Issues of Music Education in Global Perspectives: The Nigeria Experience

By

PRINCE KUFRE EFFION
Department of Music
Federal College of Education,
Pankshin.

Abstract

Music education is an indispensable weapon “per excellence” that can be used to address the various issues and dilemmas in the educational sector nationally and internationally. Music education creates deeper awareness for character acquisition, team spirit, knowledge enhancement and it offers great intellectual and applied skills among students and pupils. The main thrust of this paper however, is to highlight some of the issues that have posed or brought about education dilemma in music education; with the Nigeria experience. Some of these issues are poor funding, lack of sufficient facilities, insufficient manpower and full implementation of music education policies as enshrined in the Nigeria curriculum of education. Recommendations were provided to include stable and full resurgence of the music education policies implementation in the Nigerian curriculum.

Education can generally be seen as the process of teaching and learning in a formal or informal situation with the main aim of improving and advancing knowledge. Fafunwa (1974) defined education as the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities and other forms of behaviour which are positive values to the society in which he lives. Okafor (1998) added that education is generally perceived to be the process if discipline through training and study in the acquisition of skills and knowledge. Akinbote (2000) further opined that education is the process by which the community seeks to open its life to all the individuals within it to enable them take their part in it.

From the above definitions, education is a worthwhile venture which is directed to the training of the minds to meet up with the changing and challenging status quo of the world system. Be it formally or informally, the most common factor in education is
that there is a learning process going on. The society, nation and the world at large, can not afford to be stagnant. Education in all its perspectives is a fundamental tool towards a dynamic and contemporaneous society, and music as a well applauded subject is centred towards that direction.

What is Music?

Music is an aspect of education which is directed towards training a holistic being. Many scholars and educators have defined music variously. However, a few definitions to drive home the contextual definition of the term “music” are considered below:

Glennon (180:2) simply defined as “expressions of sound” or the expression of thoughts and feeling in an aesthetic way. Effiong (2009:114) saw music as ‘one of the fine arts which concerned with the combination of views, to beauty of form and expression of feeling or thoughts.’ Ifemesia (1987: 144) explained music as ‘a medium of communication and social unity of recording and documentation, meditation and worship, healing and socialization, recreation and celebration.’

Music matters in the day to day activities in every society. Onwukwe (2004) informed that music has been styled the greatest of the arts. She added that ‘all sound is music. In order words, music is made p of sound, and more regulated and closely garnered the sound, the better the music.’ Effiong (2012:3) analysed the characteristic features of music thus: ‘Music characteristically, move along with rhythm, melody, harmony, pitch, counter-point, timbre and forms to become pleasant, delightful and pleasurable to listen to and enjoy.’ Music matters to all individuals. Music makes a lively and enjoyable society. It is a universal language of the soul, which soothes the mind, gladdens the heart, comforts the depressed, encourages the discouraged and is often regarded as the ‘panacea’ for a pleasurable holistic well being of individual, society, nation and the world at large.

A Brief X-ray of the Nation, Nigeria

Nigeria is a developing nation with thirty six (36) states and the Federal Capital Territory as the seat of power. Nigeria is blessed with both human and natural resources which ought to be basking in the euphoria of wealth as a result of her rich natural endowment, but the story is however, different. Even in Nigeria’s fifty two years as an independent nation, there are still problems, issues and dilemmas in all sectors of the economy. Akponeme, Johnson and Effiong (2007) regrettably remarked that:

While Nigeria basked in the euphoria of the oil of the 1970s the story had since changed and the usage of the oil boom is no more relevant. Virtually all the sectors of the economy were neglected and Nigeria’s foreign earning have become very susceptible to vagaries of the oil
Today the budget of the Federal Government of Nigeria is anchored on the world oil pricing revenue by the government is hinged completely on the per barrel price of petroleum (p. 210).

With the rich national resources available in Nigeria, which would have been of immersed assistance to revive every sector of its economy, Nigerians are still suffering in silence. The government and other stakeholders have not been able to fully harness the rich resources to better the lots of the citizens. Why is this so? Effiong (2011:5) quoting (Uwodi, 2008) said: it is no more news that Nigeria has been rated as one of the most nations of the world. Transparency international, a reputable non-government organization (NGO) rated Nigeria as the 12th most corrupt nation in the world. Effiong (2011) quoting Iliya (2009) added thus to the present state of Nigeria:

Truly within the country, a lot of things go on. We hear of armed robberies, assassinations, bribery, examination malpractices and various forms of fraudulent practices and corruptions in many places. We hear of human trafficking; particularly women and children…

Nigeria is viewed as a terrible country especially by foreigners, due to the pervasiveness of corruption, economic backwardness, political ineptitude, frequent strikes, electoral frauds, civil and religious uprising… (p. 3).

Soyinka (2008:2) quoting directly the words of the former minister of information, in Nigeria, Professor Dora Akunyili said: Our image especially in and outside this country is highly battered. Outside the country in particular, that perception of Nigeria and Nigerians is so bad that even on the internet you keep receiving information that should not travel to Nigeria and all that. Every Nigerian is regarded as a fraudster and criminal, without being given the benefit of the doubt.

However, as challenging and corrupt as the nation may be presently, Nigeria is still receiving a lot of positive changes and transformations in all sectors by few “concerned leaders and stake holders” in their various disciplines and capacities.

Educationally, the story is not seemingly indifferent. For example, Nigeria as a developing nation, has the highest number of both private and federal universities in Africa, and is still lacking behind with the standard of her education. One may ponder to ask; why is the present standard of education falling in the midst of surplus resources that would have better its lots in Nigeria? Well, the issues that have brought about these dilemmas, with music education as a laudable panacea, for global educational renaissance are provided in this paper.
The Role of Music in Education in Nigeria

A Nigerian child in particular is born and nurtured in music. He grows and learns in the society where he lives with music and eventually takes his exit from the world with music. Through formal and informal education of a child, music becomes a ready and established medium of instruction. Also, music contributes immensely to the over all growth and development of the child.

Music education, which started in the United States of America in 1788, and was later financed in 1986 (Mason, 1988) had the following aims at inception:
(a) For students/pupils to be able to read and sing musical notations by sight and later be able to perform practically, both vocal and instrumental types of music. (b) Being able to achieve the important aims of responsiveness, through the study music by using concepts tools in academic discipline.

Music education in the 21st century has the potential of being one of the most valuable subjects for enhancing human personality. Okafor and Maison (1992) revealed that music education is geared towards helping man to be able to express himself deeply. Effiong (2009:115) added that ‘it prepares individuals not just to earn a living, but also for life itself.’ He continued that ‘while the individual is being equipped and prepared by music educators to be useful to him/ her, he/she is at the same time groomed for service to his/her fellow men.’

Effiong (2009), however, defined Music Education as:
That aspect of education, which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic, scientific knowledge to enable one adopts him/her successfully in the society as well as contribute immensely to the development of the society (p. 114).

Okafor (2005) provided the general aim of music education which is ‘to equip the individual to perform music in the society and to contribute to the economy.’ He added that ‘the person so prepared is to perform either as an artist or as a teacher.’

Music education in Nigeria started formally at the inception of the music department of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1960. Okafor (2005) explained that: The University of Nigeria, Nsukka, the first autonomous University in Nigeria, established the first college of music in Africa. It was a great step towards the dignity of music and the musician. One of the pioneer Advanced Teacher Training Colleges (College of Education), the Alvan Ikoku College of Education, Owerri, also introduced music in its
One of the aims for introducing music in the curriculum of the pioneering institutions of higher learning in Nigeria was to expose the students to theoretical, practical and applied skills and make the students useful to themselves in the society they live, in practical musicianship. Music education has that ability to encourage, spur and motivate learners into purposeful and resourceful action. Music education in Nigeria assists in the training and development of individuals to be able to express themselves deeply in practical terms and earn a living. Also, it prepares individuals to be useful to the society. Either as music educators or musicians, through music education, the society is positively influenced because music educators are available to use their knowledge to contribute meaningfully to the development of the society. Music trains the minds, built good character disposition and instill disciplines. It encourages the depressed, makes learning / comprehension subject faster, grooms and soothes the heart. Music is the universal language of humanity, the rhythm of life and the panacea for a complete life of an individual.

**Music in School Curriculum**

Traditionally, music has been included in the curriculum of schools for reasons of citizenship, character development, team spirit and health benefits (Effiong, 2009). Ukpanah (2004) gave further reasons for its inclusion thus:

*The need to include music as one of the viable teaching subject in the general school curriculum is that it helps to stimulate the brain and discipline the mind, there by serving as incentive for the other subjects... culturally speaking, music helps in the shaping of an individual into an acceptable member of his/her society. Besides, music is a profession which helps one to earn a meaningful living out of it, depending on the level of involvement in its study and practice (p. 21).*

On correlation of Nigerian music with other subjects of the school curriculum, Onwuekwe (194: 141) explained that ‘music is correlated with all the subjects of the school curriculum.’ She continued that ‘music could be regarded as subject of subjects.’ Through music, very difficult subjects could be watered down to the level the people involved; be they primary school pupils, students in secondary schools or students of tertiary institutions. In the teaching of mathematics for example, music could be implored. How? For instance, a teacher is the teaching the topic “Subtraction”, a popular song entitled “Ten green bottles are hanging on wall...” could be used. This song helps to facilitate and make learning exciting, and comprehension quicker. Music is pivotal in education because it makes learning faster. Through it, the norms and values of the society are made known to its members to accept. So, music serves as the
basis for educating members of the community. Music education, however creates, generates and gears up a formidable society as no society can do without music.

As a result of the role music education plays to the society, nation and the world at large, October 1st, each year, the International Music Council through its worldwide membership celebrates international music day. Johns – Egemba: 92011) quoting Frank Callway (former president of IMC) in Nnamani (1999:97) remarked thus:

*On each International Music Day, October 1st, it is a tradition for the International Music Council to celebrate the vital part music plays in the everyday life of all people. This year 1989, this event has an extra significance, as the IMC celebrates 40th anniversary ... Music is unquestionably a universal phenomenon and it contains seeds of unity of mankind... fascinating and rewarding in it (p. 49).*

Apart from the educational qualities music provides to the society, it has social, national, cultural, religious, political and ethical relevance. For example, the Nigerian National Anthem is on a daily basis rendered / performed by all patriotic citizens of Nigeria to pay their allegiance to her nation in places of work, offices, schools, firms and everywhere. Nigeria sings this song regularly to show respect to her father land.

**Issues of Music Education in Nigeria**

Issues could synonymously be considered as the problems, dilemmas, troubles, negative effects and the caterpillars, eating and eroding the educational system / sector. These issues, if properly handled, treated and harnessed, can assist immeasurably, in bringing a lasting resurgence to education and improve the economic base of any nation. For the purpose of this paper, the following issues shall be considered.

**(a) Full Implementation and acceptance of Music Education**

For Nigerians to acquire the ability to propagate Nigerian musical and artistic ideas, National Policy on Education posits that education, including music education (Onyeji, 2004), remains the most effective instrument of social change known to man / woman (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1981). Traditionally, music has been included in the curriculum of schools for reasons of citizenship, character development, team spirit and health benefits (Effiong, 2009).

It is a wise thing at this juncture, for one to ponder, think and ask why music is not given its right of place by planners and implementers of the school curriculum when it has been accepted as a viable subject in general education and in the junior secondary school system in Nigeria. Most schools, primary, secondary and even tertiary institutions do not see the necessity to allow music to be taught as one the
subject/courses. It is not even in the school time table. The worst affected areas are the Northern parts of Nigeria and the middle belt regions where I have stayed for about thirty years now. It might interest the reader to know that in the tertiary institution available in the Northern Nigeria, there is no singular department of music. In the middle belt regions in Nigeria, only Federal College of Education, Pankshin and Federal College of Education, Okene have must departments to train music educators and musicians. Of recent, Federal College of Education, Zaria, accepted music to be incorporated with creative arts and drama as a department. In most of the junior secondary schools, music is only taught as an elective course / subject; and not even taken in the Junior West African Examination Council (Junior WAEC). Music has been seriously relegated because the government curriculum planners and implementers have not given it a full fledged acceptance as enshrined in the Nigerian curriculum of education and National Policy on Education.

Onyeji and Adebowale (2004:80) lamented that “the university department of music in Nigeria provide a unique contest for the development of musicians and the propagation of Nigerian musical ideas amidst implementation betrayals of the Federal Government’s cultural and educational policies.’

The acceptance, recognition and emphasis laid on science education / technology, without music or other creative subjects; which trains and nurtures the minds) by the Government of Nigeria and other stakeholders, calls for serious attention.

The resultant effects of this negligence poses a big challenge to the nation’s educational system and the graduates of music in universities, polytechnics and colleges of education in Nigeria.

Onyeji and Adebowale, (2004) in Agawu, 1996: 236) further lamented over the resultant effects of this dilemma thus:

As such music educators in Nigeria are saddled with the responsibility of producing music graduates who cannot only effect the consolidation, redefinition and transformation of Nigerian musical practice but can also play in the same league as their European American and Asian colleagues (p. 80).

If a subject, profession/career like music which assists in facilitating education is neglected, the Morales of those involved is affected negatively, which will automatically affect their output, thereby, reducing the standard of education of Nigeria.
(b) **Inadequate Trained Staff**

The National Policy on Education (1981: 38) recognized the fact that ‘no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers’ and also ‘all teachers in our educational institutions, from pre-primary to university, will be professionally trained.

As far as music is concerned, the staff strength in most Nigeria’s educational sector is grossly insufficient. Professional trained staff should be employed to teach music from the pre-primary to the tertiary institutions. There are tertiary institutions in Nigeria like the Federal College of Education, Pankshin, where only seven (7) academic staff are teaching in the department of music for both the National Certificates of Education (NCE) and Bachelor of Arts Education (B. A. Ed) programmes. The implication of this is that the staff are unduly overworked and they may not be giving the students enough attention; thereby reducing the productivity rate in the nation’s standard of education. Also, the staff may stand the risk of becoming stressful, weak, sick, depressed, emotionally unstable, angry and less productive. On the part of the students, they stand the risk of not being well trained and taught on the practical and theoretical aspects of music education. Okafor (2005) vehemently supported the notion that adequate staff should be employed to teach music thus:

*Schools of music should be adequately staffed ... talented musicians should be motivated by the award of scholarship into institutions of higher learning both in Nigeria and abroad, especially in such specialized areas as ethnomusicology, instrumental technology and dance choreography (p. 204)*

Onwuekwe (1994: 141) also emphasized the need to adequately equip the teachers, to be able to handle the children in Nigerian schools. She added that if staff are adequately equipped, it will increase their academic and psychological horizons in interpreting the contents of the curriculum an impact same in the children, who will later grow to be useful members of the society.

The general aim of music education is to fully equip the individual to perform music in the society and contribute meaningfully as a teacher, educator or an artist, to enhance the quality of education. This aim should not be down trodden; but upheld maximally. In this way, the aim of music education will be achieved.

(c) **Funding / Facilities**

Music, just like any other subjects in education, should be properly fund. In a situation where there are dwindling funding supports by the government, vis-à-vis supplies of adequate musical instruments, employment of qualified professionals staff and provisions of sufficient scholarship award for the staff and students to further in
schools, attend workshops, conferences and seminars etc, the standards and morals or education will dwindle as well.

Lamenting on the funding state in Nigeria’s tertiary institutions, Gimba (2012) added:

*Another nagging problem besetting out tertiary education is dwindling funding support. Public higher education institutions in Nigeria are sorely dependent on the government budget, with the low developmental stage of the country, however, the budget allocation is limited and the financial burden of the expanding system on the government is increasingly becoming unbearable (p. 6).*

It is worth noting that improved funding in the nation’s educational sector, will not only improve the quality of teachers but will go a way in repositioning and reviving the nation’s educational standard. Music education talks about enhancing students/learners in applied skills acquisitions. Hence, musical instruments / facilities should be made available to students/pupils with enough staff, properly paid to impact knowledge and train the students/pupils in general musicianship.

**Conclusion**

Music is fundamental to global, African’s and Nigeria’s lifelong educational system. Music is pivotal and indispensable to the educational advancement and development of any nation. Whether in the informal or formal education system, music education stands as the panacea for life and as an unavoidable weapon ‘per excellence’, in enhancing, facilitating and boosting the education standard of any nation.

In Nigeria, the fact that music has traditionally been included in the curriculum of schools for reasons of character development, team spirit, citizenship and health benefit, is a welcome development. Full acceptance and implementation by the Government, curriculum implementers and planners is the yearnings by all music enthusiasts. This is so because music appears to be given little time on the time-table, with little facilities for practical musicianship. Also, insufficient professional staff, teaching aids, musical instrument, recording and play-back equipment and audio-visual aids are basic issues confronting the high education standard in Nigeria.

Nigeria as a developing nation, with the highest number of universities in Africa, polytechnics, colleges of education and other training institutes, is doing her best generally, with education for all (EFA) programme, Universal Basic Education (UBE) and in the present bold step taken by TETFUND to make allocation for its interventions in research, conference attendance, journal publications, academic staff training and development. These are welcome development.
However, music education stands a greater chance of extinction if its rich lucrative prowess is not properly harnessed by the Government, stakeholders and all citizen. Non-acceptance and partial implementation of music education in Nigeria school curriculum is an awful step which will increasingly foster education dilemmas.

Recommendations
Having seen the issues of music education, in global perspectives, with the Nigeria experience, the following recommendations are worth noting:

a. Music in general education should be studied from the pre-primary to secondary schools as a compulsory subject, and as an elective course in the Nigerian tertiary institutions. The content of the syllabus should be creative enough to include instrumentation, drama, singing, choreography, acting, dancing, costuming and music technology. This will afford the pupils/students the privilege of learning music both theoretically and practically. Through this, trained and sufficient professional music teachers, educators, musicians, music technologists and instructors will be raised to handle the various aspects of education, thereby, increasing the nation’s standard of education.

b. The curriculum of music education should be given a laudable acceptance and full implementation by the government and curriculum planners and implementers. The advantages that music education offers, such as character moulding, team spirit, citizenship, health benefit, among others should not be taken with levity. Music education trains the mind, soothes the soul, facilitates learning, instils discipline and enhances comprehension. Also, the present curriculum of music education especially for secondary schools needs review. It should be given a wider approach of recognition all over the country. Schools in some parts of the Northern Nigeria where music is not accepted as a subject, should be made to accept and introduce music education into their school’s time table. Music education should be allowed to be an elective course in all Nigerian tertiary institutions with sufficient manpower to enhance its productivity. There should be enough attention by the government to the full implementation of the National Policy on Education and Nigerian school curriculum of education for the benefit of the Nigerian citizens.

c. Music education from pre-primary schools to the tertiary institutions should be properly funded with sufficient musical instruments, books, audio/visual aids, theatre halls, recording devices, among others. Scholarship should be given to outstanding students and pupils to further their studies abroad and improve their standard of education in their output when they return. The staff, educators, teachers and instructors should also be financially empowered to attend conferences, seminars, workshops etc to improve themselves musically and be useful to the society.
Issues of Music Education in Global Perspectives: The Nigeria Experience –

References


