

REPOSITIONING MUSIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Music education is recognized as one of the major tools required for enlightenment, empowerment and societal transformation. It plays a vital role in the intellectual, emotional, social, cultural, and moral development of learners. Over the years, through research studies, it has proven to be a discipline that is naturally both theoretical and practical in application and practices leading to knowledge and skills acquisition. Thus, music education is regarded as a professional as well as a vocational course that requires effective implementation in Nigerian schools especially at both Junior and senior secondary levels. However, research has shown over the years that music education has suffered neglect due to inadequate funding, shortage of qualified teachers, poor instructional materials, limited infrastructure, and the marginalization of music within the cultural and creative arts (CCA) curriculum. But recent development has shown that a well implemented curriculum in music education will not only impart knowledge and skills in younger ones but will also empower them for survival in the present economic situation with or without government employment. In this regard, the paper highlights the challenges of music education especially at senior secondary level and advocates for its repositioning and proper implementation right from the elementary level through the Junior and senior secondary. The paper concludes that revitalizing music education requires collaborative efforts from government, curriculum planners, school administrators, music educators, parents and the private sector.

Keywords: Concept, Music, Education, senior secondary school, curriculum etc.

Introduction

Music education is one of the tools needed for empowerment and societal transformation. It is an integral component of a holistic educational system because it contributes significantly to learners' cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and creative development. In Nigeria, music has traditionally served as a medium for communication, cultural preservation, entertainment, moral instruction, religious expression and social cohesion (NERDC, 2013). Over the years, research studies have shown and proved to us that music education is a profession as well as a vocation which requires effective implementation at both junior secondary school and Senior secondary levels of education. However, this discipline had suffered major setback and neglect over the years by successive administrations in Nigeria. At the elementary level, no serious attention is given to its implementation. Also, at both junior and senior secondary levels, its implementation has been haphazard as only few students who are determined offer it at the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE). From the period of independence to the present time, music had continued to be part of the curriculum in the scheme of work drawn for secondary and other institutions. There had not been much difference in the present curriculum and that of the pre-independence and the colonial era. This is because the present curriculum still has traces of great influence of Western culture in its structure, content and application.

Repositioning music education in Nigerian secondary schools requires a comprehensive reform that addresses curriculum content, quality of teachers, policy implementation, funding, infrastructure, technology integration and community participation. In this regard, music education should not be perceived merely as an extracurricular activity but as an essential discipline that contributes to learners' cognitive, emotional, cultural, social and economic development. Recent studies have emphasized that music education promotes creativity, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and entrepreneurial skills, all of which are essential competencies for the twenty-first-century workforce (Ajewole, 2024)).

Many scholars are of the opinion that there had not been a serious and conscious effort towards the review of the hitherto inherited music curriculum in Nigeria. And as such, its effective implementation at the senior secondary level is facing a serious setback which this paper is set to address. It is important to consider some key concepts and issues because they are inherent in this discussion. They include concept, music, education and senior secondary school

Concept of Music Education

Music education refers to the systematic teaching and learning of musical knowledge, skills, appreciation, creativity, and performance through formal and informal educational processes. It encompasses vocal and instrumental performance, music theory, composition, music instrumental technology, history, ear training and appreciation of indigenous and global musical traditions. The objectives of music education include; developing musical literacy and performance skills, preserving the rich cultural heritage of Nigeria, promoting creativity and

innovation, developing critical thinking and problem-solving skill, preparing learners for careers in music and the creative industries, promoting national unity and intercultural understanding and so on. (FRN, 2014)

In concept, many authors had defined education from different perspectives. For instance, Chidobi (2007) defines education as a process by which the society through schools, colleges and other institutions (both formal and informal) transmits its cultural heritage. This is an indication that education is based on societal culture. Also, Chidobi (2007) quoting from NTI module (2006), sees education as one of the basic activities in all human societies because the continuity of a society depends upon the transmission of its heritage which is done through education. Therefore, it becomes necessary that the younger generation be instructed so that they will behave according to societal norms and acceptable code of behavior of the school. Furthermore, From the above assertions, education is seen as an instrument of enlightenment through impartation of knowledge, skill acquisition, empowerment, self-actualization and so on which aids societal growth and transformation.

Music: Musical sounds or tones are produced by vibration set in motion either by the human voice or other sound producing mechanisms. In concept, many music scholars and authors had defined music from different perspectives. Music making is a lifelong activity which cannot be divorced from man and its immediate environment which is a further proof as an expression of human feelings. Music as a discipline plays major roles in the inculcation of societal norms and values in students especially the younger generation. In this regard, it is the most widely used in the society (Falusi, 2019). Music has played major roles in the activities of the people both in villages, towns, cities or urban centers, and in public and private enterprise. Thus, its importance in the education of a child cannot be overemphasized.

Education: Education thus plays major roles in societal growth, development and transformation indeed. When we look at what we called education we might not be wrong nor be far from the truth by describing it as the system by which one generation impart the ideals and cultural practices of its society to the next generation in an unending process (NTI, 2008). In the annals of history, the three great philosophers, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle had distinguished themselves among other scholars. Socrates was the teacher of Plato who was in return the teacher of Aristotle. Today, in the education history, the questioning technique is credited to Socrates, and it is recognized as Socratic method. Plato advocated a state-run lifelong education scheme through which various individuals could be prepared for their roles in the state. Aristotle in his monumental contribution to learning wrote many books which are still consulted. He was the first great biologist and contributed to all other science disciplines.

Senior Secondary School: The term “secondary school” means a school for young people between the ages eleven (11) and eighteen (18), (Hornby, 2010). Secondary school is the second level of formal education which covers the educational gap between the primary and the tertiary levels. The age range between fourteen (14) and Nineteen (19) years are recognized as the next

level of schooling after the primary. The upper arm of the secondary school education is generally known as the senior secondary school. This covers the senior secondary one (SSSI) to senior secondary school three (SSS3). While the lower arm of the secondary education is from junior secondary school one (JSSI) to junior secondary school three (JSS3). This is also recognized as the upper arm of the basic school education which runs from primary one to junior secondary three.

In the Nigerian education system, after the nursery education, a child must first and foremost undergo the basic education which runs from primary one to Junior secondary three (6, 3 system) before proceeding to the senior secondary education from senior secondary school one (SSS1) to senior secondary school three (SSS3). While a successful completion of the senior secondary education qualifies a child for further studies in tertiary institutions such as college of education, polytechnic, monotechnic, university etc. further studies In the University will require spending a minimum of four years or more depending on the courses and discipline. This procedure is in consonance with the Nigerian education policy of 6-3-3-4 system which began under the universal basic education scheme which was published in 1977 and was revised in 1981, 2004 and 2014 respectively. In order to advance the course of vocational and scientific skills, the secondary school curriculum has been expanded to cover a wide range of subjects that include, music, pre-vocational, and non-vocational electives according the NPE (2014) Revised. Generally, the purpose of establishing the junior and the senior secondary schools by the government include;

- To develop the intellectual ability of the young and transmit the knowledge and wisdom of the society to the next generation
- To perpetuate basic concept value system a socially approved behaviour among the succeeding generation
- To develop the power and capabilities of the young for self-actualization and advancement of the social group life.
- To prepare the young to assume adult responsibility

The Structure of Music in Secondary Education

In line with the requirement for the 6-3-3-4 system of education, the senior secondary school programme was designed to include the study of music in greater form than was required at the junior secondary school level. Musical studies for the Nigerian secondary school students included aspect of Western (Europe, Sub-Saharan) and Nigerian (African) music. The syllabus encompasses both the theoretical and practical aspects of music. It also included performance on a chosen musical instrument (voice or instruments of artificial mechanism) and sight reading

exercises. In the practical aspect the following instrument are examined; voice (singing), Western and African instruments. Areas to be tested in the written examination include the following:

- Aural test to be administered by means of Audio cassette or other sound producing 'mechanism
- Rudiments of music which emphasizes the basic aspects of music
- Harmony, counterpoint and composition.
- Forms and analysis
- History and literature of music
- Traditional and contemporary African/Nigerian music
- Popular African music and Black music in Diaspora.

Source: NECO syllabus for SSS music extract.

The structure of secondary music curriculum emphasized more of Western than African elements. Proportionately, the need for its repositioning becomes necessary such that in structure, the curriculum will project more of African elements in the teaching – learning process and in practice.

Problems of Music Education in Senior Secondary Schools

Over the years, the implementation of music education programme has not been effectively carried out at the senior secondary level. The reason for this anomaly is not far- fetched as the problem is a carryover cumulative effect of setback which the musical training in teaching, learning and practice had suffered from the elementary level. That is, the education authority and curriculum planners and implementers are ye to get it right. Judging from the research studies carried out on problems of music education in selected schools in Enugu state (MA.ED, Thesis) and on current research on this article (2026) under consideration, the following discovery were made about the problems of music education at the senior secondary level.

The present music curriculum in the senior secondary school is beyond the scope of students at this level. Because, music is not taught in public (primary) schools which made it difficult for teachers to effectively impart in the learners. Besides, some aspect of te curriculum as in African studies are lacking in content of the needed requirement for proper certification at this level. The structure of the present music curriculum is Western oriented. Its application in practice is more difficult than African ideology. From cultural perspective, the present curriculum has no cultural base and its implementation is foreign to both the unqualified teachers and learners. The present music curriculum lack constant review as there has been no review for more than half a decade as attested by many scholars and expert in the field which means the curriculum is long overdue

for a review. Also, some of the teaching materials are obsolete and therefore no longer relevant to Nigerian education system at this level. Thus, some aspects of the curriculum require urgent review

Furthermore, music education right from the primary through senior secondary has not received enough encouragement, and patronage by the government, education authority, school administrators, parents etc. There is lack of proper orientation on its relevance and prospects in our society. Also, there is general apathy for music education in our society as most parents discourage their wards from studying or choosing music as a subject for certification at SSCE. The result of this apathetic behavior discourages many from offering music at SSCE as only few candidates offer it as a subject and at SSCE. Even up till present, majority of our public schools don't offer it and where it is available in their school lessons' timetable, it is used for mere singing, recreation and relaxation. Finally, the required stakeholders (such as experts, teachers, parents etc.) were not duly consulted before the curriculum was drawn in the past.

Repositioning Music Education in Nigerian Secondary Schools

The implementation of music educational programmes in Nigerian secondary schools is faced with many challenges which call for quick intervention by various stakeholders and therefore requires a matter of urgency that music educational programmes in Nigerian secondary schools be repositioned for effective teaching, learning and practice. Curriculum Reform and Repositioning: One of the major obstacles confronting music education is the integration of music into Cultural and Creative Arts (CCA) curriculum, which has significantly reduced instructional time and weakened the identity as an independent academic discipline. Consequently, many schools allocate little attention to music, while teachers without specialized music training knowledge are often assigned to teach the subject. Many scholars had argued that repositioning music education should begin with restoring music as a distinct subject, particularly at the junior and senior secondary school levels, where students begin career specialization (Ayeyemi et al., 2024; Ajewole, 2024)

Analytically, the review of the current music syllabus in Nigerian secondary schools is inevitable and requires urgent implementation so as to make it more relevant to the current educational system at this level and also, to facilitate effective teaching and learning towards the realization of the educational goals and objectives in music education of the 20th century. Part of the repositioning processes requires getting it right from the elementary through the junior secondary school to the senior secondary level. In this wise, the first and foremost task requires that the present curriculum being used especially at SSS lessons be restructured and review downward with more emphasis on African elements so as to make it more relevant to the Nigerian educational system. A revised curriculum should emphasize practical musicianship alongside theoretical knowledge and as such students should be given instruction in following areas of musical trainings; music performance, composition, ear training, music technology, African indigenous music, music entrepreneurship, digital music production, music business and

management, community music practice and so on. Such a curriculum aligns with UNESCO's vision of competency-based education and employment opportunities.

Teacher Capacity Development: The next stage in the repositioning process is to employ qualified music personnel who are seasoned teachers or instructors in both theory and practice who will be able to interpret the curriculum content or scheme of work for effective teaching and learning, and in service delivery. The qualities of teachers remain the cornerstone of successful curriculum implementation. Many Nigerian secondary schools either lack qualified music teachers or assign music instruction to teachers trained in other subject areas. This situation undermines instructional quality and students' achievement (Ajewole, 2024). This exercise and innovation on repositioning must begin from the basic education level (from basic one to nine that is, primary 1 to the JSS3 class) to the senior secondary level. In this regard, government agency should therefore prioritize: recruitment of professionally trained music educators, regular in-service training programmes, sponsorship for postgraduate studies, digital literacy training, workshop on contemporary pedagogical approaches and certification in music technology. Professional development should also expose teachers to innovative instructional strategies such as project-based learning, collaborative performance, competency-based assessment and so on

Integration of Digital Technology: In our contemporary time, digital transformation has become an indispensable tool in music education. Advancement in educational technology have expanded opportunities for musical instruction in the classroom through the employment and application of virtual instruments, notation software, digital audio workstations, artificial intelligence, online collaboration platforms, and multimedia learning sources. Emerging technologies enhance creativity, increase learner's engagement, and provide flexible learning opportunities, particularly where physical resources are limited (Akano, 2026). In this wise, it becomes necessary that schools are to establish digital school laboratories equipped with; computers, MIDI keyboard, music notation software, audio interfaces, internet connectivity etc. These facilities would expose music students to modern music production techniques while bridging the technological gap between Nigerian schools and global best practices.

The third stage is the sensitization of the public on the relevance of music to the education of a Nigerian child right from the pre-nursery to the secondary and the highest education attainable. In this regard, there should be proper orientation of the masses through the mass media such as; television, radio broadcast, film strip, theatre and cinema production, symposium, conferences, seminar and workshop and so on are effective tools for public sensitization. Besides, the government should make music education compulsory as a subject from the pre-nursery age or kindergarten class and also as a compulsory or mandatory certificate subject at JSSCE and SSSCE and in all public and private institutions in Nigeria.

The fourth stage is adequate funding by the government and education authority. In this regard, conducive environment for teaching and learning must be created. These include the provision of laboratory, teaching aids and other relevant materials to enhance teaching efficiency by the

teacher and for easy comprehension by the learners. Besides, enough period or time must be allotted to the teaching and learning process at both Junior and senior secondary levels. Also, necessary encouragement such as inconvenience allowance and other incentives are to be provided for the facilitators. Besides, the promotion and payment of salary and other personnel cost are to be affected as at when due.

The accrued benefits in Repositioning music education in Nigerian secondary schools include the following among others;

- Improve students' creativity and innovation
- Preserve Nigerian cultural heritage
- Enhance emotional and social development
- Increase employment opportunity within the creative economy
- Promote entrepreneurship among young musicians
- improve national unity through intercultural appreciation.
- Support national economic diversification through the creative industries.

(Ajewole, 2024; Onu & Keke, 2025)

Conclusion and Recommendations

Music education remains an indispensable aspect of quality education in Nigeria. However, its full potential cannot be realized without deliberate policy reforms, adequate funding, qualified teachers, modern facilities such as well-equipped laboratory, regular review and improved curriculum implementation. Repositioning music education in Nigeria secondary schools will not only improves educational outcome but will go a long way in significant contribution toward cultural preservation, youth empowerment, entrepreneurship and national development. In this regard, it is expected that stakeholders ensure collective collaboration to restore music education to its rightful position within the Nigerian educational system

In order to address the problems of music education in Nigerian schools especially at senior secondary level, the paper recommends as follow;

- i. Government should employ and post qualified music teachers to all public (primary and secondary) schools and also encourage the private and other institutions to equally do same. This will further enhance proper interpretation and implementation of the music curriculum and impart knowledge in learners. There should be a reviewed curricular for

- the lower and upper basic schools, and the senior secondary education which are functional in all aspects of music education taking cognizance of the educational domains (affective, cognitive and psychomotor).
- ii. In service training and retraining of music teachers under the employment of the government must be prioritized for upgrading of knowledge, improvement on general musicianship, teaching efficiency and productivity in service.
 - iii. The curriculum experts, teachers, parents and other stakeholders in the field are to be involved in the review process. Besides, the present curricular at basics and secondary schools are to be restructured and reviewed with emphasis on African elements in order to make it more relevant to the current trends in the society and Nigerian educational system. This review process must be carried out every five years of its existence and implementation in order to facilitate effective teaching and learning.
 - iv. There should be regular public sensitization on the relevance of music to societal education through the mass media
 - v. Furthermore, the government should empower relevant authority and stake holders in the field who will be saddled with the responsibilities of proper implementation of music programmes through adequate funding.

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