

HARNESSING THE AFRO-INDIGENOUS MUSIC TRAINING PATTERN TOWARDS THE BREEDING OF CONTEMPORARY MUSICAL SOCIETY: BEROM PEOPLE OF PLATEAU STATE IN PERSPECTIVE

By

Dr. Samuel Yohanna Davou
Department of Music,
Federal College of Education Pankshin, Plateau State
Email: samwatu@hotmail.com

Dr. Helen Johnson Egemba
Department of Music,
Federal College of Education Pankshin, Plateau State

Kemeweringha, Tobi Ebiakpo
Department of Music. University of Calabar, Nigeria
Email: Kemewerighatobi@yahoo.com
ORCID NUMBER: 0009-0009-4626-4400

Abstract

Every community has a unique method for transferring its customs, traditions, and way of life to the next generation, which also serves as a guarantee to its cultural preservation and prevents the culture from going into extinction. More so, every illness has a remedy, and every culture has its uniqueness regarding its custorticle and beliefs. This aims to critically highlight the traditional training methods employed by Africans, with a focus on the Berom people of Plateau State, Nigeria, to acquire knowledge, skills, and values before, during, and after the continent's colonisation thus, examining the historical methods used in the training of musicians by providing a clear understanding of how education in Africa was done. Interestingly, evidence suggests that musicians who received their training through traditional apprenticeship methods in Nigeria continue to earn more than those who received formal training. To comprehensively understand musicians' contributions to human development, this study explores how African musicians are traditionally trained, with a particular emphasis on both informal and formal artists. Using a mixed research approach that incorporates data from public social domains and in-person interviews, the researcher seeks to illuminate the enduring methods used by Africans in training musicians and what sustains their relevance despite colonial attempts to limit their effectiveness.

Keywords: Tradition, Training, Apprentice, Musician, Colonialism.

Introduction:

Music is a practical and skilled profession that demands expert tutelage and constant rehearsal from trainees to become masters in the field. Unlike other academic disciplines that heavily rely on written texts, music places greater emphasis on the practical application than theory; hence, music written on paper, such as sheet music or a musical score, just like a technical drawing that illustrate the design of a building, providing detailed information for construction and communication within the building industry so is a musical score thus until when sung it become a reality not an illustration anymore as such, in traditional African learning system, practicals, forms the basis of its learning unlike the western system of learning that combine both theory and practicals with theory emphasized at some point using the Nigerian formal music curriculum as a prototype.

In an African context, a musician is expected to be a versatile artist who can compose music, sing, play an instrument, or dance to it. Before the arrival of colonists, who introduced the so-called formal education system with a curriculum-based approach, the traditional system of education was a long tradition among the Africans so, it derogatory for someone to think or believe that Africans were not civilized or have a system of education that works for them until the invasion of the African continent by the Europeans. However, it is important to note that curricula existed in African societies before colonisation, albeit in a different form. Authors like Meredith (2006) have argued that most African civilisations were illiterate and ignorant at the time of colonisation, despite the presence of indigenous curricula. Mosweunyane (2013) reaffirmed that pre-colonial Africa had its unique training and educational processes. For example, among

the people of Plateau State, Nigeria, the curriculum is based on a routine that spans time and seasons. The dry, rainy season comes with activities that are educative to the society, and each elder and to who have excelled in their areas of specialisation in that society automatically become tutors. Based on areas of interest, children were sent to herbalists, blacksmiths, hunters, weavers, and drummers to learn a skill. Folktales are forbidden during the day, and dance rehearsals, also known as moonlight dances, do not take place until nightfall, unless there are festivals or other special events. All of this is done to make space for everyday activities that provide a living, such as farming, crafts, and other pursuits. For the Berom, music serves only as a teaching tool. Contrary to the Western assertion that music exists only for enjoyment, music was utilised to unite groups, transmit knowledge, commemorate events, and express emotions. This helped individuals develop a sense of identity and connection.

Although traditional schools existed, the family unit was the most significant organisation for information distribution and acquisition. For instance, the Berom people of Plateau State have an activity schedule that serves as their curriculum. The community or family gathers around the fire in the morning to prepare for the day's events, with elders providing instructions. Younger ones lead animals to pasture, while older ones evaluate and provide extra care. During the agricultural season, younger children learn farming techniques, combat skills, and valuable knowledge. In the evening, they gather around the fire to hear stories from the elderly and practice music with village elders. Some engage in wrestling, constructing an arena to compete with one another. According to Dugard (2003), Africans were skilled metallurgists, weaving fine textiles and baskets, and producing beer

from barley and bananas. They also developed a relay system of quick runners for communication between communities and kingdoms. It is evident that "primitive" African civilizations learned to analyze knowledge and transmit it orally through trial and observation, a process that requires learning and mastery. This research aims to examine African training practices before colonization and determine what made them resilient, influential, and effective in society today.

Methodology:

This study employed a multiple case study methodology, as defined by Creswell (2007), to conduct a comprehensive and meticulous examination of real-life, modern bounded systems (cases) over an extended period. The researchers developed a concrete position on the findings and offered a solution on how the music curriculum of a learning institution can be improved by using oral techniques of learning music, which perfectly suit the Nigerian and African communities at large. Primary, secondary, and critical observations, evaluation of data found in public domains, social handles, books, and questionnaires were used to base this.

The researchers chose a qualitative technique to collect data from various sources, including field notes, video recordings, and interviews. This strategy allowed them to examine the traditional training system from multiple angles, including behaviours, individual ideas, and values, as practised during the pre- and post-colonial eras. The study area is Plateau State, with a focus on the Berom people. Participants were chosen based on their background in music practice and location as expatriates. Traditional dancing, instrumentation/singing, and music instrument manufacture (music technology) were among the topics of interest.

The researchers selected the Plateau North Senatorial Zone as the site for data collection. The site has regional, national, and international acclaim as the state headquarters and a historic site for ore mining. The region has developed into a haven for colonial and missionary weather comparable to that of the United Kingdom due to its pleasant climate. The region offers week-long immersion programmes in various folk music genres, which can be seen being displayed in mining camps, Burkutu (local beer) parlours. Other musically interesting genres were given attention, focusing on Kundung (xylophone) manufacturing traditions and other genres like rattle and local harp.

Berom experts on folk music performers, instrumentalists, music producers, choirmasters, dancers, and constructors of local musical instruments were engaged in the research, and they all agreed to be instrumental in the research. Data collection took place over several hours, with audio and video recordings made for each music instructor over several days of interviews. Interviews were conducted to gain insight into the perspectives of tradition-bearers regarding the acquisition and instruction of traditional music.

Additional data came from the researcher's critical observations and notes, and apprentices under their tutelage were videotaped while watching their masters operate and receiving instructions that were audio-visually recorded for coding. Historical resources that positioned the Master trainers in the folk tradition were used to acquire supporting documentation. Documentary videos and interviews that were published or broadcast were included in these materials.

To find potential themes in the tutors' actions, the recordings of each traditional carrier were

examined separately at the expense of data analysis. Following their identification and categorisation of behaviours, the researchers jointly compared and deliberated on the themes present in these manners. Each tradition bearer's most common actions and distinct coaching compoment patterns were noted by the researchers. Operational definitions were then made for every behaviour displayed by the instructors, giving the researchers a common vocabulary to describe what they were seeing.

The verbatim transcriptions of the interviews from the audio, visual, and notepad materials were categorised for themes pertaining to the role of traditional bearers in education and imparting values-driven behaviours. Researchers also contrasted interview statements with observable instruction behaviours from the traditional training system. Three primary themes emerged from the videotaped lessons after independent coding: Demonstration, Verbal Instruction, and Group Play.

Group Play consisted of three identified behaviours: solitary play, whole group micro, and whole group macro. The most frequently employed behaviours were Group Play and Co-verbal Demonstration.

Review of Relevant Literature:

The conventional approach to music education encompasses social and cognitive reactivation in its entirety. Bandura describes learning through observation, the traditional learning system, as the four fundamental steps of paying attention, keeping in mind, imitation, and motivating (Senemoğlu, 2002:223). It is "not merely imitating others' acts but gaining knowledge by cognitively comprehending the events taking place in the world" (Senemoğlu, 2002:223). Verbal witnesses are considered seriously and quoted for referencing purposes, and those

who have conveyed the truth through the oral learning system have strong information retention skills.

According to Choong (2023), musicians who followed a formal education process are referred to as musicologists, whereas roadside musicians, or those who learned music through oral or traditional systems, are primarily referred to as such in Nigeria and receive their training through an informal system. Experienced musicians with vivid recollections and a wealth of knowledge about various social situations or events play crucial roles as educators and resources in the oral (informal) transmission of music. Floyd Jr. (1996) explains why this is the case, citing the fact that African music addresses social issues and is much more than just a form of entertainment. As a result, circumstances are transformed into songs to address urgent problems, which increases the cultural significance of that specific song.

The majority of African music is uncomfortable with memories and has nothing to do with the present, in contrast to Western music, which is based mostly on amusement. Similar to African music settings, which are oral, the African music's repetitive practices allow music to be integrated with social memory by keeping society's music relevant and lively. As a result, the music becomes easy to remember and can be passed down to future generations while maintaining its stylistic integrity because it serves a practical purpose of addressing urgent situations (D. Zongo, personal communication, May 25, 2024).

Elscheková (1998) implied that, when learning in an oral style, the trainee receives music knowledge from the trainer through a constantly changing process that preserves the fundamental stylistic cultural structure while frequently exposing them to a variant formation. Personal creativity also plays a

role in shaping this process. The formal and informal superiority factors are at play in this process because the oral music training system appears to be more advantageous due to its practical character than the formal system, which depends more heavily on music theory and is not as expressive as oral music training.

Oral learning, as described by Bandura (cited in Senemoğlu, 2002:223), is primarily characterized by learning through observation, which is "not merely imitating others' acts but gaining knowledge by cognitively comprehending the events taking place in the world." This is accomplished through the four fundamental steps of motivation, keeping in mind, paying attention, and acting (Senemoğlu, 2002:231). Those who acquire music orally demonstrate an unparalleled level of passion for it, approaching it with a deep sense of purpose and dedication.

They are aware of what is most appropriate for society at any given time, and their music reflects the needs and values of their community.

African Traditional Educational System:

The African traditional educational system is an exemplary model of oral learning, where knowledge and skills are passed down from generation to generation through a rich cultural heritage. In Africa, education predated both the slave trade and colonisation of the continent. Education was seen as a fundamental human right, and everyone needed to develop into something worthwhile to benefit society (González Luna Corvera, 2019). African societies are characterised by their distinctive ability to adapt to their surroundings. This is evident in their use of tools, hut construction, herbalism, farming, hunting, and other practices. Knowledge, skills, and attitudes are passed down through

word of mouth within these societies. This system is characterised by its emphasis on practical learning, social memory, and community involvement. The oral transmission of music in African cultures is a testament to the power of traditional education, where experienced musicians play a vital role in shaping the next generation of musicians.

General education fosters creative thinking by providing individuals with the tools to independently seek new ideas without the guidance of a tutor. The ultimate goal of all learning is creative thinking, which is achieved through sensitive, perceptive, and developmental direction that ensures learning experiences are educationally sound and develop the creative potential of individuals and groups (Pal, 2023). Music teachers can encourage creativity in their students by identifying and supporting innovative ideas and activities. Creativity is not limited to gifted students or artists; it is a skill that can be developed and nurtured, which is why the popular saying "Hard work can beat talent when talent refuses to work hard."

In African music training, instructions are given verbally, and the tradition is passed down through generations (Nketia, 1974). While some argue that the verbal aspect of instruction has led to the loss of uniqueness in traditional music (Ogar, 2007), the researchers are of the belief that oral information transfer has many benefits, including the ability to improvise freely and create a community product. Singers become more creatively flexible and trusting when information is conveyed orally.

The Western educational system brought a compartmentalised education system to Nigeria, replacing the culturally oriented Afro-indigenous educational lifestyle experiences with classroom-based courses. Tests, exams, and grading schemes were

introduced, and teachers were trained in special schools. In contrast, the traditional African model is goal-driven and involves apprentices working under the mentorship of a subject-matter specialist. Unfortunately, the formal system established a wall between classroom-based learning and community-based Indigenous knowledge, as those who passed through the formal educational system were given prominence over those skilled ones who did not have certificates (Onwuatuegwu & Paul-Mgbeifulike, 2023).

The main goals of music education in Nigerian society are to teach pupils how to read, write, and play church or Western music, promoting group music-making via school musicals and choruses (Adeogun, 2007). However, expert musicians argue that traditional music is a more sensible way to help children comprehend and enjoy music.

Recruitment of Trainees in the Traditional Music Learning System:

The music instructors unanimously agreed that training is conducted based on interest. When individuals voluntarily offer themselves for mentorship, the instructors provide guidelines, and training can commence without difficulty. This approach is often employed by builders of musical instruments and occasional instrumentalists, and is most common among African musicians, their children easily inherit their parents' musical abilities, and this is highly influenced by proximity.

Interest and commitment are the fundamental prerequisites for any traditional music training program. It is occasionally not necessary to pay to enrol in traditional music training. Appreciating an expensive item or

service can be interpreted as a display of submission or loyalty, as well as an expression of gratitude. For instance, participating in a singing or dancing group is regarded as a civic duty, as each village has its own music and dance groups. During the holiday season, villages prepare for the festival, while professionals train, and younger ones watch and learn from their elders.

Traditional music training emphasises listening skills highly, focusing on sound creation, such as singing, rhythmic construction, and instrumentation. The traditional or local trainer may employ and value oral instruction and learning methods, relying on listening and imitation. Some choirs, mostly youth choirs, do not use musical scores, and their instruction is based on trust and will, without certification. The conventional training method places a strong emphasis on promoting listening and auditory learning, allowing learners to internalise sounds and apply them in practical.

Some traditional music educators argue that notation-based formal music education is not as effective as it is claimed to be, as it teaches traditional music in a robotic and colonial manner, transforming traditional sounds into Western ones. They believe that Western instruction methods cannot impart comprehensive knowledge or increase mental activity to the same extent as traditional listening-based instruction. Moreover, no system has been developed to fully capture the nuances of this style of music, as every culture is distinct, and traditional tones, particularly those of the Berom melodic instruments like the Kundung (local xylophone), are not in tune with Western musical instruments or keyboards.

In Berom dance training sessions, seasoned dancers teach new dance moves to younger

dancers, usually at night, with the entire community participating in the instruction process. Traditional instrumental instructors employ a phrase-by-phrase teaching method, emphasising listening, observation, and imitation. Children often imitate instruments with subpar materials, practising until they gain access to the actual musical instrument. Most traditional musicians build and maintain their instruments, and curiosity drives the learning process in a traditional African context.

Formal Music Training System:

The primary objective of official music education in Nigeria appears to be the promotion of Western culture over African culture. The curriculum seems to favour artists who prefer church music, such as classical music and hymns, over African musical forms. In an interview on July 5, 2024, Mr. Joshua Wale mentioned that studying music has significantly improved his piano skills and overall musicianship. Wale further stated that his sight-reading, music theory and church music composition skills have substantially improved. However, another music student, Gwomsun John, expressed his disappointment with the limited scope of his music education. Gwomsun stated that he will not completely withdraw from college because the only benefit he receives from studying music is the social benefits college life yields, but he is disappointed that he cannot apply his knowledge to improve his preferred type of music, relying solely on what he orally learned from his grandfather.

Students studying music at the Federal College of Education in Pankshin were also asked about their interest in the study of music. The majority of music students responded negatively to formal music training, citing that music studies were imposed on them by the college admission

office because their intended course of study was not granted. Some claimed that music became their only option due to their perceived deficiency, which prevented them from gaining admission into their preferred department. They viewed music as a simple course that only involved singing and dancing, but to their surprise, music became the most challenging course of their lives, requiring intense mental effort. They questioned the need for extensive music theory in the entertainment industry, advocating for prioritizing local music over Western music that is foreign to their culture.

Traditional Music Training and its Benefits:

In the African traditional training system, students have the autonomy to choose occupations based on their interests and passions, without parental influence. For instance, individuals who pursue herbalism are often identified from childhood through supernatural means, which Africans believe in; the child naturally develops a fondness for herbal components and can administer them with ease. Similarly, in music, singers are motivated to practice without coercion, and while music practice in African communities is often inherited, others can learn it out of interest or for profit, as seen among musical instrument manufacturers. Therefore, students in a formal system should be allowed to choose music as a field of study based on their own preferences, which will spark their interest in learning music rather than being forced into it.

One of the primary benefits of studying oral music style is the practical and dominant role of motorship in the system. Unlike the formal training system, which is heavily based on musical theory and prioritizes the history of Western cultures foreign to African tradition and way of life, the use of music cultured by the people should take center stage in the

curriculum, resulting in widespread acceptance in the classroom.

Furthermore, due to the global economic downturn, musical instruments and other goods have become increasingly expensive, making music teaching extremely challenging in terms of pricing, maintenance, and availability of training instruments. In traditional music training, students who are interested in music build prototype instruments used in training until they gain access to the original instruments over time. Even when they do, they have mastered the art of maintaining and building musical instruments. As a result, most traditional musical instrument players cannot only play the instrument but also manufacture it. Therefore, the usage of prototype instruments during rehearsals should be encouraged, just as it is in traditional music education.

Findings

- i. Africans, particularly the Berom people, had their system of education with a deliberate line of actions which can be referred to curriculum before its invasion by the colonists.
- ii. Music is best learned in practice rather than theory; thus, the traditional system of learning music should be emphasised.
- iii. Musicians trained through the apprenticeship system in Nigeria are more influential and skilful than those trained within the formal setting. When the traditional style of music training is prioritised, it yields a more productive result.
- iv. The best form of music training that fits the African terrain is the

traditional musical training style, because of its intention and its functionality in the community.

- v. For effective productivity, both the Western (formal) and the traditional (Informal systems of education can be matched for effective productivity.

Conclusion:

It is crucial to acknowledge that formal music studies have persisted in Nigerian higher education institutions, despite the public opinion of students and some musicologists that the curriculum used to train musicians in Nigeria does not prioritise African cultural practices. This implies an urgent need to review the curriculum to prioritise African content in the music curriculum.

It is essential to emphasise that Africa has its unique and rich type of education that has helped African cultures thrive for centuries. However, the arrival of colonial forces led to a deliberate effort to marginalise African knowledge and abilities, replacing them with foreign values. Therefore, incorporating African traditional music training into the formal curriculum can enhance effectiveness and learning outcomes, as seen in the oral training system. This is due to the persuasive learning attitude of the trainees, driven by curiosity and a willingness to learn without imposition.

It is degrading to look down on the African traditional system of education, as it is clear that even where African institutions were researched and found credible, such as Egyptian civilization, they were not integrated into African education in a way that would have instilled pride and a sense of capability. To a considerable degree, it must be accepted that colonial forces successfully imported foreign music instruction to the

continent, transforming music studies in Nigeria into a school of Western supremacy, with local music taking a backseat.

Indigenous knowledge, skills, and attitudes were vital for the continent of Africa, as they were relevant and contextual. The continent would have advanced if it had been allowed to develop its own education systems, as evidenced by the fact that African music genres dominate the African airwaves, surpassing ancient and outdated Western music styles. It would be beneficial for the continent to encourage African academics to conduct research and develop an African-friendly curriculum that preserves the region's forgotten legacy.

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