

FOSTERING MUSIC EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS THROUGH MUSIC PARTNERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

This paper has demonstrated that music education in schools can be enhanced through strategic partnerships. Schools can collaborate with tertiary institutions, professional bodies, international organizations, and local music groups to nurture pupils' and students' musical development. The study explored and highlighted partnerships between several primary schools in Anambra State and the Department of Music, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, over a one-year period (2025–2026), which produced remarkable results. The focus of the partnership was training in cultural dance, conducted by eight members of the renowned Oyoma Dance Troupe of the Department of Music, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka—a group established by the researcher in February 2025. The methodology adopted was practice-based research, which involves generating knowledge through practical engagement. Substantial insights were gained through the various training sessions conducted as part of the partnerships. These trainings culminated in the unveiling of school dance troupes during cultural events organized by the respective schools. The training sessions involved coaching pupils in synchronized dance steps using recorded cultural music. Several challenges were encountered during the study, including the unavailability of traditional musical instruments due to high costs; difficulty in selecting appropriate recorded cultural music; high transportation costs for trainers traveling to and from the schools; time constraints in scheduling rehearsals due to tight school timetables; limited availability of the trainers, who were undergraduate students; challenges in managing pupils effectively during rehearsals; and the financial burden of producing costumes for members of each school's dance troupe. Despite these challenges, appropriate solutions were implemented, and the outcomes of the partnership were positive.

Keywords: music education, partnership, cultural/traditional dance

Introduction

Music educators have always been preoccupied with the challenge of finding the best policy, an effective ideology, and solid philosophy as foundation, effective teaching methods, and the best approaches for fostering music in schools. Surprisingly, several of the lofty approaches geared towards music have not really yielded many results as intended vis-a-vis the status of music in schools. Several factors could be militating against this pursuit such as apathy from schools, parents and students, sustainability gaps, validity of the approaches and methods applied, prevailing socio-economic challenges in the country etc. Moreover, time is very essential for any idea to take its effect no matter how sophisticated or lofty it appears: if there is not ample time, conscientious effort, and patience involved, it eventually diminishes or dies completely.

However, music partnership has been found to relatively gender and foster music education in schools better and easier even though it comes with a relatively high cost and sacrifice.

An Overview of some relevant concepts

▪ Partnership

Partnership is largely a business concept where parties converge and agree on various roles, risks, assets and liabilities, and profit sharing margins in a given business. Allen (2000) expatiated on some types of business partnerships thus:

A limited partnership, or *family limited partnership* (FLP) as it is commonly referred to, is a business entity that contains two or more partners. These partners are the key players in the business arrangement. As such, it is important to understand the role of each in the workings of this entity. The partners will fall into one of two classifications: *general* or *limited*. At least one of these partners must be classified as a general partner, while the others may be treated as limited partners. This becomes a crucial distinction as you begin learning about the intricacies of this entity. ...The first type of partner, the *general partner*, is in complete control over all aspects of the business. The *limited partner* (*s*), on the other hand, has absolutely no say-so in the control of the business. When most people hear this, which role do you suppose they prefer? Why, of course, they want to be the general partner. However, there is another factor to take into consideration: *liability*, or the exposure to lawsuits. The limited partners are given limited liability, whereas the general partner is subject to personal liability. Now which one do you want to be? This is where proper planning can be so important (p.297).

The reason for the long quotation from Allen above is to draw out pertinent issues highlighted which are relevant to the present paper. Partnership as projected in this paper is not a purely business type of partnership where profit and loss margins are the focus but a type of relationship where the centrality is on a 'major partner' helping the other. In this case, the Department of Music, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka plays the role of a major partner by helping out in training pupils of the various schools in some aspects of music.

However, the issue of liability remains a major point since musical training comes with certain demands of manpower, skill, and financial involvements which are invariably business risks and liabilities that actually fell on the shoulders of the Department and the researcher (Dr. Ikedimma Okeke, who is also the Head of the Department at the time of this research) as a result of the nature and peculiarities of the partnership.

The point is that in the partnership with all the schools presented in this paper, the Department of Music of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka played the major role of providing the trainers who were undergraduate students of the Department, sourced for appropriate music for the dance, provided mp3 and music playback systems for the rehearsals, financed the materials for the costume and the sowing, and also financed the transportation and welfare of the trainers for a period of about six months minimum. The Department took the role of the *general partner* as described by Allen (2000) above even though the Department was actually supposed to be the *limited partner* in the partnership with regards to liability management. We shall return to this discussion later.

▪ **Collaboration**

Collaboration is very synonymous with partnership but there are some technical differences. Collaboration is the coming together of a group of persons, experts, or organizations to share ideas, knowledge, experience, or expertise towards achieving a common goal. Furthermore, collaboration has been described as the process of two or more people, or organizations working together to achieve common goals, share knowledge and innovate.

▪ **Differences between Partnership and Collaboration**

The major differences between partnership and collaboration have been lucidly highlighted by The James Irvine Foundation (2026) thus:

A legal partnership is a contractual relationship involving close cooperation between two or more parties having specified and joint rights and responsibilities. Each party has an equal share of the risk as well as the reward. Collaboration involves cooperation in which parties are not necessarily bound contractually. There is a relationship, but it is usually less formal than a binding, legal contract and responsibilities may not be shared equally. A collaboration exists when several people pool their common interests, assets and professional skills to promote broader interests for the community's benefit. The most important thing to remember is: Organizations do not collaborate- people collaborate (p.1).

The facts from the explanation above are that 'partnership' is a very formal and contractual engagement while 'collaboration' is not. Also the fact that 'organizations do not collaborate- people collaborate' is quite relevant to this paper. In other words, organizations go into partnerships. Music partnership as projected in this paper involved a number of Educational organizations (One Tertiary Institution and four Primary schools in Anambra State, South East, Nigeria) and they are:

1. The Department of Music, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
2. Irene Menakaya School, Onitsha, Anambra State, Nigeria
3. Bluepoint Schools, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria
4. Daystar International school, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria
5. Nnamdi Azikiwe University Primary school, Awka, Anambra State

▪ **The Nature of the Music Partnership in the Schools**

The nature of partnership requires certain contractual formalities such as specifics of risks, profit and loss margins, roles, official paper works, written and duly signed agreements, etc. However, the partnership with these schools was hinged on mutual understanding and consideration. The understanding was based on the fact that the schools needed and requested for the musical expertise of the Department of Music, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka in training their pupils in music, particularly cultural dance. The discussions on the partnership was largely necessitated by the news of the breakthrough of the famous *Oyomma Dance Troupe* of the Department of Music, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka which was created by the researcher who is also the Head of the Department. The group has made commendable impact within the university and beyond with their scintillating dance styles and performances. The various schools in partnership with the Department were all excited to see some members of the *Oyomma Dance Troupe* selected to train their pupils in varieties of cultural dance styles. The pupils were selected for the training, properly trained within the window of six months and the dance troupes finally unveiled at the event of the cultural day of the schools respectively.

Methodology

The methodology adopted for this research was *Practice - Research*. Practice –Research is a methodology in which knowledge is gained via practice or the doing of something, rather than reading about it (desk research), or

inquiring into what other people know about that thing (i.e., interviews, surveys, etc.) or other traditional models of research such as case studies and ethnographies (Schrag, 2022). The reason for the adoption of this methodology is simple: partnership with the schools was actually a research on how training pupils, in cultural dance can draw their attention to music and generally foster music education in schools. It was a kind of research that required the actual practice of the idea in the field to ascertain its feasibility and degree of success and this approach yielded commendable results in this research.

The major aspects of the partnership that were handled by the researcher:

1. Provision of trainers (2 per school, a total of 8 for the four schools)
2. Provision of costume (materials and sewing)
3. Funding the welfare of the trainers
4. Securing space at the University web space for the partnership official news
5. Funding the special performances by the *Oyomma Dance Troupe* at the unveiling/cultural day of the respective schools
6. Financial donation of twenty thousand Naira each (N20, 000) in support of the unveiled cultural dance troupes of the respective schools.

Some aspects of the partnership handled by the respective schools:

1. Provision of school space (school hall) and ample time for the training
2. Provision of the school pupils for training
3. Provision of some teachers to assist in managing the pupils during training
4. Provision of school ground as the arena for the cultural day performances
5. Provision of sound system to power the event
6. Invitation of the parents of the school to witness the unveiling

The division of labor between the Department and the schools is clearly lopsided and these are the reasons:

- i. Music Partnership with schools is capital intensive. It is not the ordinary type of research where the researcher comfortably avoids certain expenditures. The nature of this research is such that you might not get serious results if you are not ready to spend for it. This fact is quite clear from the foregoing.
- ii. Schools are currently struggling with several burdens now such as, lack of teachers, problems of space, dwindling pupils' population, paucity of funds, maintaining government approved standards, insecurity, etc., and therefore any discussion or engagement with them should be geared towards ameliorating some or at least one of these problems and not exacerbating them.
- iii. Many Schools also are looking up to higher institutions and professional organizations who could serve as their support system and partners.
- iv. The researcher actually agreed to shoulder the bulk of responsibility of the partnership because he saw the partnership as an opportunity to push music in schools which has been his burning desire and area of research specialty
- v. Moreover, tertiary institutions serve not only for teaching and research within the walls of the university but also to serve the society through productive research engagements such as music partnership in schools.

Overview of the Schools involved in the Partnership

1. Irene Manakaya School, Onitsha

Irene Menakaya School, Onitsha is located at Technical College Road, Onitsha. It is basically a nursery/primary school with thriving school management, staff and pupils. The school is currently managed by Mrs Christy Chukwu and directed by Prof. Ada Menakaya who lives in the USA. My engagement with the school started as early as 2004 when I served as the music teacher from 2004 to 2008. The school is very enthusiastic about music education hence the call for music partnership with the Department. The last partnership in March 2026 at the event of their cultural day was very scintillating and successful and hence the call for another partnership in June, 19 2026 to host the International day of the African Child at the school.

2. Bluepoint Schools Awka

Bluepoint Schools Awka is also a Nursery/Primary school located at the heart of Awka metropolis at 22 Billy Okoye Boulevard, Agu-Awka. The school director is Dr. Mrs. Ejesi, a retired educationist, and former head teacher of Unizik Primary school, Awka. My first engagement with the school was in 2022 when I was invited to train the pupils in music rudiments as part of their holiday lesson. The first engagement proved productive hence the request for partnership in 2026. The partnership in the school culminated in the raising of a special dance troupe called *Chibuzo Dance Troupe* which has junior and senior groups separately. The echoes of the success of the last partnership have initiated another request for further partnership by the school for their school graduation ceremony coming up in July, 2026.

3. Daystar International School Awka

Daystar International School is a Nursery/Primary School also located in Awka metropolis. My engagement with the school dates as early 2011 when the foundation of Formal Music Education was laid by the researcher through the introducing of formal music classes, preparing the pupils for the Christmas Carol of that year, and finally composing the school anthem of the school. The music partnership with the school also involved training the pupils in cultural dance which culminated in raising a special cultural dance troupe in the school which was unveiled on the 26th of March 2026 during the school's cultural day event.

4. Nnamdi Azikiwe University Primary School, Awka

Nnamdi Azikiwe University Primary School is located inside the University and managed by the University. It is popularly known as the Unizik Primary School. The partnership with the school was actually a kind of family partnership due to the fact that the School and the Music Department of the University are members of the same university community. The training with the pupils of the school is ongoing at the moment and will finally culminate in the unveiling of their own dance troupe in July 2026 during the school's graduation ceremony that will be witnessed by the entire University community. We could not have abandoned the 'family school' and pursued partnerships with other distant schools because 'charity should begin at home'.

▪ Why the emphasis on cultural dance (Cultural music)?

The thrust of music partnership in schools has been on cultural dance which is a major aspect of cultural music. What is the reason for this? Why commence with cultural music in schools when there are several other aspects of music that could have formed the foundation for the partnership? Is cultural music superior to other genres of music? The answers to these myriads of questions above are well captured by Nnamani (2019):

The basic roots of music which include rhythm, pitch, tone, quality and intensity are found in the music of every culture. What every culture does is to engineer these in its own which is peculiar to their music. Even within each culture, these same raw materials are engineered into different types of music for different uses (p.3).

What we can glean from Nnamani's submission above is that the music of every culture, which can be regarded as their cultural music, naturally embodies the basic elements of music, rhythm, pitch, tone, quality and intensity which are transmittable to the people in the course of its performance.

This position clearly justifies the use of cultural music (Igbo Cultural Music in the present research) as the basis for the training of the school pupils in the partnership. As the children listened and danced to the tune of the cultural music, beat, pitch, tone, intensity, rhythm, etc, were gradually assimilated and internalized.

Nnamani(2019) further buttressed that, "Community-based music programs, cultural exchange initiatives and parental involvement can also foster a sense of ownership and support for music education in rural areas".

Limitations of the study

Although the music partnership with the various schools yielded commendable results such as resuscitating music in the schools, placing music education in a reputable status, the pupils learning some basics about music through the dance training, and the creation of positive awareness about music amongst the parents and society, some limitations were observed in the course of the research practice. Some of the limitations are:

1. Music partnership in schools is relatively expensive owing to the demands of funding of costume and funding for the trainer's welfare
2. The program is very demanding with regards to space, time, manpower, and convincing the parents and some of the teachers too.
3. The program is also distracting and disruptive of school tranquility due to the noise of the dance music and encroachment into the school crucial hours.
4. Not all pupils like dance music, cultural music, and stage performances due to their different family orientations, shy nature, and preferences.
5. Finally, in a school of a total population of about three hundred to six hundred, only about ten or fifteen pupils maximum would be selected to perform in the dance troupe and this creates serious imbalance in realizing the ideals of the partnership which is fostering music education in the entire school.

Some pictorial evidences of the trainings and unveiling of the Dance Troupes

1. Irene Menakaya School Onitsha



With one of the trainers, Miss Chiamaka Okeke, on 17/10/25



The kids on the cultural day with their other trainer, Miss Chinaecherem Ogbu



The pupils with their costumier, Miss Onyinyechi



The pupils posing with the researcher, Dr. Ikedimma Okeke, after their performance.

2. Bluepoint Schools , Awka



The researcher, Dr. Ikedimma Okeke, delivering a brief topical lecture on the relevance of Cultural Music Education in schools before the entire school and audience during the school's cultural day event on the 10th of March, 2026.

BLUEPOINT SCHOOLS
22 Billy Okoye Boulevard, Agui-Awka
E-mail: bluepointschools@gmail.com
Contact: 07037766508, 08140671097, 08140113299

In Partnership With
The Department of Music,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

ANNOUNCES
20-26 Cultural Festival
(A Golden Edition)

FEATURING:

- Staff/ Pupils Parade
- Iwa oji
- Ilu Igbo
- Class Activities
- Chibuzo Dance Troupe (rehearsal piece)
- Oyomma Dance Troupe (Music Dept)

Tuesday 10th
March 2026 **1:30pm**

Bluepoint play Ground

Powered by:

Dr. Nkoll Ejesi Proprietress Bluepoint Schools	Pst. Dr. Ikedimma Okeke HOD, Music Department Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.	Pst. Iyke Young-samuel PTF Chairman Bluepoint Schools
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Flyer of the event which was widely advertised to sensitize the entire school and the wider community



Training stage at Bluepoint Schools, Awka



Chibuzo senior Dance Troupe of the School posing their trainer, Miss Esther Udeozor and the researcher, Dr. Ikedimma Okeke after their performance



Chibuzo Junior Dance Troupe of the School posing with their trainer, Miss Phyna Obiora and the Researcher, Dr. Ikedimma Okeke after their performance.



The Junior and the Senior troupes posing with the School Director, Dr. Mrs. Ejesi, after their performance



The famous *Oyomma* Dance Troupe of the Department of Music, UNIZIK, Awka, posing with the School Director, Dr. Mrs Ejesi and the Researcher, Dr. Ikedimma Okeke, after their solidarity performance at the school's cultural day.

3. Daystar International School, Awka



Rehearsal with the trainers, Miss Chisom Muoka & Miss Chibuonu



performance on the Cultural Day of the School.



Daystar International School cultural Dance Troupe in action



The dance troupe posing majestically in fulfillment



The Troupe posing with their trainers

4. Unzik Primary School, Awka

The partnership with Unzik Primary School is still at its natal stage but it is hoped to blossom fully like the others in few months from now, hopefully July, 2026 in the event of their school annual graduation ceremony. Presently, the training is on with two members of the *Oyomma Dance Troupe* actively training them.



Training phase at Unzik Primary School

Summary

The resourcefulness of music partnership as a means of fostering music education in schools through the methodology of **Research Practice** was captured in this paper. Research Practice is the discovering of ideas through actual practice. Partnership with the four schools involved active engagement of the pupils of the

respective schools through training that culminated in the unveiling of their Cultural Dance Troupes. Cultural music education through cultural dance training was explored in this study and the results proved that cultural dance is loaded with virtually all the musical elements required for rudimentary music education such as rhythm, melody, pitch discrimination, eurhythmics, tempo, intensity, dynamics, etc which the pupils easily internalized in the course of training and performance.

Despite the ideals of cultural music education via cultural dance training, it was discovered that not all pupils show interest in dance music and only a small population (less than 5%) of the pupils of a given school can be selected to join the dance troupe after the training. This drawback was found a challenge but one of the solutions to the challenge is to train both the junior and senior dance troupes in order to raise the percentage of participation as was demonstrated in Bluepoint schools Awka. Also, pupils can still learn and internalize some musical lessons and details by watching others in training and performance. This window has reduced the number of the pupils excluded in the trainings and increased the number of participation of the pupils. It was discovered also that even the pupils watching from the sides can learn more than those in the arena of training. Partnership in schools for music education is relatively expensive to run although the merits outweigh the financial challenges.

Recommendations

Schools and higher institutions should open up partnership relations to foster music education in schools in which ever means that is feasible. Schools should not pretend that all is going on well with regards to music while the subjects suffer and gradually slides into extinction. Tertiary institutions and organizations, on their part, should explore means of salvaging schools from their many challenges, not just in music, but in areas of education requiring attention. Higher institutions have the mastery, expertise, and experience to extend good hands in partnership towards schools as part of their mandate of operationality which is research and community service. Music education can be fostered in schools using Music Partnership as demonstrated in this paper as template.

Conclusion

Opportunities for fostering music education in schools abound, and one of the most effective is music partnership. Whether a school initiates collaboration with a higher institution or organization, or vice versa, is immaterial; what matters is that both parties come together with a shared commitment to promoting music education in the school.

The benefits of such an endeavor are not primarily material, especially in the context of the capitalist and materialistic nature of the modern world. Rather, the true value lies in nurturing children musically, which represents a far greater long-term investment.

When music education is strengthened in schools, it lays a solid foundation for the development of well-rounded individuals—individuals who can feel and understand the rhythm of life, relate effectively with others, appreciate diverse perspectives, acquire valuable skills, become independent, and pursue meaningful ideals in life.

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