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ADOPTING A PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MUSIC CURRICULUM IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Music, an important living art, features as a course of study more in colleges of education than any other tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Colleges of education are responsible for producing personnel who will teach at the primary and junior secondary school levels. However, there have been concerns from various quarters concerning the shortfalls of the music curriculum in these colleges especially with regard to its appropriateness within the local milieu. This study is an insider's appraisal of the music programme in these colleges, and it posits that the problem rests not so much with unsuitability of the music curriculum, but with its actual implementation. The problems associated with the implementation of the curriculum are discussed; these include inadequate staffing and funding as well as inadvertent misinterpretation of the content of the curriculum by some of the implementers. The paper identifies some practical ways whereby the state of musical arts education in the country could be improved and emphasizes the responsibilities of all stakeholders in ensuring that the music teachers of tomorrow could be better equipped to perform their expected roles.

Keywords: Colleges of Education, Music Curriculum, Music Programme, Inadequate Staffing and Funding, Musical Art Education.

INTRODUCTION

As stated in Nigeria's National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1998), "the rationale for having teacher education in the country includes providing highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers". These products through their professional background are expected to be intellectually capable of adequately meeting the challenges of the changing situation at all levels of the educational system both within and outside the country. For music in particular, the products of colleges of education have to live up to expectation of not only being efficient classroom teachers but also be adequately prepared to face the challenges of a societal performer. These can only be achieved if they have a strong and applicable foundation.

In Africa, "most institutions of higher learning that were established during the colonial period had their curricula patterned along models of the colonizing countries" (Nigerian Universities Commission Virtual Institute of Higher Education Pedagogy, 2004). The status quo was maintained even after the countries gained independence. As a result, the curricula of higher educational institutions in countries where this situation existed were designed to serve the needs of the system that was operating at that time. Issues bordering on the historical growth, trends as well as maladies of formal music education in Nigeria, have therefore received considerable attention from numerous scholars (Omibiyi-Obidike, 1979; Idolor, 2001; Samuel, 2002 and Vidal, 2004). The kernel of their various recommendations is to make a complete overhaul and revision of music curricula at various levels of our institutions of learning in Nigeria.

However, a somewhat different position is being maintained in this paper. The argument here is that while waiting for this radical change, music educators need to make an inward look at the problems militating against the execution of the present 'faulty' curricula in Nigeria's institutions. One cannot but be persuaded that as is common with most policies and programmes in Nigeria, the problem often lies not so much with inappropriateness, but with the actual implementation.

The intent of this paper is to examine the practical implementation of the curriculum for music education in Nigeria's colleges of education vis à vis the requirements stipulated in the official document of the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) - the regulatory body set up by law. The searchlight is on the colleges of education in Nigeria because out of the twenty-seven higher institutions that offer music at different levels and forms, seven are universities, only one polytechnic, while the rest are colleges of education. These colleges of education are the institutions responsible for producing the middle level teaching manpower for the country. They train musical arts educators who are in turn saddled with the responsibility of laying the foundation of formal music education for the Nigerian child since they are expected to teach at the primary and junior secondary school levels.

THE PROBLEMS OF CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

As earlier stated, the problem rests not so much with unsuitability of the music curriculum, but with its actual implementation. This section represents an insider's appraisal of the present situation - the problems associated with the implementation of the curriculum.

A) Staffing

Although the issue of inadequate staffing has been identified as one of the major problems bedevilling music education at all levels in Nigeria's educational institutions, nevertheless, this is brought back to the fore in the present discourse of this paper especially because it represents an entry point, yet a formidable mountain ahead of the desert passage experience to the 'Promised Land'. It is therefore comely to have another look in the quest of proffering a holistic answer to the entire issue of curriculum implementation of music teacher education.

In terms of personnel, the NCCE minimum standard document prescribes that there should be eight (8) academic members of staff (lecturers) to effectively run the music double major programme in colleges of education. They are expected to be supported by highly skilled instrumentalists on African and Western instruments who act as tutorial

staff (instructors). As for the single major music programme, between five to six (5-6) lecturers are required to run it efficiently. Tables 1 & 2 below clearly exemplify the gap between the required 'minimum standards' and the pedestal upon which these colleges of education stand.

Table 1 Students' Enrolment & Staff Strength 1999/2000 Academic Session

S/N	Name of College of Education	Students' Enrolment	Staff Strength
1	FCE, Abeokuta*	85	6
2	FCE (T), Gombe	22	3
3	FCE, Okene	82	7
4	FCE (Special), Oyo*	70	5
5	FCE, Pankshin	39	3
6	COE, Agbor	37	7
7	COE, Ekiadolor	25	5
8	COE, Ikere-Ekiti	74	NR
9	COE, Ilorin*	31	3
10	NOCOE, Nsugbe	74	7
11	AICOE, Owerri	17	9
12	SACOED, Oyo*	102	5
13	COE, Port Harcourt	90	7

Table 2: Students' Enrolment & Staff (Strength 2000/2001 Academic Session)

S/N	Name of College of Education	Students' Enrolment	Staff Strength
1	FCE, Abeokuta*	64	6
2	FCE, Okene	158	2
3	FCE (Special), Oyo*	84	5
4	FCE, Pankshin	50	4
5	FCE, Eha-Amufu	47	6
6	COE, Agbor	16	6
7	COE, Ekiadolor	137	3
8	COE, Ikere-Ekiti	74	NR
9	COE, Ilorin*	31	3
10	NOCOE, Nsugbe	NR	7
11	AICOE, Owerri	17	9
12	OYSCOED (SACOED), Oyo*	148	7
13	COE, Port Harcourt	14	7
14	COE, Ila-Orangun	48	NR
15	KICOE, Maiduquri	74	NR
16	COE, Ilesha*	NR	4

NR - indicates that there was no available record.

Source: NCCE, Abuja: Statistical Digest on Colleges of Education in Nigeria Vol. 6, April, 2002 and Fieldwork (*), 2004.

It should be noted that the tables presented above actually represent the total number of staff (lecturers and instructors combined) in some of the colleges. Another notable fact is that there has not been any appreciable improvement in the staffing situation in most if not all these colleges to date. Moreover, only a very few departments of music in Nigerian colleges of education could boast of professional traditional master musicians who might be illiterate or semi-illiterate on their staff list whether on full time or part time basis.

The implication of the data presented above is that members of staff in departments of music in Nigeria's colleges of education are grossly overloaded. This in turn brings to question the efficiency with which 'delivery' of the existing curriculum is done. There is the likelihood of low productivity on the part of these 'teachers of teachers' who oftentimes

have no choice but to adopt the dictum '... do your best and leave the rest'.

B) Interpretation of the Content of the Curriculum

Turning away from the issue of staffing, we now peep into some of the contents of the National Certificate in Education (NCE) programme. Vidal (2004) noted that reactionary efforts of the nationalists (to colonization of our educational system) to localize musical art forms practiced in Nigeria did not yield any positive fruits. This was quite evident in the curricula of music instruction in the schools. He further observed that Cambridge School Certificate and London General Certificate Examinations which the Nigerian high school candidates took were completely based on Western classical music traditions with papers on Harmony, Counterpoint, Forms and Analysis, Set-works on European music composers as well as History and Literature of Western Music.

For example, from a careful examination of the NCCE document in respect to courses in Applied Music (MUS 115, 125, 215, 225, 315 and 325), which are designed as practical skill acquisition on two or more instruments (African and Western), it appears as if preference is given to Piano/Keyboard covertly, while the acquisition of knowledge in other media especially African musical instruments seems to be relegated to the background.

At the beginning of each semester, lecturers assign to students 'graded and approved' set pieces most of which are works of the 'great masters' - the likes of Bach, Beethoven or Brahms. Each student is thus expected to work assiduously to play at least three of the assigned pieces as prescribed by the NCCE document (although some of them due to laziness treacherously work on lesser number or perceived easiest pieces). Evaluation of students' performance at the end of the semester is made by members of staff and regrettably it does not matter much how poorly or bastardized the pieces were rendered. Even in a situation where some hard working students struggle to master the assigned pieces, it is not a guarantee that they have possibly attained the required level of proficiency on the Piano

Little attention is also paid to help develop those areas which might be of immense benefit to the teachers of tomorrow or to adequately prepare them for the actual challenges. A case which readily comes to mind is selection of Western classical pieces of what might be considered as of 'average' standard including Bach's Minuet in G for an NCE graduate who might end up in a private nursery and primary school and be required to lead productions involving nursery rhymes, choreographic dances and Nigerian pop music, among others. Few other lucky ones of these graduates are sometimes employed in government's schools. The result has remained churning out of misfits who end up perpetuating mediocrity in Nigeria's schools right from the primary school level. Since this trend must be checked, it is the submission of this paper that the time has come to rework, re-define and begin to engage NCE students in works that would have direct and corresponding standards to the societal

expectation of these products. Following from the foregoing discourse are:

i *Re-interpretation becomes Inevitable*

In the quest to reposition music teacher education in Nigeria to meet the challenges of now and the immediate future, there is a need to borrow a leaf from existing successful experiments such as was recorded by Onyeji and Adeogun (2004). Even though both investigators used university undergraduates (their students) for the experiment, one is strongly convinced that a possible adoption or adaptation of the principle by teachers in Nigerian colleges of education might just be a step in the right direction and provide the path out of the wood. In their re-interpretation exercise, Onyeji and Adeogun adopted a collaborative approach common with the Nigerian traditional style of instruction where both the teachers and students learn to make music by participating actively and creatively in the learning process. This way, students were not reduced to passive learners (dummy heads which must be filled). Their findings seem to confirm that collaborative learning, which views learning as construction of knowledge within a social context and which therefore, encourages acculturation of individuals into a learning community judging by an outstanding improvement in the scores of the students in the performance workshop class (African Instrumental Ensemble) for that academic year (2000/2001). They therefore concluded that "the method is promising enough to help music students in Nigeria" (Onyeji and Adeogun, 2004: 5).

The matter of standardization must be pointed out, for skeptics might ask: what uniform parameters are presently in place to assess African traditional performances? Certainly there is a lot of work to be done to formally document these – research opportunities abound in this area. For this, we cannot underscore the need to collaborate with Councils for Arts and Culture within the locale of each department of music in Nigerian colleges of education, where competent resource personnel could be called upon and adequately utilized for both training and assessment when the need arises.

Nzewi (1997) had also stressed that effective music practitioner must construct their own knowledge and must assimilate new experiences in ways that make musical meaning and musical sense to them. It is an earnest expectation that music practitioners understand both the society and the musical tradition they inherit. In order to achieve these, Onyeji and Adeogun (2004) strongly called for the need for both teachers and their students to work together collaboratively to investigate music. They stressed that this investigative musical activities may be structured, or structure free. In conclusion, "the teacher as the guide would then be able to use music as a good tool for the transformation of the thinking of the learner who would not remain under the shadows of his teacher, but assisted to become more autonomous".

ii *Popular Demand/Societal Expectation*

The fact that popular music in Nigeria has remained a vibrant
Samuel : Music Curriculum

force and potent tool for influencing the socio-political life of a nation can no longer be denied. A clear testimony of this fact is the constant featuring of members of the Performing Musicians Association of Nigeria (PMAN) at government's special occasions ranging from visits of eminent world leaders to Nigeria and the nation's hosting of national and international sports' festivals. To this, Okafor (1989) had earlier stressed the need for freeing music education from its restricted and almost elitist approach whereby students have been presented with more classical music than anything else. Creating enabling environment as well as providing every opportunity for music students to develop their innate creative abilities through appropriate exposure to popular music should be the watch word of every staff motivator in colleges of education.

Okafor went further to advocate for specialized and diverse training especially in theory and orchestration for independent practising popular musicians. "This", according to him, "could be achieved through organization of workshops and seminars as well as mounting evening courses or short-term courses during school vacation periods". We wish to submit here too that this provides another melting point for 'town and gown' and a prominent opportunity for providing service to the community through floating of courses in compositions and arrangements. It is also another way whereby the academics could bring about literary approach to composition, which could assist in preserving music composition not only for the benefit of posterity, but also providing a platform for recreation, perpetuation and transformation of Nigeria's musical arts education in general. In addition to these, one is strongly convinced that if properly implemented, it would prove to be useful and additional income generating venture that could be saved for the 'raining day'.

C) *Infrastructure*

Inadequate infrastructure was one of the problems identified from a study carried out by Samuel (2006) among some institutions which offer music at the three levels of education within Oyo metropolis. This is very much in consonance with Vidal's (2004) submission when he noted that there were no provisions for materials such as books, tapes, records and African musical instruments to implement the demands of the music curricula in Nigeria for more than four decades, a situation which has subsist up till today. Consequently, it becomes practically difficult if not impossible for most teachers to take students through the requirements of the syllabus.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

In the foregoing section, some of the problems of curriculum implementation have been discussed, and solutions proffered in each case. This section of the paper therefore serves as a synopsis of these solutions, reiterating the issues at stake.

1. Staffing: Before one can talk of effective implementation of musical arts programme in Nigeria generally, the issue of adequacy of the implementers (staff)

deserves to be the first to be addressed. Each department of music in Nigerian colleges of education should be adequately provided with qualified and competent staff members to meet and even surpass the required number as stipulated in the NCCE document containing the minimum standards for colleges of education. Personnel should include skilled and well versed instrumentalists including African traditional master musicians.

2. Infrastructure: To be able to ensure effective implementation of the music curriculum, the trainers need to be provided with the infrastructure with which to work. To this end, the government should provide musical instruments and other facilities.

3. Funding: Government, through the management teams in Nigeria's colleges of education, has the duty of funding music education. Departments of music in particular should be encouraged to play an important role as a viable venture with its potential capacity of improving institution's Internally Generated Revenue (IGR). If properly harnessed, each department of music would not only in no time become self-financing, but become an avenue for generating additional income for their institutions. However, initial take off grants should be specially provided by the management to procure musical instruments as well as other facilities with which this could be fully realized.

4. Effectiveness of implementers of the programme: Musical arts educators in Nigeria should endeavour to improve on their style and methods of teaching. They need to keep abreast with current global and innovative trends in music instruction, and with the challenges brought about by the ever-changing trends in the world of musical arts education.

5. Role of professional music bodies: Professional music bodies such as Music Educators in Nigeria (COMEN), Nigerian Society for Musical Arts Educators (NISMAE) and the Musicological Society of Nigeria (MSN), should endeavour to make their impacts better felt. Specifically, representatives of these professional bodies should constitute themselves into strong advocacy group to the various management teams with a view to promoting the music discipline in Nigeria's institutions from primary up to the tertiary level of education.

6. Place of research: Musical arts educators and musicologists need to be more actively involved in intensive research into African musical and cultural heritage. Findings from such works would serve as useful materials to enrich the curriculum content to complement the Western materials often served to students especially in practical

courses.

It is our submission that if the recommendations put forward here are carefully considered and implemented, they would not only bring about the much-desired positive impacts on the issue of music curriculum in Nigeria's institutions, but the overall lot of musical arts education in the country would be greatly improved.

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