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**Author(s):** Joy Nwosu Lo-Bamijoko

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*It is with pleasure that we inaugurate the reprint of the entire seven volumes of The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning. The journal began in 1990 as The Quarterly. In 1992, with volume 3, the name changed to The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning and continued until 1997. The journal contained articles on issues that were timely when they appeared and are now important for their historical relevance. For many authors, it was their first major publication. Visions of Research in Music Education will publish facsimiles of each issue as it originally appeared. Each article will be a separate pdf file. Jason D. Vodicka has accepted my invitation to serve as guest editor for the reprint project and will compose a new editorial to introduce each volume. Chad Keilman is the production manager. I express deepest thanks to Richard Colwell for granting VRME permission to re-publish The Quarterly in online format. He has graciously prepared an introduction to the reprint series.*



# Music Education in Nigeria: *The Status of Music Learning and Teaching*

By Joy Nwosu Lo-Bamijoko

*University of Lagos*

**Abstract:** Formal music education in Nigeria, which began in the late nineteenth century, is not yet recognized as an important subject to be studied in the public schools of the nation. Music educators throughout the country are working to establish music education in the schools, incorporate indigenous music forms into the study of music, and improve the training of classroom and specialist music teachers. While there is much work to be done, a good deal of progress has been made toward the goal of offering music education to students throughout Nigeria.

The problems surrounding formal education in Nigeria are very complex. As noted by Fafunwa (1985, p. 5), from the very beginning of formal schooling, "Nigerian school children were being educated to meet the needs of a foreign culture," not those of Nigeria.

Western-style music training was brought to Nigeria by Christian missionaries in the late nineteenth century. In mission schools and church choirs, singing, ear training, sightreading, and organ playing were taught. This training aimed, as Mackey (1950, p. 130) noted, at "refining" the Nigerian musical sense and taste. The first Nigerians trained in Western music came from this background, and most of them were men and women associated with the churches. By 1960, "a degree could be obtained in music at the University of Nigeria Nsukka" (Edet, 1965, p. 77). But 30 years after the colonialists made their exit from Nigeria, music education generally has not succeeded in establishing a

firm national base in the schools of Nigeria.

After World War II, urban centres spread in Nigeria, and Nigerians acquired band instruments used and discarded by foreign service bands. Soon, neo-folk musical forms started to take root in the form of apprenticeships. This period marked the birth of the dance-music bands, with "Highlife" as one of the first dance music styles to gain wide popularity. The learning that supported this new development, called "secular music education" by Akpabot (1982, p. 22), took place outside the formal school structure, and the instructors and band leaders were products of mission schools and church choirs.

Yet music education has not taken firm root in Nigeria, in spite of efforts over the years by indigenous musicians and music teachers. Sowande (1962, p. 44) in 1962 proposed a music programme for Nigeria which would focus more on Nigerian music than on Western music. Since then, other educators have proposed and continue to propose a truly indigenous music programme for Nigeria. Progress toward achieving this has been very slow for these 30 years, but evidence of growth exists.

## Music in Nigerian Schools

Music education was not considered to be a school subject in those early years in Nigeria, and no attempt was made to give music the status of a discipline. As a result, most of the early missionary-trained musicians were men and women who belonged to other professions, and music had no powerful voice to speak for it at the policy-making level. Trained music teachers were virtually nonexistent in Nigerian schools.

When mention was made about the need

for music education in our schools, it was usually a general statement which did not specifically address the problems of music, music education, or the music profession. When music study was included on the schedules of the primary and secondary schools, it served only as a recognition of the need for music education but not as an indication of the actual practice of music in Nigerian culture.

Today, this situation remains largely the same in our primary and preprimary schools, but some changes have taken place in our secondary schools and in the universities. The national educational policy now calls for the implementation of music at every level of schooling. Progress is being made in this direction, but many schools lack of sufficient funds to accomplish this goal.

### **Music in the Preprimary Schools**

Preprimary schools in Nigeria are not compulsory. Many are privately owned and operated largely as nurseries or day-care centres for children between the ages of six months to three years; these are located mostly in urban areas. In the preprimary schools for children between the ages of about three to six, it is expected that children will participate in a lot of singing and dancing in a very organized manner and with a music teacher who can direct their activities toward specific music learning. Unfortunately, this is not the practice, for few preprimary schools can afford to hire teachers with knowledge of music. Yet some of the preprimary schools, mostly in urban areas, are well-organized. The most progressive of them are beginning to accord music an important place in preprimary education.

### **Music in the Primary Schools**

In Nigeria, children are admitted to the compulsory primary schools at the age of 6 and graduate at the age of 12. These schools are free, and they are considered the foundation upon which all other Nigerian schools are based. As in the preprimary and schools, a single teacher is expected to teach all subjects in each classroom.

Starting in August, 1983, this writer, assisted by numerous field workers and students, began a research project which

monitors the development of music education in Nigerian primary schools. The project includes primary schools in the three major language areas of Nigeria: Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba. Field work in the Hausa language area took us to Kano, Kaduna, Zaria, Sokoto, and Maiduguri, while selected schools from all the states in southern Nigeria were visited. The project, sponsored by the University of Lagos, is ongoing.

At the beginning of the project, we discovered that in most schools visited, classes in levels one to six have music or singing on their schedules. Some schools have free periods on their schedules instead of music or singing. In practice, however, singing or music time is often used as a free period.

Most of the singing done in schools occurs during the period devoted to playing games. When we asked school children to sing for us, they organized themselves in circles and other formations to sing, clap, and dance. Most songs collected during the field work were indigenous game songs. Thus, song materials are available for meeting the needs of a purely indigenous music programme, when the time comes for doing so. We now have available published collections of traditional songs that are suitable for use.

It is clear that primary school teachers may well prefer to teach subjects other than music. Also, one may find a class with a teacher who has interest in music but very little knowledge with which to teach the subject well. Those teachers interviewed who expressed interest in music often also expressed the desire to learn more about music so that they could teach it. Few schools, however, are equipped for teaching music. So where there is a will to teach music at the primary level, there may not be the means.

### **Music in the Secondary Schools**

Students who have graduated from the primary schools may enter the secondary level of education. This level is not compulsory, and students must pay small fees in order to attend. The nation, however, is moving toward making the secondary level of education both free and compulsory. The secondary level is divided into two parts: the junior secondary schools and the senior

secondary schools. Both junior and senior secondary schools last three years.

While music education has fared better at the secondary level than at the two lower levels, not all secondary schools have music teachers on staff. In three-year junior secondary schools, art and music classes are frequently available to students, although many schools lack the equipment to support these classes. In addition, only those schools funded by the Federal Military Government, known as unity schools, can afford specialized music teachers. State-owned and privately owned secondary schools cannot afford to hire teachers who teach only one subject. Nonetheless, the commitment to provide music education at this level is a giant stride ahead in our continuing efforts to introduce music at all levels of education.

### **Music at Colleges of Education**

Students who have graduated from the primary schools may enter one of the federally supported colleges of education in anticipation of becoming teachers. Considered to be part of the secondary level of education, these colleges offer programmes that require six years of study and qualify graduates to teach in the primary schools.

To earn the National Certificate of Education (NCE), students continue their study for an additional three years. These graduates are qualified to teach at the junior secondary level. In the NCE programme, music can be taken as a major, and the subject can be taken as a minor by those majoring in other areas of specialization. The NCE programme was originally intended to prepare teachers for the secondary schools, but in some states of Nigeria school boards are beginning to employ NCE teachers in the primary schools.

### **Music at Universities**

Graduates of university music programmes are qualified to specialize in teaching music in the senior secondary schools. These students, who study for four or more years to earn specialized bachelors and masters degrees and certificates in music, take courses that typically focus on the study of Western music. The programmes include aspects of both theory and performance as well as methods and education courses.

As a rule, university music programmes include only a few courses on African music. When such courses are offered in the universities, the literature and materials are scarce. Although much research has been done on African music and materials, not one university has yet designed a complete course of study focused on African music. There are two major reasons why this problem persists:

1. Experts in African music, regarded as "not educated," and therefore "not qualified," are excluded from teaching music at the tertiary school levels.
2. Western-trained scholars in African music and experts in African music theory are usually not practitioners of African music.

It is difficult to understand how one can be an expert without being educated, or how an expert can understand the theory of an unfamiliar practice. This is one of the many paradoxical situations that contribute to the difficulty of establishing high-quality music education programs in Nigerian schools.

### **Preparation of Music Teachers**

There are now three levels of teacher preparation in Nigeria, and a good deal of change is occurring. The first level, teachers training colleges, have traditionally prepared young Nigerians to teach at the preprimary and primary levels. Students enter this level, which is considered part of the secondary school system, after graduation from primary school. They study for six years to earn a certificate qualifying them to teach in the primary and preprimary schools, graduating at about the age of 18. Smith (1962, p. 149) noted that the musical training of these teachers is a remnant of the missionary era, when "musical training (for teachers) consisted of little more than how to teach a hymn or set a pitch." Further, these teachers are expected to teach all subjects in the primary and preprimary classrooms.

Colleges of education, which offer music as a major or as a minor, are gradually replacing these training colleges. Graduates of the colleges of education hold the National Certificate of Education (NCE) and teach primarily in the junior secondary schools, but they are now also being hired in the primary schools. Because they are able

to specialize in the study of music, these students are more likely to be prepared to teach the subject adequately at the primary and preprimary school levels than are those who have studied only at the first level of preparation. This is a sign of progress for music education in Nigeria.

Students of university music programmes, the third level of teacher preparation, study a full music curriculum. Graduates of these programmes are qualified to teach at the senior secondary level, and some are being hired at the junior secondary level as well. As teachers throughout Nigeria become better educated, all the educational system, and specifically music education, will benefit.

Music education has not always been weak or missing from teacher-preparation curricula. Ude (1986, p. 150) tells us that Awka College, which opened in 1926, was the earliest Anglican institution for the training of catechists and school teachers . . . the first known institution where music (singing and sight reading) was taught formally.

Smith also tells us that in the early twentieth century "missions began to add musical training to the curriculum of the Teachers Training Colleges." By 1930, however, change began to occur. Smith adds:

Schools were brought under Government supervision. Instrumental music disappeared from most of these schools. In some (teacher colleges), it was no longer necessary for a teacher in training to take music (1961, pp. 153-54).

Thirty years ago, when plans were made to reintroduce music education to the Nigerian schools, the tertiary levels were chosen as the most suitable levels at which to begin. The thinking at that time was that the universities and colleges of education would train music teachers for the schools, and these teachers would then teach music to the children as a classroom subject.

It is clear that this goal has not been met. Observers argue that if Nigeria had opted to establish a school of music instead of starting music education at the tertiary levels, the problems of music education in Nigeria would have been more quickly solved. Observers also agree that another 30 years of music education with a base at the universities and colleges of education will still not

create in Nigeria a firm foundation for music education and music practice.

Nigeria instead needs a music school for advanced and professional training. Such a school must be supported by a music education system in which children begin to learn music when they enter school and continue the subject throughout their education. When music education begins at the root of learning and continues to the top, Nigeria will benefit.

Today, progress is being made in this regard. The government of Nigeria is planning to phase out the certificates awarded by the teacher training colleges, and in the future the NCE will become the minimum qualification for teaching in Nigerian schools. Already teachers holding the NCE are beginning to teach in the nation's primary as well as secondary classrooms. Those who hold the lower certificates may return to the classroom as students to upgrade their certification. There is hope, therefore, that music education programs will reach all levels of education in Nigeria.

### **Music Practice in Nigeria**

The present music education programmes make a very marginal impact on the music practice of Nigeria's popular music artists, for the two are going in opposite directions. Among the trained musicians are performers of Western classical music who have spent over 20 years gathering a handful of followers. The progress has been tedious, and the rewards very marginal; to the knowledge of this writer, all of these artists have taken up full-time employment as teachers or broadcasters, and now perform only on a part-time basis. The audience for the Western classical music form in which these artists perform is small but steadily growing. Financial support for classical music artists is not readily available; only culturally relevant music has wide appeal in Nigeria.

Performers, like this writer and many others, have come to the limelight not through classical music performance, but through popular and *quasi* popular music performance. Nigeria, to date, does not have an orchestra, either privately owned or government sponsored. These are some of the



setbacks resulting from the absence of a school of music and a better organized music education programme.

### Conclusion

Although the journey to date has been slow, tedious, and long, there is hope that Nigeria will establish a full programme of music education. In 1977, the Second World Black and African Festival of the Arts and Culture (FESTAC), concentrated attention on the need for this.

In 1988, the Nigerian government announced a cultural policy for Nigeria, a milestone for the arts and culture. The document, if implemented, addressed many of the problems that have for so long besieged the music profession in Nigeria.

The policy provides for a National Academy for the Arts which, it is hoped, will house a school of music. In November, 1989, Nigeria, in compliance with UNESCO's declaration of 1988, launched the "World Decade for Cultural Development."

Still under great pressure to make up for lost time, the president of Nigeria, in his 1989/1990 budget speech, announced, to the greatest pleasure of all Nigerian artists, the establishment of the Ministry of Culture and Social Welfare. With this ministry, there is great hope that the cultural policy will be

fully implemented. There is also the expectation that by the end of this "World Decade for Cultural Development," much will be done to improve the status of music learning and teaching in Nigeria.

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