An Overview of Formal Music Education in Nigeria, with Special Focus on College of Education, Agbor

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Abstract

Music is an integral part of culture and is open to educational systems. The Department of Music in the College of Education, Agbor, was established on the 1st of July, 1981 as a double major course and later, the single major option was added. Since then, the Department has undergone changes in diverse ways. The programme has led to the production of manpower in music that are today contributing to the profession in different capacities. Using the College of Education, Agbor, as a case study, the knowledge herein will provide an insight into the dynamics that occurred in the college since its establishment, and the challenges being faced by the system. Suggestions on the survival of the music programme in the college and how it can be enhanced are provided. Unstructured interview questions and personal observation were the instruments used for data collection. The paper focuses on developmental trends of music studies in the college through a preliminary analysis of the basic philosophies, objectives of the programme, series of changes in times past, available facilities and manpower. The paper recommends that the Department which is in dire need of resuscitation, should urgently involve relevant stakeholders that will help galvanize and improve the

present abysmally low student and academic staff population that has been on a drastic decline since the last decade.

Keywords: Music, College of Education, Music Studies, Manpower

Introduction

Formal music education at the tertiary level began in present day Delta State in 1975 with the establishment of the College of Education, Abraka. Later in 1980, a bill was moved by the then Governor of the defunct Bendel State, Professor Ambrose Alli, to establish three more colleges of education, out of which two were sited in Warri and Agbor. The establishment of the two new colleges brought succor to music enthusiasts who had wished to study music formally. But later on, the college of education, Abraka, was upgraded to a campus of Bendel State University, Ekpoma, with music being retained as a course of study. With the creation of the new Delta State, there were to remain two colleges of education offering Music. But this was not to be the case as music was phased out of the College of Education, Warri, in 1991 (Idolor. 2001). Not until 2014 when the programme in the College of Education, Warri, was resuscitated, College of education, Agbor, was the only College of Education offering music as a course of study in Delta State. In other words, the music programme in Agbor has continued uninterruptedly since 1981. During this period, countless individuals have been produced that are today contributing their quota to music education and other areas of music practice in Nigeria. It has therefore become important to document some of the events that took place in the Department of Music, College of Education (C.O.E), Agbor. The authors collected data through interviews of old and current staff of the department and a visit to the college. It was observed that the music programme in the college has been suffering some drawbacks in terms of low student population, inadequate staff and lack of facilities for teaching and learning. The paper recommends that for the department and programme to remain

relevant, new innovations which include curriculum review must be urgently implemented, and stakeholders wooed to wade in.

Objectives of the Study

Having identified the problem, the research took a historical study of trends of musical studies in the College of Education, Agbor. The study shall identify the objectives and philosophies of the music programme of the department, and examine the instructional resources as it relates to personnel and available materials. The challenges being faced by the department shall be identified, and possible solutions unearthed in this regard.

Policy makers will be opportune to see the extent to which they have contributed to the advancement or retardation of musical studies in College while individuals who in one way or the other, single handedly or collectively contributed to the progress of musical studies in the college appropriately be distinguished in order to encourage others to emulate valuable standards for the advancement of the discipline.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is limited to the Department of Music, College of Education, Agbor. As for content, the paper briefly examines the study of music in Nigeria, using the College of Education, Agbor, as case study. It makes observations on the available manpower, instructional facilities, and the present infrastructural condition in the department.

Research Questions

The following questions were formulated to guide the study:

(1) What are the historical beginnings of the Department of Music, College of Education, Agbor?

(2) What are the set objectives and philosophy of the music programme of the college?
(3) What is the progressive trend in the intake of students over the years and output of staff and students of the department?
(4) What is the trend of materials and equipment for teaching and learning of music in the college?
(5) What are the problems affecting teaching, learning and performance of music in the college?

Method of Data Collection

The study involves a systematic and objective collection and evaluation of data related to past events, developments and experiences. This approach is useful in testing hypotheses concerning causes, effects or trends of those events that may help explain the present and anticipate future phenomena. The study is a little historical and more descriptive. This is more than mere recording of past events, as they also involve systematic/objective data collection, analysis and the confirmation or disconfirmation of hypotheses. Often times in historical research, the researcher is unable to influence the events that had already occurred and therefore, impossible to manipulate or control any of the variables. Observation was also employed and involved the researchers watching the situations with the interest of collecting data. It helped the authors to obtain firsthand information relating to a particular aspect of such situation or phenomena. It was also useful to the researchers in observing the trends in the department over the years.

Sampling

The research utilized the past and present lecturers that constituted the population of the study and were purposively taken to contribute to the sample population. This is against the background that the target population is handy and manageable enough for the study, thereby eliminating the need for a sample size or a sample technique.

Foundations of Formal Music Studies in Nigeria

In Nigeria, the teaching and learning of traditional music could be acquired through hereditary, imitation, participation, apprenticeship and innate abilities. Music education often starts from childhood through oral tradition and may be a long process. Before the beginning of Western education in Nigeria, these was the traditionally approved and effective means of transmitting musical knowledge from one generation to another. But the advent of formal education had music introduced into the school system. Western education which began in Nigeria in the nineteenth century made way for Nigeria to witness the addition of formal approaches to the existing systems of music education. The activities of the early Nigerian schools were predominantly Western oriented. The use of Western musical materials for teaching characterized the training of pupils in nineteenth century Nigerian schools. Idolor (2001: 136-137) states that 'formal approach to musical studies in Nigeria dates back to the establishment of mission schools'. By 1858, Idolor (2001) citing B.O. Ukeje, records that the first day school established by the C.M.S missionaries in Onitsha and post primary schools like Baptist Teachers College, Ibadan, and Zik Grammar School, Sapele, founded in 1897, 1905 and 1943 respectively had music literally taught in their programme of studies. Although some of the schools during the missionary and colonial period laid the foundation for studies in art music, much of the content was European based because they were the financiers and executors of the programme. Apart from some teachers colleges, most secondary school students did not learn music up to school certificate level. Notable names like Robert Coker, Nathaniel King pioneered and orchestrated modern Nigerian study of music, while T.K.E. Philips, Fela Sowande, William Wilberforce Echezona, Akin Euba, Ayo Bankole, Laz Ekwueme, Sam Akpobot and others also played leading roles in the advent of formal music education in Nigeria. Omojola (1992) also states that the efforts of these art musicians gave music a new out-look not only as a natural activity, but as an art endeavour. These music scholars according to him were all products of Euro-African tradition, having

realized that music goes far beyond singing and dancing, and saw the need for inclusion of music in the disciplines of the first indigenous university of Nigeria, in 1960. Today, music as a course is now being taught in not less than fifteen Nigerian universities, sixteen Colleges of Education and one Polytechnic running a programme in music technology. There are also some institutions like the University of Lagos and University of Ilorin that run programmes in Creative Arts and Performing Arts respectively with specialization in Music.

The music curriculum used by these departments of music are tailored towards producing individuals who are musically literate and competent both in theory and practice from the primary to tertiary levels. The cumulative nature of the curriculum is what is expected to lead to that end. But unfortunately, this goal seems to be a herculean task. Many products of the system did not wish to study music neither had they ever been exposed to some informal music lessons prior to their arrival. Hardly is music taught in primary schools, except in the privileged ones or a few sited in urban areas. At the secondary level, only a handful of them teach music at Junior Secondary School (J.S.S) level while the Senior Secondary School (S.S.S) level witnesses even a lower percentage. It is not surprising therefore that when it comes to the turn of the colleges of education who are charged with the responsibility of training teachers for J.S.S levels, the whole effort literally begins from the scratch. This may be partly responsible for why many music students in Nigerian tertiary institutions have great difficulty in coping with practical courses. Most of the time, the amount of skill proficiency acquired by graduates of colleges of education naturally falls below required minimum standards set by the National Commission for Colleges of Education. Most entrants into the college system graduate with only elementary skills in piano and other instruments. Perhaps, this accounts for why the greater percentage of music graduates have no faith in themselves to impact to others what they have studied. At best, they attempt taking teaching positions at the J.S.S level.

The dawn of acquiring higher education locally in Nigeria started with the establishment of Yaba Higher College in 1934 and was followed by the University College, Ibadan, in 1948, Nigeria Colleges of Arts and Science located in Zaria, Ibadan and Enugu, were later founded in 1952 during the colonial era of administration (Idolor, 1993). At the time, music scholars who were opportune had to travel to Michigan, London, Los Angeles, Belfast, Toronto and other foreign countries to actualize their desires of acquiring formal education in music. Pioneering personalities in this category are Robert Coker, Fela Sowande, W.W.C. Echezona, Dayo Dedeke, T.K.E Phillip and a host of others. But with the establishment of the university of Nigeria, Nsukka, on the philosophy of 'Restoring the Dignity of Man', music was seen as an important study of the African life and a department of music was founded in 1960 which took off with four pioneering students (Meki Nzewi, Felix Nwuba, Sam Olukwu and Michael Okoye) in 1961 (Idolor, 1992). One basic approach to curricula development was evident in all the programmes and that is the bi—musical model which emphasized the synthesis of African and other world music cultures including Europe. But to avoid the abuse of standards and perhaps, unhealthy rivalry between the music departments, commissions were set by the Federal Government of Nigeria to fashion out a common ground for the different curricula which were already in operation. These are the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) established in 1987 and 1989 respectively.

Brief History of the Music Programme in the College of Education, Agbor

The dawn of acquiring higher education locally in Nigeria started with the establishment of Yaba Higher College in 1934 and was followed by the University College, Ibadan, in 1948; Nigeria College of Arts and Sciences in Zaria, Ibadan and Enugu in 1990, there were thirty two Universities, twenty six Polytechnics, five Colleges of Education and six Schools of Arts and Sciences (Idolor, 1993:131). With a more indigenous autonomy of the

Nigerian educational system, the 1981 National Policy on Education (NPE) designed the following aims for higher education in Nigeria:

(a) The acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value - orientation for the survival of the individual and society.
(b) The development of the intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate their environments.
(c) The acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community
(d) The acquisition of an objective view of the local and external environments.

These goals are to be pursued through:

i. Teaching
ii. Research
iii. The dissemination of existing and new information.
iv. The pursuit of service to the community.
v. Being a storehouse of knowledge (FRN 1981:22).

Consequent upon these goals, institutions of higher learning established various faculties/schools/colleges such as the Arts, Social Sciences, Humanities, Pure Sciences, Engineering, Technology, Medicine, Business Administration, Agriculture, Law, Education, etc. These faculties were made up of hundreds of courses in which students can specialize.
While it may be asserted that some form of general studies and researches were made in music in the institutions of higher learning in pre-independence Nigeria, intensive career/professional musical studies started with the establishment of the Department of Music, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, in 1960.

During the regime of Professor Ambrose Alli, the governor of Bendel State, a bill was passed for the establishment of four Colleges of Education in the state on 1 July, 1981. These colleges were located in Benin, Warri, Agbor and Igueben. The purpose of the bill was to:

a) produce highly motivated conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system;
b) encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
c) help teachers to fit into social life of the community and the society at large and to enhance their commitment to national objectives;
d) provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adaptable to any changing situations not only in the life of their country, but in the wider world; and
e) enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.
(FRN, 1998, p. 39, cited in Adeogun, 2015:3)

The entry requirements for candidates to study music is almost uniform in all colleges of education in Nigeria. Candidates are required to have at least three credit passes at the ordinary level in not more than two sittings. For holders of the grade two teachers certificate, merit or credit passes in two relevant subject combinations were required. In all these, a pass in music at the Senior Secondary Certificate or G.C.E/O,/L/TC II is usually not compulsory for admission to study music because many candidates had no formal background in music in their various secondary schools. However, candidates are sometimes subjected to a departmental auditioning in music. Usually, one hundred multiple-choice type questions bordering on all aspects of the performance level in the test determine admission into the department of music.

Nwoko (personal communication) observes that the background of the mode of admission that had been experimented in the department from 1980 to 1984 was later found unsuitable for the caliber of music teachers and

musicians intended for society. ln the 1984/1985 academic session, students were admitted and in 1985/1986 session, the first set of students for double major study were moved to year one. She also notes that it was inappropriate for students to undertake teaching practices for one year because students lacked required teaching skills. As Head of Department, she raised a memo for the entire programme in the college for students to embark on teaching practice in the first semester of year three. This was based on the fact that students needed to be equipped with the content of their discipline before acquiring teaching skills. This proposal was approved and has since become the practice in the college till this day.

The issue of music as a single major course became a concern to students and lecturers in the college. It was observed that students focused more on the combined subject than music. At the beginning of the department, there were only three lecturers, staff population was three. Mrs. Elsie, E. Nwoko, (Dip. Mus./Ed, B.Ed. Music, M.Ed), who was the Head of Department, Mr. Joseph, E. C. Opuje (C.M, G.D.M, A.F, Dip Tech. Cert Music) Mr. Israel, B. Omoda (H.N.D Music). As at the time of this research, the department has six (6) lecturers and three (3) office staff.

At the time of the curriculum harmonization exercise in 1986, the only music department in the colleges of education in the state was Agbor. The harmonization exercise was done on the basis of single major. At the beginning of the 1986/1987 session, the music department in the college got the approval for a double major music programme. The head of department had to write on February 24, 1987, when the need for music as a double major course arose particularly as the defunct Bendel State University, Ekpoma, had its Department of Music sited in Abraka Campus.

Later on, a letter was sent to the management requesting approval for the Academic Study of Music in Nigerian Schools. The letter contained the following requests:

1. A change from single to double major music programme
2. An increase of total units for N.C.E.
3. Reinstatement of applied music in year 1 and II to achieve the desired objectives.
4. A community of some courses in subsequent years of study for cumulative purpose.

According to Idolor (2011), on 21 September, 1987, a seminar on the implementation of the harmonized music programme was held. Music staff from each of the colleges of education attended the seminar at the University of Benin, from 26th to 27th February, 1990. With this, double major curriculum and the reduction of teaching practice duration from one year to one semester, a great improvement was made to include more courses such as General Musicianship, Conducting, Scoring and Arranging, Band/Ensemble and Dance Performance. The content also involved details that equipped graduates with required musical knowledge. The Pre-NCE curriculum in music in all the colleges had six courses which are Theory of Music, African Music, History of Western Music, Aural Training, Applied Music and English Language.

Objectives of the Music Programme in the College of Education, Agbor

The major aim of the Department of Music is to teach, research and undertake community services relevant to the profession. The objective of the department as stated earlier is to produce qualified, competent and imaginative music teachers capable of teaching the subject both at the primary and junior secondary school levels. Idolor (1993) records that in 1986, the moderating institution, the University of Benin, called for Harmonization of the music curricular of Agbor, Ekiadolor and Warri, with Dr. Emeka Nwaduoku as the chairman of the committee. It is not enough that students of the department go into the school and concentrate on teaching music as a theoretical subject, but as a practical subject. Since this

can stimulate the interest and enthusiasm of learners, a theoretical and practical competence on the part of the teacher is required.

Infrastructure/Equipment, Student Population and Staffing of the Department of Music, C.O.E, Agbor

When the department started in 1980, the only available musical instruments were few recorders and traditional musical instruments like drums, *Agogo, Isia, Alo, Okpokolo* (Slit drum) and conga drums. The first standard piano was bought for the department in 1981. At the end of the same year, two clarinets and two flutes were purchased with which the department staged her maiden concert. As at the time of writing this research, the Western musical instruments in the Department include flutes, trumpets, saxophones, pianos, violins, clarinets, trombones, tuba and various sound reinforcement equipment. But sadly, virtually all the available musical instruments listed above are in a dilapidated state. Most of the instruments are nonfunctional, too old and irreparable. For example, the only functional upright piano in the Department was bought in 1981. Aside its existence and use for about four decades, the piano has over the years suffered invasion by rodents, termites and other insects, thus causing and leaving almost permanent technical and structural damages. The music studio is a far cry of what should constitute a studio. Most of the gadgets have either been vandalized or deployed to serve other purposes outside the studio. There are currently two lecture rooms and a performance hall, all of which are unkempt and grossly inappropriate for music studies. There are a considerable number of African musical instruments. The course, Elementary Technology of Music (Mus. 127) has been one of the means through which African musical instruments are produced for the Department.

As at the time of this research, Mr. Oghiator Kassim (Personal communication) confirmed that there are only six students in the whole Department of Music at C.O.E, Agbor, with two students in each class. The

situation was even worse earlier in 2020 during the first semester, where year three students had to go for the mandatory teaching practice and industrial training (I.T); this situation left the department with only four students. The abysmally low number of six students in the department not only puts the survival of the department and job security of her staff at risk, it poses a major challenge to teaching and learning of practical and ensemble courses. For example, choreographing a traditional dance, learning an art or popular piece for soprano, alto, tenor, bass, or playing orchestral works becomes almost impossible. Although the department resorted to recalling old students that are still within Agbor metropolis to boost the number of performers for college events like matriculation ceremonies, it is factual that the situation calls for an immediate intervention by stakeholders. Also, there are presently only six fulltime academic staff in the department. This is because a number of lecturers in the department have either retired from service, or left the college system in search for greener pastures.

Music Staff of College of Education, Agbor, and their Academic Qualifications

S/N	Name of Staff	Academic Qualifications	Area(s) of Specialization	Musical Instruments Taught
1	Uche, Maureen	N.C.E., B.A, M.A., PhD	African Musicology and Dance	Clarinet
2	Oghiator, Kassim	N.C.E., B.A., M.A	African Musicology and Technology	Saxophone and Trombone
3	Okunbor, Dora	N.C.E., B.A (Ed), M.Ed., M.A	Music Education	Flute
4	Okafor, Justina	B.A (Ed), M.A., PhD	Theory and Composition	Piano and Flute

5	Onyenye, Peace	B.A., PGDE., M.A., M.A	Music Media and African Musicology	Saxophone
6	*Ofosu, Osborne	B.A(Ed), M.A	Theory and Composition	Piano and Violin
7	Nwokolo, Timothy	N.C.E., B.A	Popular Music	Trumpet

Source: Igbi, 2017

- Ofosu, Osborne is a servicing staff of the Department of Music, who originally lectures in the Department of Early Childhood Education.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper focused on tertiary music education in Nigeria, using the College of Education, Agbor, as case study. The study noted that the department is presently a shadow of what it was in the 1990s and 2000s, owing to poor human and material resources. The student population has also been on a steady decline in the last decade, a situation which has left a full-fledged Department of Music with only six students and six academic staff. In view of this, it is recommended that the general public be re-oriented on the importance and need for music education to avoid the negative perception of the profession. It is also observed that lack of manpower in the college has led to the low productivity of teachers at the higher level of education. The Department of Music at the College of Education, Agbor, should solicit financial intervention from individuals, music enthusiasts and organizations of good will to acquire infrastructure such as a standard concert hall that will be fit for ensemble rehearsals and sit more guests during concerts. A well-equipped music studio and more musical instruments that would meet the needs of music students should be provided. Through this, the lofty aims of the NCCE will be achieved while the students of the department get the desired grooming that will enable them compete favourably with their counterparts from elsewhere.

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Interviews

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Mrs. Elsie Nwoko
Professor Emurobome Idolor
Mrs. Dora Okumbor