

## MUSIC EDUCATION: PEDAGOGY OF HOPE

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper will discuss the importance of music as a subject of study in Nigerian schools, both primary and secondary. It will highlight the historical background on music education formally and informally taking into cognizance how music should be taught in order to make the public and music learners appreciate music for its sake, instead of accepting it only as a medium of entertainment and instrument of studying other subjects in schools. Music education has been in existence right from the origin of music itself. Communities and societies have relied on music as an instrument of instruction, knowledge, information and entertainment. Music has also served its purpose as a form of worship for religious purposes and other forms. Children have learnt a lot through music and this system is still on today. The study of music as a subject today has declined because the importance as a subject of study has been overlooked and even viewed as just a subject purely for entertainment yet music still plays its roles in various forms and areas beyond what the society sees it. Literatures related to the subject of study will serve as data instrument for this study. Questionnaires will also be used to provide necessary information to enhance this study as well.*

**KEYWORDS:** music, education, system, community, school.

### INTRODUCTION

Music as an art has played a lot of important roles in the lives of members of Nigerian societies. It is used as a medium of expression, for joy, sorrow, narrating stories and events, political rallies etc. and it is therefore unique as a medium of knowledge and entertainment. It has contributed to the promotion of society's cultural values, bringing people of different cultures together and creating avenues for interchange of culture. Among other arts, music has more expressive qualities since it contains more artistic elements that other arts have. It is therefore an explicit avenue for showcasing various expressions which can be either joyful or sad. Music is very important to every community in Nigeria since it acts as a unifying instrument that brings the people together. Active participation in musical activities is therefore encouraged to improve sustainability and exposures to musical interests and cultural practices of communities within and outside their environment.

Music has been used to teach other subjects in school. Its relationship with other arts cannot be overlooked since it has from early times been used as a medium of teaching other subjects like Mathematics, English Language, Rhymes etc. Children learn faster through musical sounds; communities use music to teach morals especially during moonlight plays which were a part of the cultural activities among various communities in Nigerian Societies. Music helped in informal education of the young who were exposed to the cultural activities and beliefs of their communities. In the sciences, music is related when one talks about sounds or acoustics which has to do with musical instruments, and also their qualities as regard timbre etc. The study of music in schools is very important. Music should not only be used as a measure to study and understand other subjects alone. It should be studied for its own sake. This is because the study of music will help the students to know something of beauty and the art of expressing it. It will further encourage them to be sensitive to the world around them, hear the sounds of nature and accept to live as one, despite their differences in culture and tastes. . An education in music therefore is very important to the individual as well as the society in which the individual lives. Music is a part of the fabric of our society, hence it should be studied to help keep the cultural perspectives of every community alive and active. This is because every society in our country uses music to carry forward its ideas and ideals. This can be achieved through practical studies and research whereby the music learner develops the ability to compose, perform and research the music of cultures.

Education in music will make the student to know in full measure, the wonder of being human by being sensitive to the human condition, know themselves, express their thoughts, convictions, even fears and dreams etc. The study of music involves more of group learning, exchange of ideas, and discovery of hidden talents to become better artists. Music education participation should also provide unique opportunities for literacy preparation, not only in music study but also in studying other subjects, using music as the instrument of study. Education in music therefore contributes positively to the development of a child, mentally physically, emotionally, socially, and academically. Music is a magical gift which a child needs to sharpen his abilities and character towards a positive growth in his environment and the society at large. Music is used for mental exercise since it can be used to prepare the learner for the day's activities and to also ease boredom. Music therefore has this power of helping people remember what they have learnt especially through notation, and

rhymes, children are taught by putting the words into songs; this helps the learners to remember easily and even have a longer period of retaining what they have learnt, especially when they are put into songs.

### **MUSIC EDUCATION:**

Music education is a field of study that is associated with the teaching and learning of music. The teaching and learning of music begins informally from the home, where the children become aware of sounds that they hear as infants. These sounds attract the attention of the child who would in turn respond/react to this combination of sounds. These responses to stimuli may either be positive or negative. The positive reactions are viewed as sounds pleasant to the ears while the negative sounds are seen to be noise which are unwanted and undesirable. The study and responses to musical sounds touch on all learning domains as the child grows and begins to identify various sounds and hitherto begins to differentiate between musical sounds and ordinary sounds in his/her environment. These recognitions and experiences help in building the psychomotor domain of the child and every other essential part of the child. It further prepares the child for effective musical skill acquisition which will encourage him to become a better musician and performer. Acquisition of musical skills and creativity therefore starts from the home where the child lives and grows since that is where the child is already acquainted with, it is also his /her cultural surrounding which comprises his musical as well as non-musical sounds. The first school of music for the child is the home where he/she listens to his mother and other relatives sing on their own or to him/her. As the child grows, he begins to coordinate sounds and also responds to sounds which he appreciates and even the ones not appreciating to his/her ears or senses. Mothers in African communities sing lullabies to their children; the intention maybe to lull the baby to sleep but these lullabies actually sensitizes the child to various sounds which the child reacts to positively or negatively. This avenue helps the child to begin unconsciously to select what sound he/she likes or not. Udensi (2002:10) advises that “the type of music that could be used as a set of induction in the teaching of other subject topics should be tuneful, interesting, memorable, imaginative and relevant to the topic in order to arrest the pupils’ attention throughout the course of the lesson”.

Exposure to musical sounds helps the growing child understand his environment, the cultural perception and practices in his/ her surroundings. This act will help the learner/ trainees in musical field to appreciate his musical culture which he/she is born into and also help to appreciate those musical sounds and musical culture of other communities.

### **INFORMAL MUSIC EDUCATION**

Music education began informally before the pre-colonial period. Music was one of the medium of communication among societies in Nigeria. The ‘school’ then was in the home where children are taught songs from their parents especially their mothers who sang lullabies, work songs, and other songs to accompany their stories during moonlight plays. Songs were also learnt during festivals where members of dance groups, usually made up of the youth come together to launch their dance. Here, good singers, dancers and instrumentalists were discovered and recognised. Some societies have professionals who are paid to teach others how to play traditional instruments and in the homes of these professionals, a ‘school’ is formed where people are formally recruited and trained to become instrumentalists.

In informal music education, Bebey (1975:6) contends that “at this early stage of life, it is evident that the child is merely a listener but as he begins to grow up, he soon starts to play active role in music”. He stresses that “it is also clear that talent has nothing to do with age, for the rhythms that these tiny tots hammer out in their makeshift instruments are portent of their capabilities in later life”. Musical training from the early stage in a child’s life is therefore a part of his growth and the musical games which children indulge in is a form of training which prepares them to participate in all areas or spheres of life as they grow. Informal music education has helped the children to discover their interests and talents in music areas hence prepare for the formal music education class where western music is taught more than the indigenous music of their culture.

### **FORMAL MUSIC EDUCATION**

Idolor, (2001:136) defined formal education as “the organisation of learning experiences in a structure which has clear and distinct roles for the teacher and the learner”. He stresses that “formal approach to musical studies in Nigeria dates back to the establishment of mission schools in 1843”.

Adegbite, (2001: 78) also states that, “the Anglican came in 1842, Methodist in 1845 and Baptist in 1850”, while Ukeze (1979) contends “by 1858, the first day school established by the CMS missionaries in Onitsha, and post primary schools like Baptist Teachers College, Ogbomosho, Wesley College, Ibadan and Zik Grammar school, Sapele founded in 1897, 1905 and 1943 respectively, had music literally taught in their programme of studies”.

Idolor, (2001:136) stresses that “although many of the schools during the missionary and colonial period laid foundation for studies in Art music, much of the content was European-based”. The aim of these western educators who were then the financiers and executors of their schools were to train their students to play simple hymn tunes from staff notation on the harmonium or organ. The teaching of music therefore did not involve the method of teaching from the known to the unknown where the learners could indulge in their already known musical experiences. They were made to pay more attention to western type of music in place of their ethnic music which was seen by the colonial masters as ‘barbaric’ and ‘primitive’. Adeogun, A (2015) infers that, “indigenous Nigerian communities have had a highly structured music education system which is very effective in ensuring the continuity of their age-old musical traditions and culture.” He continued that, “at its core are the apprenticeship systems, initiation schools, and music borrowing practices aimed at producing dutiful master-musician –teachers who are not to instruct,

Omibiyi, (2001) notes that “Nigeria political independence in 1960 brought about a change in the political system and content of music curriculum which became more African, thereby bringing into the limelight what is today called African Art Music”. At the early stage, there was a problem of qualified manpower which included qualified music teachers, instructional music materials etc. all these are to encourage the appreciation of art music in Nigerian schools and the society at large. On the other hand, practitioners of art music were mostly from the southern part of the country because Christian activities were very popular there, especially in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and for the most part of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The teaching of music was therefore strictly to the south.

Idolor (2001:136) opines that “African Art music is a musical creation which exhibit features that are characteristics of traditional African music composed through literary approach”. In this approach, the objectives, contents, methods of teaching, selection of the learning experiences and the evaluation of system of the entire programme should be deliberately and systematically determined and laid out. In the revised National Policy on Education, the curriculum contains among others, cultural and creative arts as a subject, which includes music which was recommended for primary schools while music became a core subject in the junior secondary schools and an elective subject in the senior secondary schools. Besides this, there have been intensified efforts to acquire instructional materials and produce enough manpower which was to encourage the study of music in schools. The approach in teaching the subject is important since it will create a positive interest in the mind of the learners. It will also create an avenue for the learners to determine whether to study music at a higher level as they discover their talents and interest in the subject or the study of other subjects.

#### **APPROACH TO THE TEACHING OF MUSIC**

Formal teaching of music in schools has been in existence since Nigeria’s Independence, but the society still see the study of music as unnecessary since every member of the society can either sing or dance, why go to school to study music? Others can suggest that one can join a musical band if interested in becoming a musician. Music education is not just a means of entertainment nor an avenue to escape boredom and stress. Music studied in the school qualifies as an educational subject whenever it provides with clarity, more of what the learner needs than he is able to absorb informally from his environment. Formal music education is a stepping stone to the study of music as an art. It creates a sense of interest in the aesthetic organisation of the music which the individual is familiar with, be it his folk music or that of other societies. From past experiences, it has been discovered that people who would have loved to study music or musical instruments have failed to continue as a result of not being able to understand the subject, especially due to the approach in the teaching of the subject. Wrong approach towards the teaching of music has left a lot of people interested in studying music fed up, confused and even some graduated as music teachers but refused to further. Music teachers in the past may have helped their students to enjoy and perform music, today’s teachers should add to these accomplishments by helping the learners understand music theoretically and practically. It is therefore always very important to start from the known to unknown.

Music education in the primary schools should therefore be encouraged. The approach here should not only be limited to singing of hymns, rhythms, rhymes, but there should be more of the pupils’ involvement in singing their traditional folk songs and learning that of others who may have come from other neighbouring communities. Relegating the traditional music of learners and delving into the musical idioms of the western society will not only make the interested learner to lose interest in his cultural music, but confuse him as he will find such music abstract especially when musical terms and languages such as tempo, timbre, ostinato and other musical terms are used.

Nketia, (1966:480) notes that, “Every musical type played in community life has a tradition behind it, a tradition which governs its mode of performance, its repertoire, its choice, and use of musical instruments as well as

traditions that govern the context in which it should be played. Those familiar with these expect to recognise them in practice and may be disturbed if there are serious departures”.

A formal education in music should not be a departure from the musical background of the learners. Music is an art that involves a lot of participation which will encourage interchange of cultural values and effect continuity and change which is very common in contemporary Nigeria society. The curriculum should contain more of music of traditional societies, their instrumental ensembles, etc. This will arouse the interest and pride of the younger generation in their own culture and steer their addiction to total interests in foreign musical culture.

## CONCLUSION

What then should we say is the state of music education in Nigerian schools? Has it contributed to the development of aesthetic value or a sense of aesthetic taste, whereby the student should have a feeling for and about the things in their lives? Has music education helped the learner to be something other than a passive recipient of someone else’s sense of what is aesthetically appealing?

The society is fast changing and this is due to external socio-cultural pressures. Through formal music education and electronic media, the study of music and participation in musical activities has become “multicultural”. Exposure have therefore affected musical activities of individuals, even those who want to study music in schools, some prefer the western music to that of their culture. This should not prevent music educators, composers, researchers, arrangers etc. from encouraging music education. They should adapt those aspects that can project African musical peculiarities and this should start from the primary schools. Idolor, (2002:9) notes that “the fact that the scholar now lives within a multi-ethnic community and is able, in other aspects of social life to communicate successfully with the various members of his community, makes it desirable to be knowledgeable also in musical practices outside his/her own ethnic group”. This does not mean that foreign musical idioms are not educative. It is better for the learners to start from those music practices which they are familiar with before embarking on foreign grounds. This will enhance a proper documentation of their music through notation, researches and even performances.

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