DECOLONISING MUSIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: RECONNECTING INDIGENOUS MUSICAL TRADITIONS IN CLASSROOM PRACTICES

By

Ukeme Akpan Udoh Ph.D.

And

Grace Etim Ekong Ph.D.
Department of Music,
University of Uyo, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Since Nigeria's independence in 1960, the music education model in Nigeria and many parts of Africa has been promoted as bi-musical, dominated by Western and African music elements. The same model has characterised the curriculum contents and the actual teaching and learning of music. In the recent period, many scholars have proposed that the main aim of African musicology should be to balance the curriculum contents and interpret the same in the classroom practices at least within the reality of the (Nigerian) society. The question is, is it possible to achieve a balance between Western music theory and its African counterpart? Will a balance in the curriculum address the cultural and social deficiencies of the educational system? While focusing on these questions, this paper examines bi-musicality in the Nigerian music curriculum and music systems. Its analytical turn adopts Nativism as a postcolonial mode of reorientation as a framework to raise concerns regarding decoloniality in music education in Nigeria, especially the need to reconnect with indigenous traditions. Despite the fluidity of decolonising creativity and culture in Nigeria vis-à-vis globalisation and modernisation, we propose reviving some essential musical and cultural traditions that are facing extinction and adopting them into the music education curriculum.

KEYWORDS: Decolonisation, Music Education, Nigeria, Bi-Musicality, Cultural Identity.

INTRODUCTION

This essay examines bi-musicality in the content of the National Universities Commission's Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (NUC, BMAS). It assesses the African and Western content in the curriculum and argues for a balance in bi-musicality. The materials for this paper were gleaned from three years of observations and interactions involving music graduates and third- and fourth-year students between 2021 and 2023. A total of 90 participants were involved in the study, 70 were third- and fourth-year undergraduates, while the remaining 20 were graduates. For the latter (music graduates), we focused on those who have been employed or self-employed and those who were unemployed (identified as 'educated unemployment'). Our interviews with the third- and fourth-year students adopted a focus-group discussion on what they thought was wrong with the teaching and learning of music in our academy. Although our earlier motivation in this research was on "educated unemployment" and why music education should be geared towards a balance in employment, this motivation changed as third- and fourth-year students shared their classroom experiences on what they understood music to be and the reality

they encountered in the classroom practices. Their dimensions and our earlier motivation have been contextualised and merged into our discussions on the need for the decolonisation of music education in Nigeria as a bi-musical approach, towards a multi-musical approach. The paper is presented in two sections. First, we present an overview of the matters that arise from discussion on music education in Nigeria, as we propose a decolonisation that reconnects Indigenous culture and societal reality in classroom practices. This advocacy toward decolonisation is already a global trend in post-colonial discourses, and we have, in the current context, localised our discourse to Nigeria. The second section highlights the content of the curriculum and analyses Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) as we pursue an understanding of the dominant ideology behind its functioning, which represents the kind of education that has been transmitted to succeeding generations in the last six decades. Theoretically, we have engaged with 'reconnecting tradition' that synchronizes with the postcolonial concept of Nativism. By this, we imply that Nativism means the localization of contents or 'reconnecting traditions' as Nketia calls it (Nketia, 2018). The exception is that such 'localization' would require the specific culturally dependent strategy that serves as a model in the analysis of music in the Nigerian educational system (as demonstrated in this paper) and at the same time has global relevance. It is on this merit that the relationship between music as musicking, and music education through its music curriculum, both as social practices and culture-dependent realities has relevance taking the view that 'education has a role in reshaping society' as 'education' in the pre-colonial epoch in Nigeria was the responsibility of the community.

NIGERIA, DECOLONIALITY AND SOCIAL REALITY

In his topical publication, Allsup (2016) describes an open philosophy of music education as 'opening closed forms of communication'. He went further to identify music education on some levels as demanding "an emancipatory process, one that takes the lingua franca of global power, hierarchy, and oppression and bends it to local needs" (p. 6). This description explains colonization as 'global power, hierarchy, and oppression', and decolonization as 'an emancipatory process that bends to local needs.' Globally, Burke Stanton has reported that music is equated with "works of the music in the Western tradition" (2018, p. 5), and critiquing these anomalies, Christopher Small observes that "This privileging of Western classical music above all other musics is a strange and contradictory phenomenon" (1998, p. 3). In Nigeria, for instance, there is a perceptible distinction between music and music education. The former is the gamut of musical practices within the traditions of Nigerian society. The latter promotes the Eurocentric approach (i.e., bi-musicality) that places Western music at the apex of musical socialisation. The problem with the latter is that it has created and continues to create difficulties in musicological studies by distinguishing sharply, the so-called 'primitive' and the high culture; folk/traditional music and classical music; popular and art music. A more problematic issue is the discrepancy it has promoted in the Nigerian context of music education, which always favours Western musical culture. Thus, the calls for decolonisation correspond with understanding the dynamics of colonialism that have developed new strategies (Kessia, Marks and Ramugondo, 2020). In this paper, we examine the concept of bi-musicality and how it is contextualised in the Nigerian music curriculum and music education systems. In the analysis, we have identified Nativism as a postcolonial mode of reorientation and a framework to raise concerns regarding decoloniality in music education in Nigeria, especially the need to reconnect with indigenous traditions. The notion of reconnection with indigenous oral traditions is closely linked with music as a social practice.

MUSIC AS A SOCIAL PRACTICE

Music is a social practice and shares similarities with schooling, language, art, religion, and so on, which are all social practices. Regelski (2009, p. vi) defines a social practice as "a collection of customs shared by a particular group that, through that group, makes a contribution to society and culture". In other words, a social practice can be measured by its contribution to society and culture. While it might be pre-emptive to suggest that indigenous music, like other social practices, contributes to society and culture, we want to focus more on music education in Nigeria to assess its contributions and to sustain its networks of practices. By this, we assess bi-musical music education in Nigeria. Our concern is geared toward how promoting Western ideals has hindered the function of social practice and its networks in the schooling systems. This concern is not new, some scholars have described music education in Nigeria as a form of colonisation (Onyeji, 2017; Okafor, 1992; Nzewi, 1988). What is new in this context is the theoretical underpinning that enables us to critically assess bi-musicality and the resilience of colonisation. The paper contributes to several scholarly works on decolonisation and music education in Nigeria. The aim is to illustrate the connection between Western music ideals and how the new education goals, under conditions of nativism, as a postcolonial theory, can positively impact the music educational system. We argue that until certain conditions of bi-musicality are met, decolonisation may remain impossible. The implication is that the complex relationships that developed under the colonial system remain ingrained in the networks of music education.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MUSIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Nigeria's formal education in music began through Christianity by the missionaries who established schools to support their Christianization agenda. When colonial administration joined later, the school systems had specific goals of training native personnel to support the indirect rule, and other lower-level work force in Nigeria (Falola and Dauda, 2017). At the end of colonial rule in 1960, music programmes were adopted or borrowed abroad and were implemented in Nigeria. But in the decades after independence, scholars like Kabir and Djebbari (2019) have demonstrated how music and other local creativity represent a powerful medium to perform different registers of identity in various local, national, or diasporic contexts. In other words, these cultural creativity and models should have become epistemic stances for music education in specific African domains to develop the field of African Musicology. African Musicology is what Kofi Agawu has identified as the 'Africanist Ethnomusicology' (Agawu, 2003), whose primary objective for music education in Africa is to provide the enabling practical and social grounds for individuals to meet expected social, cultural, and creative obligations in any given social context (Onyeji & Onyeji, 2023; Ekong & Udoh, 2017). The background of African Musicology is to contextualise cultural identity models as a major component of indigenous Africa in its educational goals.

Ostensibly, achieving African Musicology's educational goals in Nigeria has been quite daunting, especially resisting the Westernised model within the Nigerian curriculum. But the difficulty with this lacuna of identity essence is also steeped in multiple deficiencies, and there are questions arising thereto: What kind of music education will proffer solutions to the new 'educated unemployment' in Nigeria? This question becomes more complicated when we ask: Why should Nigerian music graduates be unemployed when the Nigerian music industry, for instance, has been one of the fastest-growing and lucrative industries in recent years? It is for this reason that we have focused on the music education curriculum in Nigeria and its bi-musical foundation. Thus, we

understand music in what Christopher Small calls musicking, and music education as schooling, both as social practices that should contribute to society and culture. Our concern is how music and music education synchronise within the network of practices to contribute significantly to the social progress within Nigerian society and culture. It is within the aforementioned issues that this paper lends toward decolonisation, at least to reflect the social context and patterns of musicking as a social practice in contemporary society. Thus, we contextualise reconnecting Indigenous traditions with decolonisation, which 'seeks a radical disordering of violent structures in all of their insidious manifestations' (Stanton, 2018, p. 7). To examine one of such manifestations, we have analysed the teaching and learning model within the Nigerian educational system using the National Universities Commission's Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS). It is noteworthy that the new curriculum, called Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS), may have more concentration on reconnecting Indigenous traditions. Even so, it has just begun, and it will be pre-emptive to assess the impact of a four-year curriculum within its first year of implementation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE THEORY OF NATIVISM

Before fast-forwarding to the core of this paper, we have engaged with Ashcraft, Griffiths and Tiffin's definition of 'Nativism' as "A term for the desire to return to indigenous practices and cultural forms as they existed in pre-colonial society" (2007, p. 143). In this context, we acknowledge that there was an education model in the pre-colonial society that was functional and society-driven. In Nativism, we have subscribed to reconnecting with cultural activities that promote societal development and traditions. The debate on Nativism as decolonisation becomes complex because most scholars have continued to query how far such a return, reconnection, or reconstruction is possible (or desirable) in a globally complex and technologically advanced modernity. This is so because the desire to return to, reconnect with, or restore indigenous practices, beliefs, and cultural forms inhibited, destroyed, or outlawed by a colonising power, and generally held by cultural natives in the past, has in recent times become problematic. For example, Ebre, Mbopo, or Ekpo music among the Ibibio of Nigeria is seen as outdated or old-fashioned even when their Indigenous practices are more authentic and, therefore, more culturally nourishing than the adopted or imposed Western practices. In addition, some natives or internal authorities now identify them as 'primitive' or old-fashioned and should be banned. As Kwabena-Nketia (2018) explains, nativism would mean "competence in the indigenous music … gained through the enculturated process of oral tradition, apprenticeship and participation in musical events in the traditional community, and not through the formal school system introduced by colonial and missionary intervention" (p. 17). In this case, the enculturated process of apprenticeship and participation in these musical events are seen as irrelevant and useless and are activities of the uneducated. This is where decolonisation, like nativism or reconnecting with tradition, comes in, and a revisionist system (a progressive strategy) should aid rather than hinder modern growth and cultural interconnections. At this point, we will argue that the borrowed Western educational model, rather than building connectivity, creates a disconnect because interconnections with other cultures must be built on an established cultural foundation to interact effectively. Thus, colonisation and its subtle agents, such as globalisation and modernity, repudiate competence in the indigenous music. Therefore, on what grounds would competence in indigenous music move beyond anti-colonisation to propagating a reorientation of the African knowledge systems? We propose that Nativism in the Nigerian educational system would mean a reconnection with

Indigenous traditions and cultural realities. Taken differently, decolonisation should advance beyond a 'desire' (in the definition of Nativism) to pragmatic approaches, and it must confront epistemic powers and imperial strategies that function using internal colonising systems. Again, decolonisation, we advocate, must entail a conscious implementation and interpretation of Nigerian educational goals toward the tenets of the society and culture. This is so from the background that "Indigenous [musical] practices are more authentic and therefore more culturally nourishing than the adopted or imposed western practices" (Onyeji, 2017) and should contribute meaningfully to functional education. However, modernity also has a role to play. As Mokwunyei (2020, p. 147) explains, "While education represents the thought of a people who are trapped in a whirl of civilisational change, the curriculum remains the crucible for both imagined and real improvements to the human mind." To examine the model of modernity in the Nigerian curriculum, we turn to bi-musicality in the Nigerian music education system.

BI-MUSICALITY: AN UNEQUALLED PRACTICE IN NIGERIA

There is an unequalled practice of bi-musicality in Nigeria. According to Okafor (2005, p. 210), "The University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), must be mentioned and praised for the trail it blazed in music education of the country. UNN had the first college of Music in Africa, and it produced a core of people trained in music as well as other disciplines. It placed a strong emphasis on the study of the traditional music of the country." In the last sentence, Okafor made it incredibly clear that the UNN programme was established to entrench bi-musicality in its products. But to what extent did the curriculum place a strong emphasis on the study of the traditional music of the country? This question arises because, at the time of this proposition, as Hymes Onovwerosuoke observes, "Many of the early music teachers were European and American, causing courses to be taught from a Western perspective" (2007, p. 1). Even the much-celebrated art music, the most successful product of this bi-musical experimentation, had its shortcomings, a tokenistic approach in the use of Indigenous music elements. For example, as Hymes Onovwerosuoke notes further "In most cases, composers, whether schooled at home or abroad, are taught the Western music traditions of harmony, orchestration, etc., and are subsequently inclined to write compositions for standard genres including string quartets, symphonies and operas" (Ibid.). In addition, the compositions were intended for a new audience. Kwabena Nketia, a notable scholar of African music explains that art music is "music designed for intent listening or presentation as 'concert' music, music in which expression of feeling is combined with a high level of craftsmanship and a sense of beauty" (2004, p. 5). Notably, two dimensions: training and audience participation, betrayed the notion of art music and its connectivity to indigenous music. This was so because the notion that African art music signifies "works that manifest these attributes but which are rooted in the traditions of Africa" (Ibid.) was quite ironic. The next issue was traditional music, which belongs to a functional context and could not be explained within 'a high level of craftsmanship and a sense of beauty', training and mode of audience participation. More succinctly, Ademola Adegbite has explained that art musicians are those "who had training [education] in techniques of western art music" identifying its specialized genre in the fact that they reflect both Western and African elements, describing it as a "type of musical synthesis which is cross-fertilized by African and Western musical elements" (2002, p. 77). The point here is that a 'reflection of both Western and African elements', with cliches of synthesis and cross-fertilization, had become terminologies to explain away the colonial occupation in art music. For clarity, the views above show that art musicians had their training in the techniques of Western

art music without much background in traditional music. Hymes Onovwerosuoke (2007), while supporting art music practices, notes concerning the educational background that "To obtain fluency with the Western elements of music, African composers were trained abroad as well as in native African music schools" (p. 1). By this, Wendy inadvertently agrees that the music curriculum abroad and those used in native schools were similar. Hymes Onovwerosuoke notes further that "In native schools, the amount of the curriculum devoted to that country's own ethnic groups and to Western concert music varies from institution to institution" (Hymes Onovwerosuoke 2007). This means that the native schools had no standard practices or models to implement or localise, as we would explain in this context. Perhaps these educationally-exposed elites did not want to learn under quacks and amateurs, even when traditional music, musicians, and popular music were dominant in their locality. Furthermore, Idolor buttresses that in the case of Nigerian (native) schools, the adjustment to a more nationalistic curriculum took place gradually and that many of the early music teachers were European and American, causing courses to be taught from a Western perspective. He explains further that shortly after African nations started to win independence, the call for a more nationalistic curriculum was strengthened, and each institution's music department enlarged this component of the programme as resources allowed (Idolor 2001). The challenge with this position is complex, especially in attaching the localisation of the music programmes/curriculum to resources. As we have observed, the educational budgets in Nigeria have been on a steady decline in the last ten years. Although resources may be secondary in Idolor's view, the primary position is leaving the decolonisation to each institution's music department to grapple with under models of bi-musicality. This shows the lack of epistemic or ideological stance when compared with Western music that can be implemented using local content. Thus, we find that art music has a sense of an imagined 'Africanness' in African Pianism, African Vocalism, African Symphony, and other works by Africans, caused by its attendant problem: the problems of bi-musicality in Nigerian music education, which has been overlooked.

CLASSROOM EXPERIMENTS OF BI-MUSICALITY IN NIGERIA

We have noted that the programme of music education in post-independent Nigeria was bi-musical, except that the output, like art music, was conspicuously Western. Apart from the fact that African/Nigerian art musicians or composers were becoming elitist in modelling Western or Euro-American three-movement styles, exploring Western idioms (Piano and Orchestra), and perpetuating the same systems that colonialism had bequeathed, the elements of African identity were tokenistic and subservient in these expeditions. This is what Irele (1993) meant when he raised the question: "Is African Music Possible?" Abiola Irele's question was a wake-up call, as many responses have emerged since this question was raised (Uzoigwe, 1996; Nesbit, 2001; Omibiyi-Obidike, 2001). One interesting response is given by Joshua Uzoigwe, who drew Irele's attention to his compositions and that of Akin Euba in Nigeria, and many other examples in Africa (Uzoigwe, 1996). The exponential creativity in Uzoigwe's explorations of the Neo-African art music cum his genuine intent of African compositional expeditions have been explained by Akin Euba when he noted that

> Joshua Uzoigwe had established himself as a leading exponent of African pianism and one of the major figures in the neo-African school of composition. His command of the genre of African pianism is demonstrated in such works as *Talking Drums* (1990) and

> *Agbigbo* (2003) for solo piano, and in the instrumental part of the song *Eriri Ngeringe* (1973) (Euba 2005, p. 84).

But the question that follows this exponential achievement is, where is Uzoigwe's model in classroom practices? We note that despite Uzoigwe's re-connectivity with tradition among the Ngwa of the Igbo ethnic group exemplified in his book *Ukom: A Study of African Music Craftsmanship* (1998), our university classroom is dominated by the anachronism of Western epistemic models that revives Irele's African music questions decades after. This leads to the crux of bi-musicality and its attendant problems of interpretation. For example, the model of UNN as explained by Edna Edet in *An Experiment in Bi-musicality* (1966) shows that:

> the greatest area of difficulty was the paucity of materials for African music. . . It was all well to say that we were committed to a course in bi-musicality and the student should receive as much experience with African instruments and African musical culture as they have received with Western equivalents, but where could we find the materials to use in the African music classes? Where were we going to find trained indigenous musicians to teach African musical instruments? (p. 45).

It is noteworthy that Edet's view here highlights the paucity of materials for African music. Of course, we could argue for a reasonable level of change today. We have books by Kwabena, The *Music of Africa* (1974), Kofi Agawu – *The African Imagination in Music* (2016), Meki Nzewi- *African Music Theoretical Continuum* (1997), Richard Okafor- *Music in Nigerian Society* (2005), Joshua Uzoigwe- *Ukom: A Study of African Music Craftsmanship* (1998), and many others. While it is important to acknowledge the availability of modern materials such as books, research reports, and articles, our concerns are that there are many unanswered questions. For example, in the context of art music in Nigeria, we ask what model of Indigenous music has been adopted for classroom praxis and how much of these modern materials on composition have been used. Meanwhile, Edet's concern in the early stage of independent Nigerian education in music represents a critical assessment of the Nigerian educational system. It also shows there was a lopsided or Western dominance in the system. Thus, we would maintain that the availability of modern materials does not mean the lopsided system has changed or improved remarkably. This is so because of the lack of commitment to a conscious implementation of a balance between Western and African music resources to address this anomaly. The question is, is it possible to achieve a balance between Western music theory and its African counterpart? The answer is in the affirmative. Thus, the notion of bi-musicality is itself a model of duality, as we discuss later in the representation of the Nigerian curriculum in BMAS.

OVERVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES COMMISSION'S BMAS (MUSIC)

In this section, we have highlighted the courses for four-year music education in Nigerian universities as provided in the BMAS. We have segmented the courses into levels: year one as 100 level, year two — 200 level, year three — 300 level, and year four — 400 level. In our highlights, we have included primary and secondary instruments (which are Western orchestral instruments) that are offered every semester. In addition, there are three ensembles: the first, the University Chorus and Orchestra, which performs works from the periods of musical history – baroque, classical, romantic, and twentieth century; the second, the Western Ensemble performs

works from both popular music and Western classics including jazz and musicals; the third, the African Ensemble, is limited to African choruses, dance, folk opera and instrumental works. In the 100 level, courses include Music as Art and Science, Rudiments, Foundations of Musicianship, Tonal Harmony, Survey of History of Western Music, Basic Piano, and *African Music I*. In the 200 level, courses include Foundations of Musicianship II, Tonal Harmony II, Western Music before 1750, Music of Other World Cultures, Basic Piano II, and *African Music II*. In the 300 level, courses include Introduction to Music Technology, Tonal Harmony III, Modal Counterpoint, Tonal Counterpoint, Analysis of Tonal Music, Western Music from 1750 to Present, Afro-American Music, *African Music III* (African Music Theory), Elementary Keyboard Harmony, Applied Music Coaching and Choral Conducting. In the 400 level, courses include Acoustics and Psychoacoustics of Music, Twentieth Century Compositional Techniques, Fugue, Orchestration, Analysis and Analytical Methods for Twentieth Century Music, Composition, Historiography of Music, and Special Topics in the History of Western Music. *Contemporary African Music*, Keyboard Harmony and Accompaniment, Choir Training and Choral Arranging, and Criticism and Musical Scholarship.

By highlighting the marginalisation of African music as shown (in italics) in the BMAS, we note that our assessment is based on our understanding that the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standard is adopted by all universities in Nigeria. Next is the content of the courses designated as *African Music* in the curriculum. The first is *African Music* – "This course is a survey of the role and function of music among the peoples of black Africa. There will be a focus on traditional music in society, influences by external forces, African musical instruments and performance techniques." (NUC, 2007, p. 150). In the first year of studies, we compare the array of courses as listed above, showing Western music with this prescription. It shows a total disregard for the complexity of the Indigenous music of Africa. The three aspects of the multiplex society and its music as represented in those sentences, are considerably broad, and fusing them into one course to create room for more Western music courses, such as Rudiments and Foundation of Musicianship which could be merged, are symbolic of the colonizing content of the curriculum. So, at face value, we can criticise the curriculum to demonstrate that Nigerian education is trapped in Westernisation.

The next course in our consideration is *African Music II* – "This is a study of the historical, literary and aesthetic aspects of African music, with particular reference to specific Nigerian culture groups. Similarities and differences among various linguistic and religious groups within Nigeria will be highlighted. Cross-cultural fertilization within and beyond Nigeria, Musical areas, distribution of instruments and performance techniques will be studied." (NUC, 2007, p. 151). This content is like the first, it is conspicuously broad. The main problem here is not the broadness of the Nigerian culture groups but how to identify materials that show the similarities and differences among various linguistic and religious groups, with particular reference to minority groups. For example, in the Niger Delta sub-region, there are diverse minority groups whose music has not had any representation for scholarly engagement in the classroom. Thus, Cross-cultural fertilization becomes a conjecture among the major ethnic groups – Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and perhaps Ibibio. This, for example, does not mean that the notion that "the curriculum remains the crucible for both imagined and real improvements to the human mind" (Mokwunyei, 2020, p. 147) is objectionable; it means that the curriculum, while creating room for Western music marginalizes Indigenous music in the classroom practice.

In our survey, the course *African Music III (African Music Theory)*, we find interesting content: "A study of the quality of the music of the peoples of black Africa, and an analysis of its theoretical peculiarities with special reference to form, rhythm, melody and scales, harmony, and instrumentation. Problems of notation and transcription will be highlighted" (NUC, 2007, p. 153). Comparatively, the content for Western music isolates specific course content for *Form* (Analysis of Tonal Music), *Harmony* (Tonal Harmony I, II, and III), *Rhythm, Melody, and Scales* (Studied in Rudiments of Music, Foundations of Musicianship, and other courses that explore *instrumentation*, *notation*, and *transcription* (such as Orchestration), but combines all these elements to be studied as a course in African Music Theory. What this content does is to model a reading from Western literature on the content to be studied. This creates a sense of superiority to Western music as a 'high' culture, whereas other cultures take their relativity as 'low' cultures. The implication of this superiority is established in the use of scales such as pentatonic scales, where the generalisation in the arrangement of black notes (3+2) on the keyboard is the model for the Tone, Tone, Semitone, Tone (or Whole, Whole, Half, Whole). Thus, C, D, E, F, and G are implied to be the components of the pentatonic scale.

Superficially, scales are scales and modes are modes, whether in a Western or African context. Contrary to this, some specific scales and modes portray the marked difference between African and Western structures when subjected to scrutiny. Thus, the fields of *Musicology* and *Ethnomusicology* explore these structures as *similarities* and *differences*. There are other issues like the materials that are used in courses like African Music Theory, whose contents should move from Gerhard Kubik's *Theory of African Music* to Meki Nzewi's A *Contemporary Study of Musical Arts - Informed by African Indigenous Knowledge Systems*. The imbalance in BMAS has made scholars bombard the Nigerian music education system as grossly colonial and imperial by every standard: and that individual interpretations of the curriculum in the various departments of music in the Nigerian university system, show that Western music hegemony is explicitly projected. The implication is that the call for the decolonization of this system is not new and for many years has not yielded substantial results (Kallio, 2020). Other scholars and researchers in music education have achieved considerable ground in highlighting the violence of coloniality that permeates music curricula, pedagogical approaches, teacher education, and music education philosophies, among other aspects of the profession (Bradley, 2012; Herbst, Nzewi and Agawu, 2003). Thus, our contribution shows that the main problem is the curriculum. Lastly, the BMAS concedes to popular music in its content with the inclusion of *Contemporary African Music.* However, the content betrays such potential. The content says: "This is a study of the trends in contemporary African music, including composed art music and popular music. Objectives and techniques employed by African art music composers, and influences leading to the music of today in Africa. Contemporary music makers and their works will be studied" (NUC, 2007, p. 155). While we argue that the main problem of bi-musicality is the inequality demonstrated in this sprinkling trajectory of contemporary African music, we note that popular music is completely marginalised in the curriculum. For example, the Nigerian Music Industry, a multibillion-dollar industry, is represented by the contemporary stance, but the content shows popular music as an appendage in promoting the study of art music. As Okafor (2005) reports, "an examination of music education in Nigeria presents the observer with an immediate and glaring anomaly" (2005, p. 214). The anomaly of exclusion for popular music, the genre that dominates the Nigerian social reality, whose patronage the youth dominate while the political class seems to commodify the genre, creates a social distance to the reality of students. Therefore, the contention is that the music

curriculum does not represent music as a social practice within the Nigerian social and cultural reality. Overall, the "focus of music education itself appears to be on Western music, music transplanted or introduced into the culture of the indigenous Nigerian community from an outside culture. The syllabus of the educational system, the curriculum content, and the philosophy and thrusts of the institution which teach music place a strong emphasis on Western music" (Ibid.).

DECOLONISING MUSIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA THROUGH BMAS

While contending that African music has been marginalised in the BMAS, we acknowledge that reasonable efforts have been made over the years towards decolonisation, at least in the production of materials as stated earlier. For instance, Meki Nzewi, Joshua Uzoigwe, Christian Onyeji, and others have been at the forefront of this decolonisation and African liberation in the musical arts of Africa (Nzewi, 1997; Onyeji, 2017). However, there seems to be a politics of knowledge and knowledge production both at the global and in the Nigerian multicultural society. On one hand, the controversies and questions of authenticity and acceptability of concepts are more dominant in music than in other areas of African studies. How can these issues be tackled under the decolonisation of music education in Nigeria? Because in decolonising music education in Nigeria, there are concepts such as "Africanisation" or "Endogenisation" of the educational systems, which according to Byamungu (2002), seek to address the issue of "Africanised" education with the questions:

> When you have known to read and write, [as an African] which books are you given to read? What is the final aim of the fascinating stories you are made to summarize for the exam? Put differently, what is the aim of the initial project of education? Is there any correlation between what is learnt at school and what life demands? As it were, is the thematic choice, thrust and goal of the African academy relevant to the conditions of the Africans? (quoted in Nasoga, 2005, p. 5)

In this way, the issue of materials becomes a recurring one, where music education means learning and teaching, and where the production of teachers and the dominance of teaching is the most important achievement of the BMAS. Thus, those aspects that are relevant to life demands or reality in music such as demonstrated in the Nigerian music industry, are only imagined. As Adeogun (2018) observes, "If music education is taken as the process of transmitting and transforming music culture, then music education has always been an inherent component of societies all over the world. including the territory now known as Nigeria." This statement suggests that the difference between the Western and African models of music education has politicised concepts of formal (written) and informal (unwritten) systems, respectively, and it is a product of Western hegemony. In this view. the formal and informal systems represent a civilisation conjecture and comparison, which is an imperial trajectory. Decolonisation, in this context and within the context of BMAS as highlighted earlier, involves constructing a balance between the two systems. Currently, the mantra of decolonisation has become rhetorical in the Nigerian educational system, considering the BMAS and the highlight of African music, as a representation of reconnecting with tradition. The Nigerian situation is depleted with a lack of unifying policies and substantial material and systems to promote the African/Nigerian model. More importantly, when much of the practices of African music traditions are modelled into individual interpretations, as some arguments have shown, who is interpreting what (elements), where (culture), and how (model)? Most importantly, African music is generalised and creates a

marginal context for Ibibio music, for example. Thus, African music should be decolonised. The Nigerian "schools must make curricula compatible with the music cultures of Nigerian learners in educationally crucial ways by transforming them into sites of learning that accommodate different modalities of musical thought, content, practices and pedagogy that would contribute to the emergence of a Nigerian identity that enables every Nigerian to be enriched by having access to music traditions wider than his/her sectarian heritage" (Adeogun, 2018, p. 15). This view raises questions and decoloniality in the Nigerian music curriculum and its attendant issues on content, practice and social reality.

RECONNECTING INDIGENOUS MUSICAL TRADITIONS IN CLASSROOM PRACTICES

As a decolonial strategy, we propose two options for reconnecting musical traditions in Classroom practices. First, a conscious attempt to dualise the BMAS with the context of the present curriculum. This means African music is to be studied comprehensively and comparatively to include specific Indigenous music theory, music history, harmonic principles, traditional music composition, Neo-traditional art music composition, instrument construction and material culture development, and so on. The second is to model a curriculum that represents the realities of Nigerian society. This is where our earlier notion of social practice takes meaningful and useful precedence in the Nigerian experience. A few interviews with some of our graduate interlocutors observed this deficiency in our academy. They found that the musicking practices in Nigerian society are segmented into traditional, popular, and least, art music. However, art music has been promoted above these practices in the Nigerian classroom experiences. Some of the students noted that they grew up in a traditional dance troupe before coming to the university. Their intention of acquiring modern skills and global traditions has not been objectified by the imposition of Western concepts. In this assertion, they acknowledge the ability to write and notate songs and rhythmic patterns as a significant role the training has played, but the contention is that reading or writing music does not translate to the social practice of musicking in general. What we see here is the added advantage of musical apprenticeship before music education. Similarly, the focus-group discussion with selected third- and fourth-year students revealed the strand of observations we have itemised into the two options above. But the problem now revolves back to the curriculum, the curriculum must first be receptive to musical apprenticeship or participation in oral tradition as fieldwork. This is so because the notion of participant-observation is contextually an outsider's perspective.

To reconnect with indigenous culture and musical practices, we propose a decolonial strategy in our ways of thinking and living, and to adopt indigenous language, education, values, and beliefs. By this, we imply that the decolonisation of musical arts in Nigeria should be founded on reconnection with indigenous traditions and models (see example in Udoh and others, 2022). The bi-musical in teaching and learning at the tertiary level should depend on *balancing* the narratives, be it history, theory, ensemble practices, composition and performance, and so on. No aspect of the indigenous musical system should be left to 'the survival of the fittest'. The decolonisation of music education (in the present day and age) should constitute a reasonable level of revival, a rebirth, re-awakening, and sustenance of cultural heritage towards the emancipation of colonised mindset, especially in the current global space of multiculturalism. For example, the digital space is jam-packed with all kinds of music, fusions, etc. By this, we mean, there is a remarkable difference between what Indigenous practitioners would accept as 'music',

for example, *mbre*, literally play/music (incorporating singing, dancing, and dramatic enactment, etc.), compared with music in absolute and abstract domains of art music. So, there is a need to balance these two dimensions in the bi-musical system.

From our critical analysis of the Nigerian music education system, from the curriculum contents and interpretations, we can summarise that the classroom practices are still pro-Western. We have limited the analysis to university education. But our advocacy is for a comprehensive overhaul of the Western model, thereby creating a more community-friendly and reality-friendly system of music education. Such analytical synthesis is crucial to specifically identify the difference between what traditional musicians do as music-making (musicking) and the 'casting of shadows' represented in fieldwork, whose narratives become books or materials used in the classrooms. This may pose a problem to the foundation of what 'music' or 'musicking' is represented in the university classroom. As Cooley and Barz (2008) have noted, "actively taking part in a society's [community] music-cultural practices, the ethnomusicologist had the potential for uniquely and truly participatory participation-observation" (p. 4). The implication of this assertion shows that the ethnomusicologist is cast as an outsider who needs to participate in the community's music-cultural practices. Yet, some practitioners have lived all their lives in the community's music-cultural practices before encountering ethnomusicology; their frame of reference, as insiders within the cultural community, becomes more than 'uniquely and truly participatory'. Meki Nzewi has exemplified some of these dimensions in *Musical Sense and Musical Meaning: An Indigenous African Perception* (2008).

While we suggest the town-gown synergy in the fieldwork experiences, fieldwork is the first level towards the decolonisation of African music studies for 'outsiders'. However, the observational and experiential portions of the ethnographic process on musical practices should be inseparable from authentic representation and interpretation. This means, therefore, that fieldwork in music should be approached as an apprenticeship if we must combat the "crisis of representation" in modern literature. For example, the 'crisis of representation' that links ethnographic fieldwork to misrepresentation, and conflict of interest to colonial, imperial, and other repressive power structures will continue to problematize scholarship in the global south until it is addressed. Thus, musical apprenticeship, for example, would create realistic invention between 'the student' (apprentice) and 'the Indigenous expert' (traditional musician or instrument maker), in synergising the town and gown.

In this way, what we make of musical apprenticeship should contribute to what is presented in the curriculum to compete with the already dominating stance in Western music. Ostensibly, our emphasis is on creating a balance in the lopsided educational system in Africa. Perhaps, the focus of the sustainability process on performative aspects of Indigenous culture should be hinged on reviving the pristine (near pristine) heritage: a cultural language, a system of learning, values, religious beliefs, and so on. Importantly, to compete with Western theological foundations, certain factors are needed, and as Okafor (2005) has observed. "Western education came with the advent of the British trader and coloniser, and the advent of the Christian missionary" (p. 225). How do we contain the foundation that traditional music or music-cultural practices were pagan practices, and that Christian converts must purge themselves of such entanglements? So, the educational foundation, as it is, standing on colonisation, is a faulty system having been foregrounded on exploitation (capitalism). In the same vein, the deconstruction of these systems must necessarily

follow the same trend of purging itself from all relics of exploitation in our education system, political ideology, values, religious beliefs, and so on.

CONCLUSION

The rate at which graduates of music in the Nigerian education system are unemployed has raised questions regarding the anomaly, considering the rate at which entrepreneurial or skill development has been promoted above university education. Our focus in this essay has been to highlight the challenging imbalance in the curriculum as illustrated in the BMAS. Thus, we have argued that the BMAS is a major challenge to Nigeria's florid educational development that must be confronted through bi-musicality, towards developing a more society-friendly curriculum. In exploring the curriculum challenges, we have raised concerns regarding the possibility of decolonizing music education in Nigeria, especially the need to reconnect with indigenous traditions under the aegis of bi-musicality, while moving towards multi-musicality. Despite the argument of fluidity within decolonizing creativity (music inclusive) in Nigeria vis-à-vis globalization and the apparent dearth of some essential cultural traditions, the project of decolonizing music education needs concerted efforts by curriculum developers and interpreters.

From our analysis, Indigenous music and music within the social reality of society contribute an insignificant content of about 5% in the BMAS. Most disturbing is the total disregard for popular music, including its business essentials, in the curriculum. Hence, the paper advocates for decolonisation as resistance to colonisation in music education. We support the argument that the classroom practices are predominantly Western and that until substantial efforts are made to reconnect local musical traditions, decolonisation or anti-colonialism remains a rhetoric of modernity without epistemic orientation and practice. Our analysis of the National Universities Commission's Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) on music was done to illustrate a post-colonial curriculum and to understand the many ideological and aesthetic complexities inherent in Nigeria’s cultural decolonisation after independence. The emphasis on what constitutes African musical traditions in the curriculum was intentional and goal-oriented. We have argued that until music education synchronises with music as social practices and their network of practices, the entire schooling process becomes lopsided if not dysfunctional, and irrelevant to contemporary realities; hence, the increase in ‘educated unemployment’ continues to rise.

REFERENCES

Adeogun, A. O. (2018). 'The development of university music education in Nigeria: An outline'. *Sage Open*, 8(2): 1– 14. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018774108

Agawu, Kofi. (2003). *Representing African Music: Postcolonial Notes, Queries, Positions*. London: Routledge.

Agu, Dan C. C. (1984). 'The vocal-music composer in a Nigerian traditional society and his compositional techniques'. *The Pacific Review of Ethnomusicology,* Vol. l: 13 – 28.

Allsup, R. E. (2016). *Remixing the Classroom Toward an Open Philosophy of Music Education*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., and Tiffin, H. (Second edition). (2007). *Post-Colonial Studies - The Key Concepts*. USA and Canada: Routledge.

Bradley, D. (2012). 'Good for what, good for whom?: Decolonizing music education philosophies'. In Wayne Bowman and Ana Lucia Frega (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy in Music Education*, (410-433). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cooley, T. J. and Barz, G. (2008). 'Casting shadows: fieldwork is dead! Long live fieldwork'. In Gregory Barz & Timothy J. Cooley (eds.) *Casting Shadows: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*, (3-24). Oxford: Oxford University Press, Inc.

Djebbari, E. (2019). 'Decolonising culture, staging traditional dances, creating a new music dance genre: the National Ballet of Mali's postcolonial agency'. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 1-17. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/13696815.2019.1624154

Edet, E. M. (1966). 'An experiment in bi-musicality'. *Music Educators Journal*, 52(4): 144-147.

Ekong, G. E. and Udoh, U. A. (2017). 'Compositional practice in Nigerian music education: Emerging issues and challenges'. *Journal of Conference of Music Educators,* 9: 63-75.

Euba, A. (2005). 'Remembering Joshua Uzoigwe: Exponent of African pianism (1946-2005)'. *Journal of the Musical Art of Africa,* 2(1): 84-88. DOI: 10.2989/18121000509486703.

Falola, T., and Dauda, B. (2017). *Decolonizing Nigeria (1945-1960) – Politics, Power and Personalities.* Austin: Pan-African University Press.

Herbst, A., Nzewi, M., & Agawu, K. (2003). *Musical arts in Africa: Theory, practice and education*. Pretoria, South Africa: University of South Africa Press.

Hood, M. (1960). 'The Challenge of Bi-Musicality'. *Ethnomusicology,* 4(2): 55-59.

Idolor, G. E. (2001). 'Formal education and the development of African art music in Nigeria'. In

M.A. Omibiyi (ed.), *African Art Music in Nigeria: Fela Sowande Memorial*, (135-149). Lagos: Stirling-Horden Publishers (Nig.) Ltd.

Irele, A. (1993). 'Is African Music Possible?' *Transition 61*: 56 – 71.

Kabir, A. J., & Djebbari, E. (2019). 'Dance and decolonisation in Africa: Introduction'. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 31(3): 314 -317. DOI: 10.1080/13696815.2019.1632173.

Kallio, A. A. (2020). 'Decolonizing music education research and the (Im)possibility of methodological responsibility'. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 42(2): 177-191.

Kessi, S., Marks, Z., & Ramugondo, E. (2020) 'Decolonizing African studies'. *Critical African Studies*, 12(3): 271-282. https://doi.org/10.1080/21681392.2020.1813413

Masoga, M. (2005). 'Establishing dialogue: thoughts on music education in Africa'. In Anri Herbst (ed.) *Emerging Solutions for Musical Arts Education in Africa*, (l – 10). Cape Town: African Minds.

Mokwunyei, J. N. (2020) 'Decolonising the musical Arts in Nigeria: An overview of the 5th biennial national conference of music and the performing Arts (NACOMPA).' *Journal of the Musical Arts in Africa*, 17(I): 145-154. DOI: 10.2989/18121004.2020.1864901.

Nketia, J. H. K. (1974). *The Music of Africa.* New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc.

Nketia, J. H. K. (2018). *Reinstating Traditional Music in Contemporary Contexts. Akropong-Akuapem: Regnum Africa Publications.*

Nzewi, Meki (1988). 'State of literary Music in Nigeria: A review'. *Nigerian Magazine* 56(3/4): 4-25.

Nzewi, Meki, and Omolo-Ongati, R. (2014). 'Injecting the African spirit of humanity into the assessment of musical arts in the classroom'. *Journal of the Musical Arts in Africa*, Volume 11: 55–72. https://doi.org/10.2989/18121004.2014.998403

Nzewi, Meki, Anyahuru, I., and Ohiaramunna, T. (2008). *Musical Sense and Musical Meaning: An Indigenous African Perception.* Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers.

Nzewi, Meki. (2007). 'Re-searching music education for civic activism'. *Music Education Research*, 9:3, 305-321.

Okafor, R. (1992). 'Music in Nigerian education'. *African Music*, 1(2): 5-12.

Okafor, R. C. (2005). *Music in Nigerian Society.* Enugu, Nigeria: New Generation Books.

Onovwerosuoke, W. H. (2007). *African Art Music for Flute: A Study of Selected Works by African Composers*. PhD Thesis, Louisiana State University.

Onyeji, C. (2017). 'Africanizing musical arts in African classrooms: Rationale, relevance, perspectives and evidence'. In *West African Journal of Musical Arts Education*, 4(1): 1-20.

Onyeji, C. and Onyeji, E. (2023). 'Formal music education in contemporary Nigeria: Current state, challenges and strategies for sustainable development'. *Abraka Humanities Review*, 13(1): 38-47.

Regelski, T. A. (2009). 'Curriculum reform: Reclaiming "music" as social praxis'. *Action, Criticism & Theory for Music Education* 8(1):66-84.

Small, C. (1998). *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening.* Middletown, Connecticut*:* Wesleyan University Press.

Stanton, Burke (2018). 'Musicking in the borders toward decolonizing methodologies'. *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, Vol. 26(I): 4-23.

The National Universities Commission, (2007). *Approved Minimum Academic Standards for Bachelor of Arts in Music*. The Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Udoh, U. A**.,** Akpakpan, J. J., Asenye, C. M., and Inyang, B. S. (2022). 'Decolonizing African Compositions - Deconstructing the Theory and Practice using traditional models'. Tan Sooi Beng and Marcia Ostashewsk (eds.). *Dialogues: Towards Decolonizing Music and Dance Studies*, International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) Digital Publication. Website: http://www.ictmdialogues.org.

Uzoigwe, J. (1998). *Ukom: A Study of African Musical Craftmanship.* Okigwe: Fasmen Communications.