

CHAPTER FIVE

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE IN MUSIC EDUCATION: TEACHERS' ROLE

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Abstract

Music education is associated with the teaching and learning of music which can be either formal or informal. Theory and practice are two sides of music learning. They are two completely independent concerns but recognize principle in cohesive existence. The purpose of this paper is to provide a bridge between theory and practice that exists in music learning. The researcher observed that the gap between music education theory and its practice is widening. The study is an attempt to bring classroom music knowledge more in line with reality. The methodology adopted is observation; the target population is made up of teachers and students of selected schools within Anambra state. Findings from the study shows that a lot is required from teacher, students, curriculum planners, education stakeholders for effective music education. Inadequate practice of what is taught affects students negatively in learning. The study states some suggestions and recommendations, urging teachers to live up to expectation in attempting to bridge the existing gap.

Keywords: Music education, Teachers' role, Theory and Practice.

Introduction

The study of music theory interacts with intuition, honing, sharpening and enhancing it with further insights and perceptions. What one gathers from theory may seem to be simply surface information, but that information will eventually amplify and broaden your musical intuition. Being mediators between educational policy and educational practice, teachers are the factors, which predetermine the quality of education. This requires re-identification and re-acknowledgement of the teacher's role and value in the process of personality education. Choice of career of its planning has to be perceived as continuous and long-term process, which is going on not only during the years of studies but also having obtained a profession, therefore the learner must know that learning is a continuous process. Sultana in Lasaukiene (2015) opines that, effective learning, both theory and practice is predetermined by external necessity i.e. requirements imposed by environment, as well as by internal motivation, determination of a person himself or herself or by conscious perception of a targeted choice of the profession and objective evaluation of own abilities and professional activities, identification of possible career opportunities planned and systematically improvement of own professional activities.

In Nigeria, music is important not only for entertainment and relaxation but also an important subject for educational purposes. It requires effective learning and training. It is taught at all levels of education- primary, secondary and tertiary with different degrees of emphasis and seriousness. Serious music learning is supposed to begin in the secondary school, improving the foundation they learnt in the primary. It is from the secondary school

that the students are expected to advance their careers in music into tertiary levels. (Ezeugwu, 2015). Studies have shown that that students' response to study of music is very poor in Nigerian schools, especially at the secondary level. This has been facing a lot of problem. The students of music find it difficult to adjust and tune their personality to the environments.

Current curriculum in Nigeria which is activity based provides the framework of what should be taught, how it should be taught, what it should be taught with and who learning out comes should be accessed. Ojukwu and onuora-Oguno opines that:

There is need for teachers to move away from the traditional 'chalk and talk' approach to learning by doing approach. It has been acknowledge that for students to do well in music and develop practical skills which will be useful to them in their later lives, they must be actively involved in the process of learning (P.36).

Learning is based on assumption that what is learnt in school will be transferred to life situations outside the school; teachers should strive for impact, involving the students in various activities. Bridging theory and practice speaks volume in music education; if successively achieved the learner will be provided with learning and rewarding experience. Teaching and learning of music thus become fun in the classroom.

The problem of the study arises from the approach which students views music as a subject of study as observed by the researcher. Students most times perceive that music is all about dancing, singing, and playing of instruments. The teacher on the other hand does more of talking without doing, or showing the students how to do. This creates a gap between theory and practice in music education. The purpose of this study is to bridge the existing gap between the two, and see how the teacher can marry the two for effective teaching and learning of music.

Impact of Learning theories and theoretical studies in music theory and practice

There have been some propounded music learning theories which if is carefully applied can go a long way in enhancing the adequate balance of theory and practice in music education. Kodaly in Ojukwu (2017) emphasized the quality of expression, feeling and involvement of the child in music performance. The teacher's attention should be focused on the student as the enjoyer, explorer, and discoverer in music class rather than as an inheritor. This gives more latitude and greater relevance to the behavioral theorist who provide extremely useful ways of understanding how developmental changes in behaviour and thinking occur and why behavioral problem arise in some learners. Once the teacher understands the developmental challenges in the student and become his or her facilitator, adviser and stimulator the student discovers his or her self and move forward.

Piaget's cognitive theory should be taken in cognizance in music education. He developed a theory of mental growth by observing behaviour of children. The delineated four stages in the development of behaviour and thinking, starting from the day they are born all the way through adulthood. The first stage of the development is referred to as the sensor motor stage.

This stage begins at birth and lasts through 24 months, he or she moves into the pre-operational stage, which is from 24 months old through the age of 7. When the child reaches the age of 7, he enters the concrete operational stage, which spans from 7 to 12 years old. When a child hit the age of adolescence, he moves into the final stage of development, known as the formal operation which spans adolescents through adulthood. (study.com)

Sensori moto stage: The main achievement during this stage is object permanence. This stage requires the child to know that an object still exists, even if it is hidden. It requires the ability to form a mental representation (i.e. a schema) of object.

Pre-operational: During this stage, young children can think about things symbolically. This is the ability to make one thing- a world or an object- stand for something other than itself. Thinking is still egocentric and the infant has difficulty taking the viewpoint of others.

Concrete operational stage: Piaget considered the concrete stage a major turning point in the child's cognitive development because it marks the beginning of logical or operational thought. This means the child can work things out internally in the head (rather than physically try things out in the real world). Children can conceive number (age 6), mass (age 7), and weight (age 9). Conservation is the understanding that something stays the same in quantity even though its appearance changes.

Formal operational stage: It begins at approximately at 11 years and lasts into adulthood. During this time, people develop the ability to think about abstract concepts and logically test hypotheses. Piaget has been extremely influential in developing educational policy and teaching practice. Okeke (2014) highlights its implication and application to music. The stages suggest that:

- Younger children in particular be given many opportunities to listen, sing, play and move to music
- The introduction of staff notation should occur only after preliminary experiences
- Music instruction follows sound before symbol approach
- Age eight is a turning point in a child's cognitive development. At this time, children are capable of identifying timbres, discriminatory among random melodies, and perceiving structure in simple melodies.
- Music curriculum should be planned to follow the maturational ages of the learners. The evidence of the developmental stages implies the existence of sensitive or critical periods when formal learning should duly commence. (p 52).

A teacher should take note of these to ensure that what he is teaching is what the learner can comprehend at that particular stage. For instance, sharp in music raises a note, but in advance music studies this assertion may not hold. But it is improper trying to prove to secondary school learner that it is not in all case that sharp raises a note. The point is this, in teaching both theory and practice the teacher must consider the learning stage of the students and what the intellectual capacity can carry.

The traditional values theory by Swanwick in Ojukwu also focused on the student's and emphasizes that learner's need to master relevant skills and information as inheritors of a set of cultural values and practices in order to take part in musical affairs. This theory stresses commitment to the value of active involvement of the students in learning especially in performing music. It is an ideal theory that will help the teacher go through the process of passing knowledge with confidence to the learner and at the same time render advisory role to them. This also goes to buttress the cognitivist belief that understanding how learners think is crucial to understand their development because learner's perception of events often determine how these events affect them.

Reflective practice and critical self-reflection

Reflective practice and critical self-reflection generally refer to one of two approaches to understanding one's teaching. The first approaches consist of reflecting on one's teaching in terms of the effect or lack of effect it is having on students learning. Generally the analysis is framed in terms of questions such as: Was what taught age appropriate? Was I clear in my objectives and expectations? Did I make the learning experience meaningful for my students? What assumptions about the students or learning informed what I did in the classroom? What educational theory informed my theory? These are kind of questions emerging for teachers according to (INTASC (Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium) in Tubman. The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his choices and actions on others. This required the teacher to determine the objectives, select the curriculum appropriate to those objectives, organize the content, and develop assessment to determine if the objectives have been met.

The second approach consists of reflecting on one's teaching in terms of what is often referred as diversity. For example, one might ask: Was my teaching culturally sensitive? Was my teaching inclusive? Did I enact any prejudices in my teaching or choice of curriculum? How does my social identity eg. Race, class, gender, influence my teaching? This approach asks teachers to be more cognizant and critical of their own attitudes and values than the first approach does.

The traditional model of music learning for classical musicians implies many solitary hours spent working firstly on techniques, and later on interpretation, based upon one-to-one instrumental or vocal tuition. In an attempt to explain the phenomenon of practice by classical musicians, researchers adopt many different approaches. Miksz in Esslin-Peard for example offered a tripartite division between the individual, a comparison of student and teacher view, and changes over a long period of time. Despite this attempt to find synergies, there is no overall all consensus about practice behaviours, because it would seem that within the broad context of musical learning, there is no single way to become an expert musician. Zimmerman also in Esslin-Peard described how high school students were helped by teachers to develop self-regulated learning include setting proximal goal, self-awareness, monitoring progress, self-motivation, effect time management, attributing causation to outcomes and the ability to apply and adapt newly gained knowledge to future behaviour

and skilled development.

Teacher's Role in Bridging Theory and Practice in Music Education

Music education is a field of study associated with teaching and learning of music. It touches on all learning domain (the development of skills), the cognitive domain (the acquisition of knowledge) and the affective domain (the learner's willingness to receive, internalize, and share what is learned), including music appreciation and sensitivity.

Teachers should do their best in bringing the cognitive and psychomotor domain side by side in learning. These will be achieved by creating an enabling environment for students to explore and develop themselves.

Teachers should realize that they do not possess all knowledge. Specialist should be invited to train or expose the students to the choice area of practice.

The teacher must not neglect the native endowment of the learner. Exploring the learner's native endowment, developing it better will go a long way in bridging theory and practice in music education.

Motivation is an important tool in the hand of a teacher to enhance music education. It involves arousing the learner's interest in learning. Leonhard and House in Okeke (2014) explain that 'it is the most complex but most important task of the music teacher to manage the learning so that optimal motivation is present.'

Discussion of Findings

Often times, students with musical interest and ability argue the value of learning music theory. At one extreme are those who feel that learning as a set of "rules" will only limit their creativity, and at the other end those who are truly interested in understanding how the parts of a musical piece work together.

It is important to understand that music theory is not a set of rules and regulations that must be followed like traffic laws. Music has always come before the theory that explains it. The laws or theories of music are more like the laws of nature in that they explain the workings of a system that already exists.

Theory is a way to explain how certain combination of notes work together, and a method of identifying and categorizing different sound. It does not limit on expressing his creativity. For every musical example that breaks the rule, there's an explanation that shows how that exception still follows the basic principle.

Recommendation and Conclusion

Having examined the existing gaps between theory and practice in music education in Nigerian secondary schools, there is need to bridge it. This, no doubt will ensure effective

teaching and learning of music. Since education has been explained as the development of individual according to his needs and the demands of the society of which he is integral part. For a learner to develop there is need that the teacher will balance or merge both theory and practical. For the knowledge acquired to meet the demands of the society, it should be expressed in practical terms. Okafor (2005) in interpreting FRN states “the person who has received quality music education, must function as a musician at the best and highest level of the country's economy. He must not only earn a living, but must be able to use music as a tool for national economic development.” (p 212)

There is need to adjust the curriculum in other to evaluate how the content will embrace practices that will boast the interest of learner and makes them relevant. Okafor further laments that music studied in the classroom is not the music that moves and develops the economy. One finds mainly western popular music and neo-traditional popular music which are very important in the society and in the economy. This is what one hears at the parties and in the media.

The students have great role to play but it the role of the teacher to activate or stimulate the mind of the students. There is need for orientation before the commencement of music education. Outcome of the data analysis shows that students are ever ready to explore all manner of practical in music but shy away from the theoretical aspect. They (students) must be reminded that both of the goes hand in hand in making one a better music students.

A government, school proprietors also has a great role because investigation from the data collected showed that there is lack of instrument needed for practical. Both western and traditional music instruments are lacking. In some cases where practical classes did not hold is not the teachers making. The school managers see music as a second class subject, therefore not giving it attention like other subject they termed more important

It is observed that curriculum planners tend to pay attention to theory and practical aspect of our musical tradition or culture. Music and culture are inseparable while culture informs music, music projects culture. Education serves as an agent for presenting the culture hence it becomes imperative that methodologies will be derived from the culture owners which music educators, ethnomusicologists etc. should document through research for cultural continuity (Ugwu & Ezeke, 2015). Meki in Ugwu wrote:

Modern literacy education in African music has hitherto focused more on observed context studies. The philosophical rooting, psychological and therapeutic force, and humaning imperation that ground African indigenous musical arts conceptualizations, theoretical musicological content and contextual practices have not been much discerned or integrated. Much needed in contemporary education, there are integrative studies and literature materials that represent the intellectual base of the knowledge owners and creators, and which will ensure cognitive understanding of the indigenous musical art system of Africa. (p 120)

The researcher is of the view that illustration of musical terms such as rhythm, pitch, tone, melody, source of musical sound (acoustics), should be related to people's knowledge. Teachers are charged to have a cultural meaningful sense of direction in music education. It should be illustrated with what the students already know or observe in the society. When this is effectively done, it will give the students a sense of security and self confidence to boast or showcase what they have learnt and so, contribute their quota in the society.

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