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Harmonizing Progress: Unveiling the Evolution, Challenges, and Strategies for Sustainable Formal Music Education in Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

Educating a nation is crucial for the development of society in the developing world. This study used a cross-sectional survey design, employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data were collected and processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 22.0). The data were coded, entered into a computer, and summarized using frequency tables to identify errors and make necessary edits. The study included a total of 208 participants, with the findings presented as percentages. The study revealed that the number of female teachers was lower compared to male teachers, with females accounting for 45% and males for 55%. This disparity was attributed to the fact that many schools in villages had fewer female teachers, who often had spouses or lived separately in towns, resulting in limited teaching availability. Additionally, 43.4% of respondents had been in the same school for 4-7 years, while 26.6% had been in the same school for at least 10 years, suggesting a potential repetition of experiences year after year. Furthermore, 16.6% of teachers were separated and 20% were single, which could potentially interfere with their duties and impact student performance. Among the respondents, 8.4% were widowed and 5% had divorced, indicating that they had to handle everything on their own, potentially leading to less focus on their assigned duties in the classroom and resulting in poor student performance. Additionally, 50% of respondents were married, although some were not located in the same workplace as their spouses, making it challenging to concentrate on school assignments. The study emphasized the importance of equipping head teachers with leadership knowledge and skills in order to exert influence on their schools and academic work.

Keywords: Formal Music Education, Nigeria, Tertiary-Level Music Programs, Primary School Music Education, Curriculum Challenges, Cultural Foundation and Sustainable Development.

INTRODUCTION

The evolution of formal music education in Nigeria unfolded in response to semi-formal musical practices tied to colonial and missionary efforts, echoing developments across Africa [1]; [2]; [3]. [4] assert that discussions about sub-Saharan Africa invariably involve grappling, even briefly, with colonialism, Christianity, and cultural emancipation. Eager to expand their musical horizons, many Nigerians embraced new forms of expression, such as marching bands, participation in school and church choirs, and private lessons in musical instrument proficiency. This enthusiasm stemmed from a deep connection to religious and musical traditions within their communities, as noted by [5], [6], and [2], attributing the establishment of formal music education to the arrival of various missionary groups in Nigeria, leading to the establishment of churches and schools that introduced Western music education.

Describing non-curriculum-based music learning, [7] emphasizes the importance of music literacy, particularly solfa notation, for missionary and colonial educational goals, contributing to the formation of church choirs and recreational school music. This initial exposure laid the foundation for the flourishing of music education in Nigeria, motivating individuals to become choir masters, organists, composers, singers, and instrumentalists. Some, like Robert Coker, the first Nigerian to study music abroad in Germany, Thomas Ekundayo Philips, Fela Sowande, William Wilberforce Chukwudinka Echezona, Olaolu Omideyi, Lazarus Ekwueme, Akin Euba, and

others, received scholarships for formal music education abroad and played pivotal roles upon their return, enhancing musical activities in various spheres.

The establishment of Nigeria's first indigenous university in 1960 in Nsukka, Enugu State, marked a crucial moment in the promotion of music education. Under the leadership of then-President Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, who prioritized equal emphasis on the liberal and creative arts alongside the sciences, music became one of the disciplines at the new university [8]. The inaugural group of Nigerian-trained musicologists graduated in 1964, formalizing music education in Nigeria. However, concerns arose about the unusual top-down approach, initiating formal music education at the highest academic level without concurrent structures at foundational levels.

Returning graduates contributed to higher education, broadcasting institutions, choirs, and universities, but a significant gap persisted until the latter half of the 20th century when formal music education was officially introduced at secondary and primary levels. This gap contributed to an imbalanced and fragile infrastructure at the lower tiers of music education in Nigeria. Addressing these concerns, this discussion follows the chronological structure established in Nigeria. It begins with an exploration of tertiary-level music education, followed by an examination of the secondary level, and concludes with an assessment of the primary level. Each section presents the current state and challenges, ultimately proposing strategies for advancement.

Dynamics and Challenges in Tertiary Music Education: A Comprehensive Examination of Nigeria's Current Landscape

The inception of formal music education at the tertiary level in Nigeria dates back to 1961, when the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, integrated music into its programs. This ground breaking move elevated the status of musicians, challenging the prevailing stereotype and fostering a new image of musicians as serious contributors to societal improvement [9]. The subsequent establishment of music departments in numerous universities across the country marked a significant expansion of music education, offering both diversity and challenges.

Tertiary-Level Music Programs: Since the establishment of the first Department of Music at Nsukka, named in honor of Fela Sowande, several other universities, including Obafemi Awolowo University, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Delta State University, and University of Uyo, have followed suit [10]. The inclusion of music in the curricula of 22 universities, sixteen education colleges, and one polytechnic underscores the growth and widespread acceptance of music education in Nigeria [6].

National Policy on Education and Curriculum:

Aligning with the National Policy on Education, these institutions embrace a dual-cultural curriculum, offering a comparative study of Western and African music. The curriculum aims to encourage aesthetic, creative, and musical activities, providing a homogenous foundation for music education across institutions [11]. However, concerns have been raised about the heavy emphasis on Western music, with calls for a more inclusive approach that incorporates African music theory and practice [12]; [13].

Challenges in Tertiary Music Education:

The latter half of the 20th century witnessed a significant increase in the number of Nigerians teaching music at the tertiary level. Despite this positive trend, challenges have emerged, particularly concerning the quality of new hires. An influx of students, often lacking genuine interest or aptitude for music, has resulted in a lowering of standards, impacting the professionalism of graduates [14]. Moreover, the propagation of Western musical norms has been criticized for alienating students from their cultural backgrounds [12].

Policy Shifts and Peer Pressures:

Policy shifts in universities, focusing on student quotas for enhanced fund generation, have led to the admission of students with little preparation or interest in music. Peer pressure to choose music education over other options, coupled with cultural, institutional, and religious influences, has further complicated the landscape [15].

Recommendations and Future Directions:

To address these challenges, there is a growing need for a best practice model that develops Africa-sensitive music education. The issue of curriculum content and direction must be revisited to foster inclusivity and cultural relevance. The focus should also shift towards encouraging genuine interest and talent in music, rather than prioritizing increased enrolment for financial gains.

While tertiary music education in Nigeria has made significant strides, challenges persist. A comprehensive review of policies, curriculum, and teaching standards is essential to ensure that music education aligns with the cultural context and meets the evolving needs of students and society. Addressing these challenges will contribute to the continued growth and development of music education at the tertiary level in Nigeria.

Primary School Music Education in Nigeria: An Analysis of the Present Landscape and Persistent Challenges

In the 1980s, Nigeria witnessed the formal integration of music instruction into the elementary school curriculum. However, despite this inclusion, primary schools, especially in rural areas, predominantly focused on activities such as storytelling, folktale songs, dancing, singing, and providing background music for school plays. Music theory instruction was notably absent in this approach. In contrast, some urban schools incorporated the teaching of recorders and a few musical instruments alongside the mentioned activities, attempting to instill the fundamentals of music education. Structural and curriculum changes emerged in 2008 with the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 system, which is now the 9-year Universal Basic Education (UBE) system [16].

Evolution of Primary School Music Education:

The introduction of the CCA (Cultural and Creative Arts) curriculum under the UBE system marked a transformative phase in primary school music education. However, challenges persisted as three subject areas were merged into one, creating ambiguity in the focus for teachers. This resulted in a marginalization of music in favor of disciplines like dance, theatre, and fine arts. Despite attempts to adapt, music at the elementary level faced difficulties akin to those at the upper basic level, reflecting a broader struggle within the education system.

Challenges in Primary School Music Education:

- **Curriculum Implementation:** The adoption of the CCA curriculum introduced complexities, with teachers having to navigate multiple subjects. This led to the marginalization of music, as teachers tended to focus on areas aligned with their strengths and interests.
- **Teacher Training:** Many classroom teachers lacked the necessary skills to teach music, contributing to a shift in emphasis towards subjects perceived as more engaging, such as drama and dance. This not only impacted the quality of music education but also perpetuated misconceptions about the subject.
- **Resource Limitations:** Primary schools, especially those in rural areas, faced challenges in acquiring resources and staff to support a comprehensive music education program. This resulted in a departure from the intended curriculum.
- **Socio-religious Prejudices:** Socio-religious biases influenced the prioritization of certain subjects over music, contributing to the challenges faced in formal music education at the elementary level.

Primary school music education in Nigeria, despite its formal integration into the curriculum, grapples with persistent challenges. The introduction of the CCA curriculum, while attempting to streamline subjects, has unintentionally marginalized music. Addressing issues related to curriculum implementation, teacher training, resource allocation, and socioreligious biases is essential for fostering a holistic and effective music education experience at the elementary level.

Advancing Formal Music Education in Nigeria: Strategies for Sustainable Development

Contemporary literature on formal music education in Nigeria highlights various challenges plaguing the system [9]; [17]-[22]. These challenges range from financial constraints and curriculum biases to cultural prejudices, lack of support, and teacher capacity issues. While acknowledging the complexity of these issues, scholars emphasize the urgent need for collaborative efforts to address them holistically and reinvigorate music education at all levels.

Cultural Foundation of Music Education:

Central to the sustainable development of formal music education is the recognition and definition of the cultural foundation of music. The dual cultural posture, with an emphasis on Western components, has been observed as limiting the incorporation of indigenous knowledge. Scholars advocate for a return to African cultural and creative values, promoting Africa-sensed music education [23]-[27]. This approach would draw on indigenous materials, align with learners' cultural backgrounds, and mitigate the challenges of resource unavailability currently hampering sustainable development.

Balancing Western and Indigenous Music:

To overcome resource constraints, formal music education should strive for a cultural identity that encompasses proficiency in both Western art music and African indigenous music. This approach would create a more inclusive curriculum that accommodates all cultural entities in Nigeria. An Africa-sensed curriculum would prioritize Africanity, fostering a balance that reflects Nigeria's rich musical heritage at all levels of music education.

Capacity Building and Autonomy:

The implementation of the Cultural and Creative Arts (CCA) curriculum requires more qualified teachers, emphasizing the need for urgent capacity-building initiatives. Granting autonomy to music at the junior secondary

level would facilitate capacity-building for engagement at the senior secondary level, ensuring continuity. It is crucial for institutions offering music at the junior level to recruit teachers for the senior level, fostering a seamless educational experience. Additionally, addressing capacity building and professionalism at the tertiary level and granting autonomy to music departments in student selection would contribute to a more sustainable and potent music education process. Strategies for sustainable development in formal music education in Nigeria necessitate a deliberate shift towards Africa-sensed music education, balancing Western and indigenous components. Emphasizing cultural identity, capacity building, and granting autonomy at various educational levels will contribute to a more inclusive and resilient music education system. Collaborative efforts among stakeholders are essential to usher in a new era of relevance and standardization for the future of music education in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

Formal music education in Nigeria has undergone a multifaceted evolution, marked by historical influences, institutional developments, and persistent challenges. The study underscores the need for a nuanced and comprehensive approach to address the identified issues and ensure the sustainable development of music education at all levels. Tertiary-level music education, while witnessing substantial growth, grapples with challenges such as diluted teaching standards and imbalanced curricula. The proposed solutions emphasize revisiting content, promoting inclusivity, and prioritizing quality over quantity in student enrolment. Primary school music education, introduced in the 1980s, faces challenges related to curriculum implementation, teacher training, resource limitations, and socio-religious biases. The study advocates for addressing these issues to create a holistic music education experience at the elementary level. Strategies for sustainable development center around the recognition of the cultural foundation of music education, promoting Africa-sensed music education, and balancing Western and indigenous components. Emphasis is placed on capacity building, granting autonomy, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders. Collectively, these recommendations seek to usher in a new era of relevance and standardization for formal music education in Nigeria, ensuring its resilience and inclusivity in the face of evolving educational landscapes and societal needs.

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