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INCORPORATING THE URBAN GBÁGYÌ MUSICAL HERITAGE OF ABUJA INTO FORMAL MUSIC EDUCATION: A VISION 2030 ADVOCACY

Abstract

This paper highlights the benefits of musical arts education in the curriculum and call for stronger emphasis on the socio-cultural elements of 'streets' music. The main thrust is on the 'Gbagyi' street music among Abuja teenagers. Data was collected through interviews, personal observation, youtube and existing literature The paper illuminates on the importance of incorporating socio-cultural elements of music in the 'streets' into formal practice and proposes a model of arts music instruction for junior secondary schools in Abuja to promote local music to global level. This paper concludes that embracing the socio-cultural elements of music performed by teenagers and youth in selected rural areas in Abuja streets, will promote and constitute a model for appreciating Nigerian music among the youth and teenagers. In vision 2030, both teaching and practical learning experiences in Musical arts education must be encouraged by Nigerian music curricular planners.

Keywords: Illuminate, Elements, Street, Embracing, Socio-cultural.

Introduction

The Educational Research Centre (ERC) plays a crucial role in the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC). The ERC encourages, promotes, and coordinates educational research programs being carried out in Nigeria. The body identifies educational problems within Nigeria that require research and establishes their priority. Periodically, the ERC compiles and publishes a list of completed research projects. The

Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) serves as the think tank for Nigerian education and development. Its mission includes:

- Providing building blocks for strategic educational planning and development
- Ensuring education quality assurance.
- Formulating and implementing educational policies.
- The NERDC maintains a research and development library where new educational resources are deposited.
- Additionally, it maintains relationships with corresponding educational research and development centers.

The ERC focuses on research, while the NERDC takes a broader approach, encompassing curriculum development, and language promotion among other activities to enhance education in Nigeria. The Educational Research Centre is one of the academic centers of the Council. In line with the Council's mandate, the Educational Research Centre (ERC) encourages, promotes and coordinates educational research programs carried out in Nigeria. The Centre is responsible for the identification of educational problems in which research is needed in Nigeria and the establishment of the order of priority thereof.

Through the ERC, the council carries out the function of compiling, publishing or sponsoring the publication of the results of educational research particularization of such results where their recognition is in the council opinion of a national importance. The ERC also has the responsibility of carrying out studies in comparative curriculum and the encouragement and promotion of reading culture through a continuous research into the needs of Nigerian readers. Since 2005, the Educational Research Centre based on its function has concentrated its research activities to policy-driven researches for educational development, developed training manuals for education practitioners and conducted training for relevant stakeholders in education.

Key Functions

ERC encourages, promotes, and co-ordinates educational research programs carried out in Nigeria. The Educational Research Centre identifies educational problems in Nigeria in which research is needed, and establishes the order of priority thereof; it periodically compiles and publishes a list of completed research projects. Compiles, publishes or sponsors the publication of the results of educational research, particularly in relation to Nigerian educational problems and the popularization of such results where their general recognition is in the council's opinion of a national importance. More so, assesses surveys or investigates any educational matter considered necessary, either independently or in co-operation with individuals, organizations or agencies and Carries out studies in comparative curriculum.

Abuja was created in 1976 by Decree No. 6 by the late General Murtala Muhammed. The indigenous ethnic groups of Abuja were carved from Niger, Plateau, Kaduna and the Present Kogi state which was formerly part of Kwara State. Abuja is surrounded by various areas where traditional music thrives. The region often serves as cultural hubs where local music, dance and traditions are passed down through generations. According to Adamu (2007), there are five major ethnic components of Abuja. These are the Koro, Bassa, Gade, Gbagyi and Ganagana. Prior to this declaration, other groups within Abuja were listed by Adamu as: Gbagyi or Gwari (a majority), Koro, Gwandara, The Gade, The Bassa, The Fulani (of Pai and Kundu), and the Igbira.

The Gbagyi practice Knunu, or the traditional faith mixed with distinct cultural practices. These cultural observances and practices consist of marriage (Amula), naming a child (Ayetu), and burial rites (Azabi or Bera) (Ayuba Larry Sanda Yusuf, 699-702). The Gbagyi are a homogeneous group with linguistic variations. While the Yanma and Ngenge exist, there is Gbari or Gwari group. The belief of the Gbagyi is in gods and guardian spirits, evident in ancestor-worship and they consult Zokuda who are diviners and Ashigbeda who are herbalists and healers.

The Gbagyi community is a major host to the federal capital of Nigeria, Abuja. Most of the Gbagyi cultural practices have remained undocumented. Their cultures are influenced by communities all around in Abuja since they embrace and imitate the other cultures for some of their festivals are being abolished. It is therefore crucial that these challenges be addressed, in a scholarly approach through the educational bodied that see to the education of the new generation by embracing the socio musical aspect of the Gbayi musical culture that is found in their street into classrooms and blended into the school curriculum in order to give way for the ethnical cultural advancement and development.

Research Methods

This study is a descriptive study conducted among local communities in Abuja. It employs interviews, observations and existing literature on street music to find out the socio-cultural elements of 'streets' music among the people in the selected Abuja localities. The target population was street music musicians selected from the local communities in Abuja.

Street music as a form of music in Africa

Street music is a term that encompasses various genres of music that originated in urban streets, often reflecting the culture, struggles and experiences of marginalized communities. Street music is a vital part of Abuja cultural expression, providing entertainment and a means of storytelling for the community. Some examples of music that can be considered 'Street music' include:

- i. Hip-Hop/Rap which emerged in the 1970s in New York City, hip-hop and rap music is quintessential street music genres, with artists like Grandmaster Flash, The Notorious B.I.G., and Jay-Z.
- ii. Grime: This is a fusion of hip-hop, electronic, and British punk, with its origin in the UK with artists like Stormzy, Kano, and Skepta.
- iii. Drill: A subgenre of hip-hop, drill music emerged in Chicago and is characterized by its dark, gritty sound and graphic lyrics, with artists like Chief Keef and Lil Durk.
- iv. Trap: A subgenre of hip-hop, trap music originated in the Southern United States and is known for its heavy, synthesized beats and often graphic lyrics, with artists like Gucci Mane and Migos.
- v. Reggaeton: A genre that originated in Puerto Rico, reggaeton combines Caribbean rhythms with urban street sensibilities, with artists like Daddy Yankee and J Balvin.
- vi. Gangsta Rap: A subgenre of hip-hop, gangsta rap emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, with artists like N.W.A, Ice Cube, and Snoop Dogg.
- vii. UK Garage: A genre that emerged in the UK, UK garage combines elements of hip-hop, R&B, and electronic music, with artists like So Solid Crew and Dizzee Rascal.

Street music in urban area

The concept of street music and its emergence in the public urban sphere is one of the most important factors in strengthening and accelerating the process of the creative city. Street music as an urban public art, is an influential event in urban communities that seeks to improve the quality of social life, strengthen collective memories, increase the level of vitality and dynamism of the city and achieve creative urban development. These genres and others like them are often characterized by their raw energy, lyrical honesty, and connection to the streets, reflecting the experiences and struggles of urban communities.

Sabon Sai Ko Wa (New life for all)

The *Sabon Sai Ko Wa* group is emblematic of this rich cultural tradition. Their music often features themes related to community life, local legends, and social commentary. They perform a mix of indigenous music styles, incorporating instruments such as the locally made Konga drums, goje (traditional string instrument), and xylophone made with animal horns, rattle and various forms of local percussions.

Influence and impact of the ‘Sabon sai Ko Wa’ group in Abuja

The *Sabon sai Ko Wa* group’s impacts are felt in several areas in Abuja, Nigeria. In terms of cultural preservation, this group plays a crucial role in preserving the cultural heritage of their communities. Through their performances, they keep traditional music alive and ensure that younger generations are exposed to their cultural roots. With regards to community engagement, the group’s performances foster community spirit and cohesion. They provide a platform for communal interaction and collective enjoyment, strengthening social bounds and creating a sense of belonging among the residents.

Tourism and economic impact is another area that the Sabon sai Ko Wa group contributes to. While primarily focused on cultural preservation, street music in rural areas around Abuja also attracts tourists interested in experiencing authentic local culture. This has the potential to generate economic benefits for the community by creating opportunities for local artisans, musicians, and performers.

Literature Review

Street music style as a subculture

The earliest work on street style was on subculture, and it came out of delinquent studies by people like Stanley Cohen. Subculture was seen as a ‘problem’ in some ways during the first analyses. Then in the 1970s it gave a different model, coming out of the work of Stuart Hall and many others at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, whose resistance through rituals looks at teddy boys, skinheads, mods, rastas and rude boys. It talks about a breakdown in national consensus, and identifies an alienated revolt into style (George Melly's phrase), which is produced by a myriad of social and economic changes in post-war Britain. In their analysis of teddy boys, the Birmingham Centre looked hard at the changing social, political and economic conditions of post-war Britain.

Benefits of Music Education

Music education offers a wide range of benefits for students such as enhancing and helping in developing students’ fine motor skills. These are skills essential for activities like writing,

using a computer, notating sound, playing of musical instruments and other physical tasks in the classroom. Musically trained children tend to have better motor function than those who do not receive music education.

It also prepares students' brains for achievement as studies have shown that studying music strengthens brain areas used in processing complex math. Students who take music in junior secondary school perform better on algebra assessments in senior grades because their brains are already accustomed to the processes used in mathematics. In the same vein, it fosters Superior Working Memory. Working memory is crucial for reasoning and problem-solving. Musicians tend to have superior working memory compared to non-musicians. Their long-term musical training contributes to better mental control during memory and recall tasks.

Better thinking skills are cultivated during the learning process. Music education sharpens cognitive abilities, including critical thinking and creativity. It encourages students to think outside the box and explore new ideas. In addition, it improves academic achievement among students. Music education has positive effects on academic performance. Better improvements in the area of recalling and retentive memory for students who study music improve their recall and retention of verbal information. Music instruction enhances mathematics' skills, making complex math processes more accessible.

In reading and English Language Arts (ELA), Music education boosts reading and ELA skills. It aids in developing Creative Capacities for Lifelong Success. Music education contributes to lifelong success by Sharpening Student Attentiveness: Musicians learn to focus and pay attention to details. In the area of strengthening perseverance, learning an instrument requires dedication and persistence. Music encourages creativity and expression. It Supports better study habits and self-esteem. Music students often develop effective study habits and increased self-esteem.

Importance of street music in the classrooms

Surveys of elements found in street music that can be of great use in the musical arts education in Abuja schools are briefly discussed in the following section.

Rhythms and Beats: The use of street music will be infectious in the teaching of rhythms, beats, meter and timing.

Lyrics and Poetry: By analyzing and adopting street music lyrics to teach poetry, language, and creative writing skills. Focus can be on themes like self-expression, social justice, and community.

Instrumentation: Introduce children to instruments commonly used in street music, like local drums, rattle, tabunu, and xylophone.

Improvisation: Encourage children to improvise and create their own rhymes, beats, or melodies, fostering creativity and self-expression.

Cultural Connection: The use of street music in teaching children about diverse cultures, histories, and social contexts, promotes empathy and understanding.

Music Production: With the introduction of street music, children become familiar with basic music production techniques, like sampling, looping, and mixing. This helps in creating street music-inspired tracks.

Dance and Movement: Incorporate street dance styles, like hip dance, fisherman dance or Gbagyi tap dance, will teach children about fast and slow movement, coordination, and self-expression.

Psychosocial Benefits of street music in the classroom

Although the assertion that music is beneficial in academic, social, and cognitive aspects. Studies have supported the idea that music can have an impact, and others have suggested no impact. Miranda and Claes (2009) stated that, “In terms of music listening as problem-focused coping, it is conceivable that music listening can be used deliberately by adolescents in order to reflect upon the resolution of stressful situations they confront” (p. 218). The concept of using music as a tool being utilized in the developments of students’ emotional wellbeing is well supported by music researchers (Duerksen and Darrow 1991). This topic specifically argues for the benefits of music class for “at-risk” students in the article of Music Educators Journal. It was further explained that the students are classified as students who are not handicapped, but are frequently truant, lack self-confidence, and have no sense of belonging in school among many other symptoms.

These authors argue that, ‘Students are more likely to attend school if they perceive it as a positive place to be. Music classes can provide a positive setting in which students can learn and practice self-discipline’ (p.47). A further assertion from this study declares that music class is a place student can learn consistent attendance, conformity, obtain a sense of belonging, and gain confidence to achieve nonmusical goals. Students have reasons they struggle in school; however, many of them are due to negative emotional and physical wellbeing. Duerksen and Darrow charge the teacher here, giving them responsibility to help relieve students of these anxieties, “Music teachers can again help alleviate these problems for them (the students) music performance can function as a vehicle for the personal expression of moods, attitudes, and feelings” (p. 48).

Integrating street music into the curriculum can offer a range of psychosocial benefits for students. Here are some key points supported by academic research:

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL): - Music education, including street music, can significantly contribute to the development of social-emotional learning. SEL involves acquiring the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to effectively manage emotions, set positive goals, feel empathy for others, establish and maintain social relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Cognitive Development: Music, particularly when integrated across curriculum areas, can have a positive impact on students' cognitive development. This includes enhancing memory, attention, and the ability to process complex information.

Academic Achievement: Teachers have observed that integrating music into the curriculum can improve students' academic achievement, motivation, and engagement, especially in urban school settings.

Well-being and Health: Engaging in musical activities, including street music, has been associated with multi-dimensional psychological benefits, contributing to improved health and well-being.

Performance observations

When traditional songs are performed, the meanings derived from them cannot be uniform or singular. The artists are often accompanied by drummers, flutists, dancers, other singers or the chorus. This makes the performance inter-textual, moving between the song, performance, or music as coexisting texts. The poems or songs are performed before a mixed

audience of indigenes and people of other cultural extractions. These songs are heard and seen because they are oral, lyrical or musical and not written texts that are performed publicly.

However, translation was required on the field. This translation was necessary and it was to this effect that my two field assistants, Miss Godia and Lazarus were particularly helpful. Open performance involves listening to and watching songs mainly to obtain aesthetic impact. However, their performances are shaped by the audience, performance environment and audience contexts.

The performance of culture is an assortment of verbal and visual indices of narration, bearing within it the concerns of the people it showcases. Their displays of the song and dance are among their several representations of ancestry art and progress. Though, every performance of culture bears the complete essence of the people but the Gbágyi cultural transmission is inter-generational. However, the performance process is a selective one, where steps of addition and excision take place in determining what is performed.

Gbágyi songs are mainly antiphonal, short and repeated several times for emphasis. The calabash flutes, gongs, xylophone, costume, stage, figurative language among others are used to express submission to God and human forces, prayer etc. In the opinion of Anyidoho, the result is a menace of the integrative nature of the tradition of the performing arts in Africa (Musa 2019). This performance sums up the essence of the African being- spirit and man, living and yet-to live. It has been referred to as an art that is whole, complete, total, a summation of the artists' embodiment on a living space.

The songs are in short stanzas, often like refrains rendered in the main song. Performance is like narration accompanied by musical instruments like the flute, drum, gourd-rattles and metal gongs. In terms of embodiment, the eyes and ears and other parts of the Gbágyi dance during performance. They can be referred to dancing bodies when little or nothing is worn by the male dancers who have only a strip of cloth covering the phallus and the buttocks bare. The costumes consist of a dull, woven fabric tied round the torso by women and tied toga-style by the men. The typical Gbágyi cloth is coarse, navy blue, or blue-black in colours almost similar in texture to the mud cloth. There are variations to the Gbágyi textile as contemporary motifs are added to it. Of recent, inscriptions like "Mizhi Gbágyi" feature prominently on the cloth won by performers and other members of the ethnic group.

At other times, the men wrap the cloth round their bodies, toga style, or dance near naked with leaves, dried sorghum stalks as covering the waist area. Diluted ash, charcoal or powder is employed to render motifs on their bodies, depending on the page-374 New Aesthetic Dimensions in African Drama and Theatre grade, or cult of the performer. The total body or corporeal existence is engaged in performance. In terms of spatial utility, most performances are in circles while chants are going on. But when the Saa, or Etsu or King is present, the performers dance with arms stretched out, with the torso and shoulders moving back and forth, up and down. Most male and female performers dance with the chest pushed out. Others move with outward footwork and bent waists shaking to the accompanying instrumentation or music. Other elements that feature in the performances include the home, family values, the sky, animals and religion.

The *Sabon sai ko wa* (New life for all)

This group of performers are commonly found in the Northern part of Nigeria comprises of the Hausa speaking tribes. The group is vibrant from the rural outskirts of Abuja and is known for its unique blend of traditional and contemporary music styles. The group plays a significant role in preserving and promoting the local cultural heritage through street music.

Benefits of integrating *Sabon Sai Ko Wa* Music in the classroom

1. Cultural awareness and appreciation
 - Integrating traditional music like that of *Sabon sai ko wa* helps students understand and appreciate their cultural heritage.
 - It promotes cultural diversity and inclusion, allowing students from various backgrounds to see their culture represented and respected in the educational curriculum.
2. Encouraging creativity and expression
 - Exposure to traditional music encourages students to explore their creativity and express themselves through various arts forms.
 - It can inspire them to learn musical instruments, dance and live performance, fostering a well-rounded education
3. Enhancing learning through music
 - Music can be an effective tool for learning other subjects, such as language, numeracy, history, literature and social studies.
 - Traditional songs often contain historical narratives, moral lessons, and cultural stories that can enrich the learning experience.
4. Building community and collaboration
 - Group activities centered around music, such as learning to play instruments or singing traditional songs, foster team work and collaboration among pupils and students.
 - They also helped in building a sense of community and belonging within the classroom.

Methods of incorporation street music in the classrooms

1. Music lessons

Music periods on the time table can be divided into sessions to focus on traditional music, where pupils and students learn about the history and cultural significance of the songs.

Lessons can be practical base involving teaching of traditional musical instruments used by the *Sabon sai ko wa* group like the bass gourd (blowing instrument), xylophone and the kembe drums.
2. Project base learning

This approach encourages critical thinking, research, and presentation skills.

Students can undertake projects that explore the construction of the traditional musical instruments, the impact of the music on the culture and it's relevance today.
3. Interdisciplinary approach

Music has been integrated into other arts subjects as cultural and creative arts in the schools. Students compare and contrast the contextuality of the combined

subjects and other subjects like social studies and citizenship through the indebt learning of traditional songs.

4. Cultural events and performances

Schools organize cultural events where pupils and students perform different traditional music in and around Abuja. Pupils and students performing the *Sabon sai ko wa* songs will create a platform for showcasing their talents.

Such events promote cultural exchange and engagement with the broader community.

Challenges and considerations

1. Curriculum design

Integrating traditional music into an already packaged curriculum requires careful planning and alignment with educational goals.

2. Teacher training

Teachers may need additional training to effectively teach traditional music and incorporate it into their lessons.

Professional development programs can help music educators gain the necessary skills and knowledge.

3. Resource availability

Access to traditional instruments and skilled instructors can be a challenge in some schools.

Ensure that there are adequate resources for teaching traditional music since it is essential for successful integration.

The *Sabon sai ko wa* comprises of the Hausa tribe of Nigeria well known for its traditional sounds and cultural significance of their tribe.

The metaphor of the word tribe is rooted in a set of colonial mythologies. It portrait the character of the African societies, in such that, they are static, pure, cultures, not hybridized, or subject to change or alteration. Paul Gilroy argues that 'all cultures are hybrid, impure; There is no such thing as 'authentic', or organic, community, only an ideological construct; The tribe is not a natural fact of all human societies but a cultural product of nonindustrial societies. The styles of each tribe, give rooms for a fantasy of organic society which becomes perhaps the story tell when dealing with the alienation.

Conclusion

This paper concludes that street music elements that are enriched in art music education can promote and constitute a model for appreciating Nigerian music within the youth and teenagers. In vision 2030, Music art education to inculcate street music into both teaching and learning and must be encouraged by Nigerian music curricular planners. NERDC. Therefore, the use of musical instruments locally made by the Gbagyi's like the drums, xylophone, rattle, calabash flute etc. should be used in the teaching and learning of music in the class rooms to replace the Western musical instruments and be adopted into the Nigerian music curriculum by the curriculum planners.

These will serve as a great benefit for the importance of incorporating music, such as street music, into educational programs to foster a well-rounded development of students.

In summary, music education goes beyond just musical skills—it prepares students for learning, academic success, and a creative fulfilling life. Introducing *Sabon Sai Ko Wa* music into classroom settings offers a unique opportunity to blend cultural education with academic learning.

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