

## MUSIC OUTREACH AS A STRATEGY FOR REVITALIZING MUSIC EDUCATION IN REMOTE AREAS OF ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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**“We have waited too long in futility for these kids to come to us for music; it is time we took music to them”--  
-----Ikedi Okeke (2025).**

### Abstract

The need to raise awareness of formal music education in remote parts of Anambra State, Nigeria, through *music outreach* is captured in this paper. *Music outreach* is conceptualized in this study to denote all forms of campaigns geared towards the rebirth, resuscitation, inclusion, restoration, and sustenance of music education in *musically unreached* areas of society. Five primary schools located in various remote areas of Anambra State were studied over a span of fifteen years, with the researcher serving in various capacities as a music teacher, school music observer, performer, school anthem composer, and music consultant in the respective schools. Some rudimentary musical instruments, such as the recorder, xylophone, harmonica, and keyboard, were used during the fieldwork to arouse the interest of pupils in the studied schools. Various forms of musical activities, including music clubs, choral singing, school bands, and dance groups, were also explored and integrated into the schools to foster music education as part of the research. Data were sourced through direct observation and interviews conducted with pupils, teachers, parents, and management heads of the selected schools. The findings of the study revealed that music education is non-existent in most schools located in remote areas. Many of these schools, though passionate about music, are unable to initiate music programmes due to financial constraints. Core subjects such as English and Mathematics are also not sustainably taught in some of the schools because of the dearth of subject teachers. The only noticeable form of music instruction in most schools is assembly or classroom singing. The paper therefore recommends that musicologists, music educators, school teachers, and education policymakers should re-strategize towards grassroots music education in remote areas through *music outreach*. Such outreach may take the form of music concerts, music campaigns, music symposia, career days in schools, dance and singing competitions, classroom music teaching, and school-based music composition. It is believed that if the ideology of *music outreach* is optimally explored, music education will be restored in schools and repositioned to its proper place in society.

[Keywords: Music outreach, remote areas, music education, musicologists]

### Introduction

Music is found in virtually all human societies in different genres, forms, and various modes of expression. Music exists informally in African societies for entertainment, socialization, religious rites, communal engagements like fishing, wrestling, farming, etc. all serving for communal bonding. Nketia (1974) expatiates that:

In traditional African societies, music making is generally organized as a social event. Public performances, therefore, take place on social occasions- that is, on occasions when members of a group or a community come together for the enjoyment of leisure, for recreational activities, or for the performance of rite, ceremony, festival, or any kind of collective activity, such as building bridges, clearing paths, going on a search party, or putting out fire-activities that, in industrialized societies, might be assigned to specialized agencies (p.21).

Music in Nigerian societies bears no exception. Music operates in virtually all facets and labyrinths of societal engagements such as wedding, chieftaincy ceremonies, festivals such as new yam festival, *ofala* festival, age grade festival, naming ceremonies, etc. Okafor (2005) re-echoes that:

Next to the local language, traditional music is the most widely used medium of expression for all manner of occasions and at all times and periods of life. Communities manipulate it to give voice and sound to their collective thoughts, actions and even spirituality. In this way, while the people make use of the music, the music makes use of them for it places on them imprint on character, mien, thoughts and carriage, which are commonly summarized as identity (p.87).

It has become clear from the foregoing that music in African societies has always been part of the culture of the people and a tool for communal cohesion but the idea of making music an object of formal studies and investigation in rural and “remote” places of our society has not fully been understood and accommodated as pertinent to the development of children, the society and the advancement of the musical art, hence the focus of this paper.

### **A look at pertinent concepts**

Several concepts intricate to the paper are examined in details here:

#### **Music outreach**

‘Music outreach’ as conceptualized in this paper refers to all modes of campaign for musical sensitization, revitalization and sustenance in ‘remote’ areas of the society. This could take some forms of musical activities such as children’s dance display and competition; and also in schools as music club, singing in choir, playing in school band, dance groups etc. Music outreach is not a new concept in musicology and ethnomusicologists and socio-anthropologists have employed it extensively with remarkable success in studying the music and cultures of people of the world. The aspect of the concept which this paper advocates is the focus on sensitizing remote communities on the place of music in formal education and the possibility of advancing the indigenous music of the people on global platforms particularly in a burgeoning digital economy of the twenty-first century.

#### **‘Rural and Remote areas’**

Rural areas of Anambra society are those areas that are bereft of basic amenities and development such as roads, electricity, water, schools, hospitals, digital communications etc. Even though some rural communities in Anambra state have witnessed rapid growth in amenities and infrastructural developments, most of them still retain the agrarian life typical of rural life. ‘Musically Remote Areas’ of Anambra society refers to such areas that have no formal music in place as an aspect of holistic education of the society irrespective of whether they are in the urban or rural areas. The idea of ‘remoteness’ was interrogated in the course of the research where several schools in the urban areas that were studied had no idea of music as a subject of study or any history of music education. For instance, Eze Chima Primary School, Onitsha which is located at the heart of Onitsha metropolis, Anambra state of Nigeria has no history of music education since the inception of the school. Another school at the center of Nkpor Urban, United Primary school Nkpor, a public school, has no history of music teaching since inception even though it is located at the heart of Nkpor Ubarn area. The cited schools fall in the category of ‘musically remote schools’.



**Image 1.** The researcher interacting with and introducing musical instruments to pupils of United Primary School, Nkpor.

The interaction with pupils of United Primary School, Nkpor shown in the image above clearly demonstrates the thrust of this paper. The children's enthusiasm and desire to be taught music is unmatched! Although this school is situated in the heart of Nkpor metropolis of Anambra state, yet they are starved of formal music education.

### **Why should music be taught in schools?**

The justification for the place of music in the curriculum of studies in schools can be drawn from Bloom's taxonomy of learning outcomes where he outlined three domains of learning which any educational engagement should endeavor to capture. They are:

1. Cognitive domain
2. Psychomotor domain
3. Affective domain

The three Domains of learning and their connections with Music

Benjamin Bloom (1913-1999), an American psychologist, made contributions to the classification of educational objectives and to the theory of learning. In 1956, Bloom edited the first volume of taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals, which outlined a classification of learning objectives that has come to be known as Bloom's taxonomy and remains a foundational and essential element within the educational community as evidenced in the 1981 survey of significant writings that have influenced the curriculum (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Bloom outlined the three domains of learning thus:

- **The Cognitive Domain**

Skills in the cognitive domain revolve around knowledge, comprehension and critical thinking on a particular subject. Traditional education tends to emphasize the skills in this domain, particularly the lower-order objectives.

Music enhances the cognitive domain through the memorization of notes sol-fa syllables, transcription, evaluation of note values in given time signatures, pattern memorization and recognition of rhythms, harmony, melodic contours, intervals, aural perception and discrimination of notes, intervals consonances and dissonances etc.

- **The Affective Domain**

Skills in the affective domain describe the way people react emotionally and their ability to feel other living things' pain or joy. Affective objectives typically target the awareness and growth in attitudes, emotions and feelings.

Exposing children to songs and tunes with varied melodies and rhythms improves their emotional wellbeing. Just as some music evoke emotions of love, warmth, empathy, bonding, peace, and pity, so young learners are sensitized towards these humane emotions naturally. Communities abound with folksongs, play songs, moonlight songs, etc., that can be explored in the emotional development of children.

- **The Psychomotor Domain**

Skills in the psychomotor domain describe the ability to physically manipulate a tool or instrument like a hand or a hammer. Psychomotor objectives usually focus on change and /or development in behavior and/or skills.

The learning and playing of musical instruments, music conducting, play and songs, rhythmic hand and feet tapping etc., have proven to develop the hand, feet, muscles, tendons, and physical wellbeing of the individual.

Music therefore qualifies, more than every other subject, to have a compulsory space in the curriculum of studies in schools.

### **Music Education in Nigeria**

Music education in Nigeria refers to the nature, history and development of music studies in the Nigerian society either as formal or informal mode of education. Okafor (2005) guides thus:

Music education in Nigeria can be said to rest on or be founded on a tri-level structure. The first one is the traditional society: the second is the popular music industry while the third could be found in the formal schools- primary, post-primary and tertiary (p.302).

The traditional society employs the apprenticeship system, that is, learning under the tutelage of an expert musician. The popular system, even though employs the apprenticeship system also, operates with the aim of to raise popular musicians who can earn a living from music. The formal system operates through formal music schools with the introduction of the Arabic schools and Western schools. The aim, according to Okafor (2005), was:

To produce musicians who could perform in religious setting, people who could chant and recite the Koran, who could teach some Arabic music to go with Arabic culture and people who could teach songs for the Christian churches, and music for the school parade (p. 305).

### **Music in Nigerian Education**

The concept of music in education refers to the engagement of music in learning. One can learn numbers, alphabets, societal norms and taboos, even history through music. Music has also been employed effectively to serve the same purpose in the Nigerian society. Okafor (2005) intimates that:

Through song texts, a person learned the moral codes of his land, its chronology and history, and the guiding principles and ethics of his land. He also learned about his own language, the things his people lived by, and how the society worked. All these were learned through music that ranged from simple folk tunes to highly specialized ritual music, including chants, incantations and minstrels (p. 209).

The explanation above lends credence to the relevance of music in the holistic education of people which has been wittily captured by the Nigerian society. It also buttresses the push for the sustenance and advancement of music in all facets of the Nigerian milieu hence the thrust of this paper: The Idea of Music Outreach.

### **The concept of 'Music Outreach'**

'Music outreach' refers to all endeavors channeled towards the discovery, resuscitation, sustenance, promotion and the advancement of music of a people, music to the people, music for a people. The concept of music outreach sits on a tripod of music of a people, music to the people, and music for a people as captured above and these conceptual tripods shall be analyzed in detail in the course of the paper.

Presently, music studies in schools: kindergarten, primary, secondary and tertiary tiers of learning in Nigeria is a threatened species. Okeke (2023) in a pivotal study bemoaned the condition of music studies in Anambra state primary schools thus:

Formal music education in Anambra primary school system is gradually going into extinction. This, of course, portends great danger for the future of music education in the secondary and tertiary levels of learning, for one cannot hope for a positive response to music at these levels when music education at the grass root is relegated to the background (p. viii).

It has become imperative for a drive for music education awareness in schools, communities, rural areas, and all remote areas of the Nigerian milieu in order to resuscitate music. The status quo of music educators sitting in the comfort of their offices in schools and universities and waiting for pupils and students to troop in and enroll for music has become counterproductive. This paper is a clarion call to reach out for these young enthusiastic learners for music.

### **An Analogy with commercial companies**

The dawn of the realities and economic challenge of the twenty first century has driven commercial companies such as banks into vistas of marketing and outreaches. Banking has been taken to the doorstep of everyone now via POS units. People can now access their accounts, transfers and receive money, pay utility bills, and even open accounts at the most remote places with ease and authenticity. Communication companies have also tapped into the vista of outreach by establishing business points where people can buy new sim cards, recharge their lines and access various packages on their networks with speed and ease.

This approach has made these companies more visible, reachable, and beneficial to a wider scope of people and has immensely impacted positively on their survival. Commercial companies invest and depend heavily on 'outreach' to survive.

Musicologists can draw from this approach to resuscitate, reform, and promote music studies in Anambra, and Nigeria at large.

### **Music outreach as the re-discovery and incorporation of the music of a people**

'Music outreach should not lay claim to exposing a people to music for the time because no society is bereft of music, every society has always organized themselves with music peculiar to their culture and employed for entertainment, ceremonies, rituals, etc. Therefore, any empirical 'music outreach' basically engages in discovering, studying, incorporating and appreciating the music of the given people as a first step towards the realization of other aspects of the outreach.

Ethnomusicologists have employed this principle extensively in studying the music of other lands and other world cultures. So many music, musical genres, and musical practices of different peoples of the world are still unknown to the rest of the world and it is such a challenge that 'music outreach' is designed to resolve. When the folksong of a community is discovered through 'outreach', the responsibility lies on the musicologist to incorporate it in the curriculum of music studies of the given area for appreciation because the folk music of a people is indigenous to

them and more meaningful to them than any other. The idea is to start from the known to the unknown; move from the familiar to the unfamiliar.

#### **Music outreach as the introduction of music to the people**

The second aspect of music outreach is preoccupied with the introduction of a new or different form of, music to a people. Most cultures are open to new ideas, new artistic styles, and new concepts that can improve theirs and this creates the opportunity for the formal teaching of musical ideas and practices that can enhance or add to the existing ones in the target society.

For instance, one can introduce choral music and part singing to the music of a society without necessary altering the original music but rather improving it.

#### **Music outreach as the promotion of music of a people**

Music outreach can also operate on the premise of promoting the music of a people. This promotion can take such forms as notating the music, recording the music, organizing concerts to showcase the music, archiving the music, and creating digital platforms to host and publicize the music for a wider visibility. The case of Ugandan ghetto wonder kids that featured in the 2022 world cup in Qatar with their dance as case study. The dance troupe was founded by triplets who were orphaned kids in Ugandan suburb but who grew in number and attracted the attention of other ghetto kids and a promoter who nurtured and promoted them to world cup stage visibility.

#### **Methodology**

Six schools in different 'remote' areas of Anambra state, Nigeria were studied in this research namely: Community secondary school, Igboukwu; Eze Chima primary school, Onitsha; Kings and Queens secondary school, Nkpor; United primary school, Nkpor; Supreme Knowledge Comprehensive school, Nkpor; Daystar International school, Awka.

#### **Duration of study**

This research has spanned the duration of fifteen years (15yrs; 2008-2023)

#### **Mode of engagement with the schools**

My engagement with some of the schools were in the capacity of music teacher ( Supreme Knowledge Comprehensive schools, Nkpor,) and others as a consultant. I was employed in Supreme Knowledge comprehensive schools, Nkpor as a music teacher in 2008 and left in 2012 (4 years of music teaching and intensive research in music outreach). The rest of the schools engaged me as a music consultant to oversee the development of music and possibly the establishment of a music department on the schools.

Field work/Music outreach in the various schools.

All the schools visited had no formal music education as at the time of the engagement. Although some of them has traditional dance troupes and traditional ensembles which they rehearsed for ceremonies in the schools and outings, but the idea of formal music teaching in the classroom was not in place.

- Supreme Knowledge Comprehensive schools, Nkpor:**

This is a private school situated in Nkpor-Agu within Onitsha metropolis of Anambra state, Nigeria. It had a population of about three hundred and fifty learners in the nursery, primary, and secondary tiers by 2007 when I joined the school as a music teacher.

#### **Music outreach in Supreme Knowledge Comprehensive Schools, Nkpor**

As at 2007, the only form of music that existed in the school was assembly and class singing which were informal. I humbly persuaded the school director, Lady Pat. Okeke towards establishing a music room for classes, music club for enthusiastic pupils and students, and sets of musical instruments (Western and Traditional) for the equipping of the music room. Within one year, the entire school became agog with musical trainings, rehearsals, presentations, and concerts. Every opportunity for music in the school such as school assembly, PTA meetings, graduation ceremony, seminars and symposia, career day, Christmas party etc., was optimally maximized.

The entire experience blossomed into full orchestra, dance troupes, parades band squad, choir, soloists and accomplished musicians in the school who ventured into serving various churches as musicians.

The euphoria led to the organization of the first ever private schools' music concert held in Onitsha metropolis in October, 2008 and hosted by the school with several schools numbering about six in attendance with their respective and peculiar musical renditions.

The musical aroma in the school attracted the Universal Basic Education Board (Anambra state Basic Education Board (ASUBEB) to invite Supreme Knowledge School music team to perform in honor of President Goodluck Jonathan on his first official visit to Anambra state, on October, 2010.

A new culture was introduced in the school that every program in the school should feature at least one performance by the music department and this legacy has kept the school bubbling with a fresh complexion courtesy of music.



**Image 2. The researcher with the famous Bongo Dance Troupe of Supreme Knowledge Comprehensive Schools, Nkpor (Raised by the Researcher in 2010).**



**Image 3. Pupils of supreme Knowledge Comprehensive Schools Nkpor welcoming President Goodluck Jonathan on his first Official visit to Anambra state @ASUBEB premises, Awka, 2010**

It is worrisome that children in most communities of Anambra state have been denied their right to holistic learning and are daily bombarded with the so-called 'core courses'. The researchers outreach to United Primary School, Nkpor showed how enthusiastic these children are for music but unfortunately there is no such hope for them presently.



**Image 4. The researcher with pupils of Prosperity International schools, Nkpor in one of his 'Music Outreaches' in 2025.**

### **Findings**

The outcome of the music outreaches thus far showed that:

- Children are enthusiastic to learn, train, and express themselves through music if there are ready music teachers to engage them.
- Several schools in rural communities of Anambra state have no contact with music as a school subject. For example, community secondary school, Igboukwu.
- Even some of the schools in the supposed urban areas of the state are still 'musically unreached' for example, Eze Chima Primary School, Onitsha; United primary school, Nkpor; Prosperity International schools, Nkpor, and several others.
- Anambra society has not generally accepted music as a worthy subject of study in schools due to the reckless life style associated with musicians around.
- Many schools cannot afford music studies due to 'rising cost of musical instruments' and paucity of funds for commensurate pay of music teachers.
- Some of the schools that commenced music studies some years past could not sustain the practice due to the peculiar change of paucity of funds.

### **Recommendations**

The paper recommends that

- All Anambra state stakeholders in education should move towards a sensitization initiative through the entire communities of the state for the relevance of such subjects as in the holistic development and education of the children.
- Schools should source for funding in sustaining music in their schools from the government, parents, private corporations so that the pupils do not get deprived of the benefits accruing from music studies.
- Music educators should deemphasize the 'glamorous' idea of urban school music teaching where there are immediate financial returns and rise to the challenge of music outreach in remote areas of the state which is even more rewarding in terms of breaking new grounds and leaving a legacy.
- Every music institution, department, academy, organization, schools, and even churches should heed the clarion call and explore the vista of 'music outreach' throughout all remote communities of the state in order to sustain
- Finally, exponents and proponents of music education in the state should further push for assistance, funding, training, grant, aid, or sponsorship from international bodies envisioned with rural development and sustainable educational development such as UNICEF, UBE, UNESCO, etc. to facilitate the vision of **MUSIC OUTREACH** captured in the paper.

## Conclusion

This paper has articulated a clear vision for reaching children in remote areas of Anambra State through music education, despite the numerous structural, financial, and institutional challenges that confront its implementation. The findings reveal that music education remains largely neglected in many rural schools, not due to a lack of interest among pupils or stakeholders, but because of inadequate resources, insufficient trained personnel, and limited policy attention. Consequently, waiting passively for children in these underserved communities to seek out music education has proven ineffective.

Rather, the study demonstrates that proactive engagement through music outreach offers a viable and transformative alternative. By taking music directly to these children, educators and musicologists can stimulate interest, uncover latent talents, and foster holistic development that complements formal education. Music outreach initiatives—such as school-based performances, interactive music workshops, clubs, choirs, and instrumental training—serve not only as pedagogical tools but also as catalysts for community involvement and educational inclusion.

Furthermore, the paper underscores the need for collaboration among music educators, school administrators, policymakers, and cultural institutions to reposition music education as a vital component of basic education, particularly in remote areas. When strategically planned and sustainably implemented, music outreach can bridge the gap between urban and rural music education, promote cultural continuity, and enhance learners' cognitive, social, and emotional development.

In conclusion, music outreach should be embraced as both an educational and social intervention. If optimally explored and adequately supported, it holds the potential to restore music education in remote schools, ensure equitable access to the arts, and reaffirm the role of music as a powerful medium for learning, cultural expression, and societal development in Anambra State and beyond.

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