

# MUSIC EDUCATION: A VERITABLE TOOL FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF EDUCATION IN AFRICA FOR GLOBAL CHALLENGES

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## **Abstract**

*Man is a living soul. Music is the food for the soul, goes a saying in the music parlance and musicians are urged to play on. Globally, the entire world is faced with multiple challenges and pestilences never known to man before. Security challenges, capped by intense terrorism in all continents, health challenges epitomed by outbreak of deadly diseases like ebola, zika virus, lassa fever, SARS among others, natural disasters of earthquakes, floods, cyclone and many others, there is the challenges of earth warming effects due to depleted ozone layer with its devastating effects on humanity. The list of global challenges is unending and Africa is not left out. Adesoken Z. (1998) stated that music occupies a prominent place in the life of traditional African society and is a spiritual need which accompanies their day to day human activities. For this purpose, this paper examines the place of music in transforming the educational system in Africa to meet the global challenges.*

The connection between education and transformation is not far fetched as education remains the main change agent in any society. Music is a universal food for the soul and only well fed souls can be educated. Music is conceptually, culturally, emotionally and politically complex, ambiguous and ever changing. The world today is a global village and rapidly changing, Music, termed by philosophers as essentially contested concept is culturally situated and value laden to keep up with the times and catalize the needed educational transformation to meet the myriads of challenges globally as they evolve.

It is therefore imperative that if we must think transformation, then we must think music education. Music is a fundamental phenomenon in every culture, and in Africa, it portrays the totality of its effects of Western Education on our culture are evidence in all aspects with much cultural dilution. The invasions and colonial conquests of Africa and the advent of religious sets affected African music greatly. Music, to us in Africa has been a means of preserving our cultural heritage as culture and music are intertwined. In view of this, the societies having understood the value of education designed a suitable music education programme to enable it sustain and transfer its cultural values to the future generation.

### **The Place of Music in an African's Life and Education**

According to Okunbor (2013), Music in all African communities has served and will continue to serve as a means of unity, a means for teaching the young ones the culture of their home land, exposing them to the domestic values of their culture and in this way, retaining the culture identity, unity and entire heritage.

Music has been part of the African culture right from the pre-colonial era. Communities in Africa including Nigeria have a way of teaching their people music of their home land. They have music for different age groups which the children belong to.

Nketia (1979) stated that in African societies, participation in music may be a voluntary activity or an obligation imposed by one's membership in a social group. He further stated that such a social group may be a descent group (a group of people who trace their ancestry back to the same person), or it may be any group based on the broader societal classification of age, sex, interest, or occupation. Adesokan (1998) opined that music is inseparable from the daily social activities of the African, and there is no systematic music education that is embarked upon with training the African to value and appreciate the music of his culture.

Today, you will agree with me that there is great cultural diffusion and dilution and if we value the culture and customs of yester years we all as a matter of urgency must go back to music education. Adesokan (1998) further stated that the young Africans are taught moral values of the society through folk-tales, didactic songs, folk stories, lullabies, game songs and religious songs. Each young one learn from the parents, elders, age groups, association and other members of the society. The young ones learn on informal system through observation, imitation, rote methods and practical techniques.

Nketia (ibid) stated also that among the Brifor of Ghana, for example; shepherd boys make pipes out of the stalks of millet and play these to give signals to other shepherd boys, especially when they are taking cattle out in the morning to

graze in the field. Builsa herders similarly play flutes to give signals to one another, particularly when returning home with their cattle.

Okafor (2005) narrated how in Igbo land of Nigeria in Ishiolu district where male adult circumcision is practiced, folk music was used to wake up the spirit, encourage the participants of the ritual and anaesthetize them against pain. Igbo music and folk songs contain instructions, guidance, chronicles, laws, toboos, etc, so education through music was used as a tool for passing needed information to members of the Igbo society.

A number of African music composers may have been naturally talented but Amu in Nketia (2004) stated thus “composing music and poetry came to me quite naturally, except that I had to learn the intricacies of the art in my community, largely through social experience, and later through formal training”, Such is the link between the natural talent of music making and music education in Africa.

Nzewi (1999) stated that African Music education is largely an informal process. He noted further that prior to the advent of government schools the music educational practices was through initiation ‘schools’, ‘child to child’ and peer education, apprenticeship, and a wealth of specialized life related knowledge to be imparted to the new generation. Mans (2007) corroborated by saying that music education in Botswana starts in the prenatal stages of life and goes on through early childhood to adult life. He further added that as in most societies in Africa, the Botswana recognizes the significance of music in their cultural and moral development as well as in their social well being. To this end the Botswana people as in many African Societies give priority to the music education of children early in life. Music accompanies the African Child’s education from the elementary stage all through to the highest educational attainment in all the ceremonies at each stage.

### **Music as a Transformational Tool in Education**

Education is the first step to development in any society. Okafor (2006) saw education as a means by which men acquire the civilization of the present and make the civilization of the future. Education envisions men to change, transformation is to change the appearance or character of something. It is to change a system, a practice or what used to be.

### **Music as a Transformational Tool in Africa**

#### **(a) Music and Political Transformation**

Africa as a continent and the countries that make up the continent has undergone remarkable transformation in the later part of the last century up to the present moment. Most of the countries in Africa were under the burden of colonial masters – British, France, Portuguese; and each country was engaged

in struggle for freedom which came one after the other until today Africa is free. The last of the countries to be free from the grip of the whites minority rule was South Africa.

In all the years of colonialization, music and musicians were up to the task and made clarion call to natives and the entire world to support freedom.

Miriam Makeba of South Africa sang lamenting “Mama Africa, whose children were crying, hungry, wailing and seeking for freedom. Sunny Okosun of Nigeria composed a number of songs ..... extolling the virtues of the “African soldiers fighting for freedom .... Kwame Nkurumah of Ghana, Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Keneth Kaunda of Zambia, Nelson Mandela of south Africa etc.

Sunny Okosun equally wailed on “Fire in Soweto” burning all my people, shooting in Soweto, Killing all my people. Fire in Angola, Riot in Angola, Fighting in Namibia, Rebel in Zimbabwe oppressing my people..... He told the whites to leave us alone because Africa is our home and freedom is our goal.

South African freedom singers and Jubul sang.... Freedom Yes, Apatheid No ! in 1979. These and many others were contributions of music in transforming Africa from colonization to freedom.

(b) **Music and social transformation:**

Agbidi & Osayande (2009) observed that music is a strong means of social reformation. Social ill is hydra-headed and musicians/musicologists have fought against social ills depending on what is prevalent in the area they live. Kimi Ranking (2006) in decrying the evil effect of promiscuity among young unmarried girls in a community once sang:

*“Shakara don end O”*  
*“Shakara girls don carry belle*  
*Shakara end O*  
*Shakara don end O. she don get belle*  
*Shakara don end O*  
*Chichi don get belle*  
*Shakara don end O.....*

This artist in this, used music to prick the conscience of the girls to beat them to a path of moral rectitude.

Adviser Nowamagbe (2007), observed an irritating trend among youths, where they wear mini skirts or what is popularly called “low-waist” among the boys. The irritant part of this indecent dressing came to fore when they have to board vehicles and the youths pull up the skirts or trousers to enable them board easily. Through the use of music, this reformer sang.

*“Wetin you dey draw, I no know, draw draw  
‘Dey too dey meleske – Draw draw  
‘My brother dem dey expose themselves draw draw  
‘I enter my friend motor one day  
One girl come enter  
She come de say shift now, shift now  
My brother no be from house dem dey dress come?  
Dem for look mirror”*

I be like say them forget say the way you dress na i m people de take look you .... Draw draw”.

The import of the song was revolutionizing as each time any of the youths dress up indecently, you will hear the small children shout “draw draw”.

Abdulkareem (2003) took a swipe on the social menace of lecturers in campuses when he captioned his song “Mr. Lecturer”. He sang:

*Oh my lord come and save my soul  
I’m in school to keep my head above.  
My lecturer wants to have sex with me  
My H.O.D. wants to get down with me  
I’m in love with my study  
I don’t give a damn if you fail me – me me ..... etc*

This song is to evoke a social reorientation in higher institutions of learning.

What may be difficult for others to say, through music education and songs, the message is passed in songs to the society so targeted.

### **Africa and Global Challenges and the Role of Music**

Many countries in the continent of Africa and the world in general being a global village is faced with a lot of evils that threaten the peace of everyone. Africans were used to communal life but the many vices of: nepotism, terrorism, war, sexual assaults, kidnapping, drug abuse and addiction, human trafficking, human rights

violation/abuse, corruption, racism and xenophobia etc, have destroyed the fabric of unity and oneness amongst us.

- Between 2014 and first quarter of 2015, Ebola disease ravaged some West African countries like Liberia, Sierra Leon and Nigeria etc. it was a challenge to Africa and the rest of the world as some non-Africans were affected by the deadly disease. Many deaths were recorded in Liberia and Sierra Leon and this awaken the brotherliness in other African countries who rendered help and overcame that challenge.
- Terrorism is ranging in Nigeria, Cameroun, Chad and Niger Republic; through the activities of Boko Haram, Killing thousands of innocent citizens, burning houses and wasting agricultural farm products. This has led to many internally displaced persons and refugees in neighboring countries. This has also led to increased number of migrants travelling to foreign countries they judge safe. Terrorism to say the less is not limited to west Africa alone, there is the activity of Al-Shabbab in Kenya, Alquim in Northern part of Africa, the unrest in Libya is not over, protests and unrest in Burundi, South Sudan etc. the challenge of terrorism is not limited to Africa, the terrorizing effects of ISIS is well known in Iraq, Syria, and neighbouring countries. Other countries like Russia, U.S. and Britain etc are all drawn into these challenges of terrorism hence it is a global concern. Terror attack took place in Paris, London and United states between 2015 and 2016, and all must rise to halt the tide.
- Technological advancement is a challenge to Africa and the entire world. This has brought both positive and negative changes to our society. Communication has been made easier and faster while technology has equally made easy too internet scams.

### **The Role of Music in Combating African and Global Challenges**

Music is a universal language. To play effective role in combating the African and global challenges, it is imperative that some challenges and problems facing music education itself are taken care of. Kofie (2008) noted that there is lack of clear cut philosophy of music education in Ghana. Akrofi (2008) in his study observed that in sub-Saharan Africa, there is the problem of imported school system and curricular content. Odwar (2007) noted in his study that Kenyan school music has not promoted Kenyan traditional music in formal music education as much as the Western European music. Odwar further advanced some reasons which are not different from what obtain in other African states.

#### **These include:**

- Negative attitude implanted in the first set of graduates.
- Lack of regulatory board to regulate music education.

- Existing bodies like music society of Nigeria (MUSON), mainly expose and train its students in Western music.
- Promoters of African music are mostly illiterate (but cognitively sound) who have no opportunity to propagate the music beyond performance level Ekwueme (2001) identifies inconsistency in music education policy as a major challenge. Okafor (2002) in his study identified man power shortage and poor training process of Nigerian Musicians as some of the bones.

### **How Music can Halt Terrorism and Other Vices**

Oyovwe (2014) stated that Music could soften hardened hearts and turn them from committing evil to showing love and peace to humanity, music is one of the channels to reach out to the most hardened hearts because everyone loves music.

Thomas (2009) stated that music elevates mood to happenings and in that state no one thinks of harming or killing one another.

- Conflict arises from disagreements or failure to reach compromise on issues. Music remains a veritable tool for soothing frayed nerves. Conflict resolution has lived at the heart of musical expressions.
- Classical music could be played in shopping centres with a purpose of discouraging the built-up of restless individuals, break-up the congregation of rowdy gangs and prevent anti-social behavior.

### **Conclusions**

Transformation in education brings about a fundamental shift in the deep orientation of the person, the institutions, the society and the nation. Such that the world is seen in new ways and new actions and results which are observable prior to the transformation.

The right music education as a tool for meeting African and global challenges is advocated, since it has the potential for turning around a system faster than other forms of education.

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