, there is no doubt that music education and practice will enhance man's productivity.

Music as an occupation has also provided several opportunities for many Nigerians to be formally trained outside and within the country in order to practice as professional teachers (musicologists) in Nigerian schools. These professionals earn their livings solely from this work as teachers, lecturers, producers, directors, coaches, etc, just as medical doctors and bankers do. Their operations as professional teachers and lecturers in the Nigerian society have made

them equal to others as they go to the same market, pay equal taxes and bills.

In like manner, church music which is a general platform for most musicians is one of the avenues where music practice fetch a lot of money, fame and opportunities for musicians. Nigerian Churches are very rich and they appreciate music such as classical, conventional and traditional music. Any church without musical practices is lifeless; therefore, membership of such churches is rather very poor and is therefore prone to poor income and loss of membership. Let us recall that the early missionaries made use of music as a fast means of attracting converts. So, church music plays vital role in the moulding of would be musicians and the economic growth of the church as well. Instances of musicians that made it from the church are: Patty Obasi, Panam Percy Paul, Jeremiah Gyang, Frank Edward, e.t.c.

In contemporary music world, pop artistes are greatly sustaining the economic system of the country through their rich compositions and performances home and abroad. That is why Olisaeke (2011) opined that;

> *It is also advocated that popular music be enshrined in the school curriculum since music of the day is now 'pop' inclined. Days are gone when pure art music which was studied in formal school as given to us by the colonialists was the order of the day (p. 295)a."*

Early Nigerian pop musicians in the likes of late Fela Anikulapo Kuti, Onyeka Onwenu, Sunny Okosun, Jim Rex Lawson, Oriental Brothers, Osita Osadebe, Mike Okri, and others, have attracted many foreign and local fans. They also made a lot of money from their music. More money comes into Nigeria from outside countries who are contemporary pop musicians such as: P Square, 2Face Idibia, Lagbaja, Don Jazzy, Yemi Alade, Rubbi Gyang, Phyno, Flavour, etc. Many of these musicians were also billed to perform abroad from time to time, thereby attracting huge financial resources to the country. The money

they make from "shows" outside the country and even within Nigeria, are injected into the Nigerian economy. This increases and sustains our economic value. Reference should be made here of the time 'MI' in 2010, received a cheque for about 12 million naira from the marketers of his album. Burna Boy also received close to 10 million naira for 'L.I.F.E' within a month after its release. These cheques are not the norm, but indicate the kind of money that accrues to some of our contemporary pop musicians. These pop musics gain acceptance in clubs as well as when they are played over the media like radio and televisions houses, etc. If music can enhance someone's life in this manner, why should government show the kind of apathy she is currently showing towards it which is made apparent in her education curriculum as formulated?

Contemporary Problems Facing Music Education in Nigeria

Many researchers have made several attempts to find out the major problems facing the study of music as a course of study in Nigeria secondary schools and tertiary institutions. In the quest to find out and solve problems bordering the educational sector; Olusoji (2013) in a study carried out observed that, "a total number of 104 students of the University of Lagos, Lagos State University, and Musical Society of Nigeria (MUSON), music schools offering music as a course were given a questionnaire and participated in the study. This consisted of 45 males and 59 females with ages ranging from 16 – 24 years. The questionnaire was designed to cater for two categories of students of the aforementioned institutions: (A) Those transiting from secondary to higher institutions and are in their first year, and (B) Those in the middle and final years. Those in the first category (A) were asked questions such as:

a. Why they choose music as a career?
b. Whether they encountered any objections from their parents for choosing music?
c. Did they choose music as the last resort after failure to make entry requirements for other courses?

d. Whether they did music in their secondary schools?
e. What was their musical background; whether they sang in the church choir, came from a family of musicians, participated in any form of communal musical activities, e.t.c.
f. What was their role model in music?

Those in secondary category (B) were asked more matured questions such as:

a. What the public perception of school music and music scholars is?
b. Whether the traditional stigma attached to music and music practitioners has reduced?
c. What they intend to achieve with their music education, (e.g. to be a pop star? to promote serious music?)
d. Whether the training given to them in Nigeria institutions prepares them to compete and fit properly into the saturated labour market; and also compete favourably with their peers studying other disciplines and on the global stage? And
e. Students were asked to comment on the provisions of facilities and education structures and availability of competent instructors.

Findings of the Study

In the corse of this study, it was discovered that:

a. Students had problems convincing their parents about their choice of music as a career. 79% of the population said their parents disliked music as a career for their wards. It was particular visible (sic) in the responses of female respondents whose parents felt it is a profession for men not women, while others had problems drawing lines between music as vocation and avocation.
b. The findings also indicated that most respondents choose music out of frustration of not making the required grades for their first choice course and their attempt to get admission to the university in any other available courses with a lower

requirement. 65% of respondents had positive responses to the question (C) above for category: A respondents.

c. The age-long stigma attached to music is still quite prevalent in contemporary times, as undergraduates still encountered derogatory remarks from the society on their choice of music as a course and profession.
d. As a follow-up to the aforementioned, most of the respondents generally choose pop icons, both local and international, as their role models and would rather chart and pursue their career in popular music because of the immediate financial rewards rather than a career in classical music.
e. Students showed total disappoint (sic) regarding the training, facilities, and instructors in most Nigerian institutions. A total of 65% of the respondents were of the opinion that facilities used for instruction were inadequate and obsolete, 35% opined that more competent and well-trained instructors should be employed; and 40% expressed that the curriculum should be broadened to cater for and accommodate different area of interest of students as some would like to specialize in areas such as: studio management, entrepreneurial or music business, music therapy, and other specializations that were not currently offered in most Nigeria institution.

Following from the findings of the above study, we can see that the apathy shown in most of the responses may not have been unconnected with lack of support music as a course receives from government, parents and stakeholders in our educational institutions. Item number (e) above is in line with this position. Again, even the little time given to music, the content does not really and fully reflect Nigerian cultural and musical practices. There is a preponderance of western music culture. This much leaning on Western music is not a good thing for our music education and something has to be done. Why should our students be interested in learning other peoples' culture when they have theirs? With that, learning may be a bit difficult and cumbersome,

Conclusion and Recommendations

The reformation of music education curriculum in Nigerian primary and secondary schools can only be achieved when classroom music education is rooted in Nigerian cultural concept for its enrichment and benefits, not only to students but also the government, parents and curriculum planners. In this paper, we have looked at the problems confronting Nigeria's economy and music education in Nigeria. We have discovered that major problems music education encounter is mostly hinged on lack of support from government and curriculum planners. Some ways these problems can be adequately tackled by government and all concerned to put hand deck and support the growth of music education at all cost.

- To achieve this, parents should be properly enlightened about the usefulness of music education, and allow their gifted children pursue a career in music.
- The curriculum planners should do more to promote music education by way of making it a universal or compulsory subject in the primary and secondary levels of education, and should also disintegrate it from other Art subjects as presently obtained.
- Government and all stake holders should also look at the contents of music curriculum and include local contents that would make music education and practice homey, relevant and more meaningful to the society.
- Music education and practice should be provided with the vocational facilities and personnel in order to thrive as a vocational subject.
- Finally, government should not neglect the musical art and should do more to fund it, for it is said that "music is life."

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