



Revitalizing Church Music Education in Nigerian Baptist Convention Owned Theological Institutions

Dr. Udoka Peace Ossaiga

Department of Church Music, Baptist Theological Seminary, Eku, Delta State, Nigeria.

Abstract

Church music education in the Nigerian Baptist Convention began c. 1992 with the establishment of the Department of Church Music, now the Faculty of Church Music, at the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, Oyo State. From 2020, Church Music education is being offered in the Convention's theological institutions in Lagos (in 2015); Benin, Edo State (in 2022); Eku, Delta State (in 2023); and Obinze, Imo State (in 2023). The faculty and departments were established in view of the vital roles of Church music in church functions; however, the Nigerian Baptist Convention faces challenges in maintaining vibrant church music education programmes in its theological institutions. Also, there is a lack of empirical studies on church music education revitalization, especially in the Nigerian Baptist Convention. In this article, I used mixed-methods approach that consists of a survey of select twenty (20) faculty members from three of the theological institutions, church music students and administration, interview of ten (10) purposively selected church music educators, analysis of the institutions' curricula, social cognitive theory, transformational leadership theory, and organizational change theory to examine and discuss the revitalization of church music education in the Nigerian Baptist Convention's theological institutions. Findings indicate that faculty expertise, relevance of curriculum, and availability of resources are factors that are influencing effectiveness. Faculty development, curriculum review; and resources enhancement are hereby recommended for the revitalization of church music education in the institutions. This is capable of revitalizing church music education in the theological institutions for livingness.

Keywords: Church Music Education, Theological Institutions; Revitalization; Nigerian Baptist Convention.

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian Baptist Convention is an evangelical Christian denomination with over fourteen thousand (14, 000+) churches in Nigeria. While the local churches, associations of the local churches, conferences and Convention are the administrative structures of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, it is through its theological institutions that the Convention executes its theological education programmes. Theological education in the Convention features trainings in Christian theology, Christian religious education and church music. In recognition of the roles of church music to church functions, church music education is offered in the Convention's Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, Oyo State; Baptist College of Theology, Lagos; Baptist College of Theology, Benin, Edo State; Baptist Theological Seminary, Eku, Delta State; and Baptist College of Theology, Obinze, Imo State, since 1992, 2015, 2022, 2023; 2023, respectively. In the past decade, many graduates from the church music programmes have been grasping with the challenge of being

without service stations, while the departments of church music grasp with the challenge of maintaining acceptable church music education standard, faced with inadequate resources, and slim departmental faculties. In this article, I discussed the revitalization of church music education within the Nigerian Baptist Convention's owned theological institutions.

Church music education is important for the preparation of church musicians, improvement of church musicians and church music, artistic facilitation and execution of church functions, such as Christian worship, Christian education, discipleship and evangelism. Hawn (2013) discussed the importance of church music education to theological education noting that church music education has enormous impact on theological education. He states the import of church music education within the context of theological education to theological education, highlighting the benefits of church music education to theologians, church musicians, and church functions. The study underscores the trans-

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disciplinary importance of church music education in theological institutions.

Studies on church music education in Nigerian emphasize the need for contextualization. Thus, Obi (2020), exploring the evolution and globalization of gospel music in Nigeria, observed the need to contextualize church music education in Nigeria in order to produce culturally sensitive church musicians and church music. To contextualize church music education in the Nigeria, Ossaiga (2023a) called for the decolonization of church music education in the Nigerian Baptist Convention. To the cited scholars, church music education should be provided in Nigerian context for greater effectiveness. It is in pursuit of greater effectiveness in church music education in the Nigerian Baptist Convention that Ossaiga (2023b) argued that the functional music pedagogy be applied to church music education in the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

From the foregoing, I note that literature indicate the importance of church music education and the quest for contextualization of church music education in the Nigerian Baptist Convention. How church music can be revitalized for greater effectiveness, especially, in the Nigerian Baptist Convention owned theological institutions, is scant in literature.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This article is based on three theories, namely: the social cognitive theory, transformational leadership theory, and organizational change theory. The social cognitive theory is credited to Bandura (1986; 1997), Wood and Bandura (1989). The theory explains how individuals learn and adopt new behavioural patterns, including church music education. The theory indicates that learning results from personal factors, such as cognitive, emotional and biological factors, and behavioural factors such as observation, imitation and re-enforcement. Applicably, church music education can adopt new teaching methods and materials; thus, influence students' learning and adoption of musical skills for revitalization.

However, the role of leadership in effecting institutional change is noteworthy. Thus, Bass (1985) in transformational leadership theory elucidates that leaders can transform organizations through the instruments of vision, inspiration, and empowerment. I note that the leadership of Nigerian Baptist Convention and theological institutions can promote the revitalization of church music education through vision, provision of resources, and support for its church music educators. This is capable of changing church music education in the realm, positively for livingness.

On organizational change, Lewin (1951) discussed three processes of organizational change, namely: unfreezing, changing, and refreezing. He elucidated that unfreezing means to identify the need for change and create a sense of urgency, while changing means to implement new ideas. Refreezing means to institutionalize changes for organizational stability.

The Nigerian Baptist Convention can unfreeze church music education by identifying the need to revitalize its church music education and create a sense of urgency, change church music education by implementing new ideas and policies that are in support of the revitalization of its church music education; and refreeze church music education by institutionalizing changes and ensuring stability in the church music education.

The social cognitive theory, transformational leadership theory, and organizational change theory provide theoretical foundations for the study. They constitute the theoretical framework for the exploration of collaborative strategies for revitalizing church music education in the Nigerian Baptist Convention owned theological institutions.

RESEARCH METHODS

In this study, I employed a mixed-methods approach that combines survey, interview; and analysis. From three (3) Nigerian Baptist Convention owned theological institutions, I surveyed twenty (20) purposively selected faculty members, church music students, and administration. Ten (10) church music educators from the three (3) selected theological institutions were interviewed in tandem with the research objectives. The church music curricula of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso; Baptist Theological Seminary, Eku; and Baptist Colleges of Theology in Lagos; Benin, Edo State; and Obinze, Imo State were analyzed. Data gleaned through the survey, interview and curricula analysis were collated, reported and analyzed in strict adherence to ethical standards to ensure the accuracy of data, as well as the consent and anonymity of respondents. The primary data gleaned from the field formed the findings of the study.

FINDINGS

The research reports data on three key areas of the study, namely: church music faculty expertise, the relevance of curriculum; and availability of resources. Table 1.1 presents findings on faculty expertise in the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

Table 1. Faculty Expertise in Church Music Education

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Music Theory/Composition	5	25%
2	Christian Worship	5	25%
3	Church Music History	3	15%
4	Performance Studies	3	15%
5	Contemporary Music Styles	2	10%
6	African Musicology	1	5%
7	Others	2	10%

Source: Field-work, 2024.

Faculty expertise refers to the specific areas in which members of faculty at the departments of church music emphasized in their postgraduate education, music practices, and/or research. Faculty expertise determine students'

areas of specialty. Until recently, church music specialty in the theological institutions were limited to Voice and Piano. Thus, students decided their specialty between Voice and Piano; the undecided alternative became the student’s area of minor emphasis. Around 2021, the Faculty of Church Music, at the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, increased students specialty options at undergraduate levels from Piano and Voice to diverse areas of performance. At the postgraduate levels, the faculty of church music offered Composition, Christian Worship and Performance Studies as specialties.

The development is being applied to church music education in other theological institutions of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. However, the expansion of students’ specialties over stretches faculty expertise for there are no sufficient faculty with sufficient theoretical and practical foundations to navigate the terrains. This challenge is evident in faculty’s inability to attend to the horns, strings, and woodwind families of musical instruments in the departments of church music in most of the theological institutions.

The shortage of faculty expertise is partly responsible for the use of adjunct lecturers from neighbouring universities to teach courses in the areas with inadequate faculty expertise. While this effort meets immediate theoretical needs of students in the area, the effort has proven inadequate in meeting the practical needs of students in the departments. For the adjunct faculty does not have the consistent physical presence needed to nurture skills in the practical areas of study. Also, most of the adjuncts used are not in the practical aspects of church music; thus, the effort mostly improves the intellectual dimension of music education without much impact on its practical or performative domains.

The relevance of church music curriculum in the theological institutions to contemporary needs is in doubt. Table 2 displays respondents’ rating of curriculum relevance in respect of the study.

Table 2. Curriculum Relevance in Church Music Education

S/N	Rating	Frequency	Percentage
1	Low	12	60%
2	Moderate	4	20%
3	High	4	20%

Source: Field-work, 2024.

From the figure, it is noteworthy that respondents rate curriculum relevance low with sixty percent (60%) of the respondents ticking low option. While forty percent (40%) of the respondents rate the relevance of curriculum in the church music education moderate and high evenly at 20% each, the convincing low rating of curriculum relevance at 60% is not unrelated to the disconnection between societal needs and church music education in the realm. The rating resonates with the availability of resources for church music education. Table 3 presents data on resource availability in the church music education.

Table 3. Resource Availability in Church Music Education

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Musical Instruments	12	60%
2	Music Technology	1	5%
3	Library Resources	4	20%
4	Other	3	15%

Source: Field-work, 2024.

Although a majority of respondents rate the availability of musical instrument at sixty percent (60%), with the exception of the Faculty of Church Music at the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, the available musical instruments in the departments of church music are mainly electronic keyboards, few Western orchestral instruments, and a few African musical instruments. On a whole, the available musical instruments can hardly match the church music students’ populations in the theological institutions. Thus, students resort to practice scheduling in order to have access to musical instruments, for a minimum of one hour in a day!

While library resources rate twenty percent (20%), there are no standard music libraries with acceptable collections of books, journals, periodicals, tapes, audio and visual facilities in most of the departments of church music. The church music sections in the schools’ libraries do not provide sufficient secondary data for research in sacred, performative, and African musicology. These push students to online sources where the internet provides access to a measure of global church music educational resources with minimal contextual relevance. The challenge, among others, obstructs students’ research development in church music. Table 4 displays data on the challenges of church music education in the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

Table 4. Challenges Facing Church Music Education

S/N	Challenge	Frequency	Percentage
1	Inadequate Resources	10	50%
2	Outdated Curriculum	6	30%
3	Lack of Faculty Expertise	4	20%
4	Limited Student Interest	2	10%
5	Other	2	10%

Source: Field-work, 2024.

From the table above, it could be deduced that inadequate resources, outdated curriculum, lack of faculty expertise, and limited student interest are the major challenges facing church music education in the theological institutions. These challenges point to the areas in which church music education in the theological institutions needs improvements.

DISCUSSION

The findings highlight three key area for improvement. They are:

- a) faculty development programme,
- b) curriculum review and update; and
- c) resource enhancement.

As earlier observed, through full-time and part-time appointment of faculty, the theological institutions seek to meet their church music faculty needs. While the members of the faculties emphasized different areas of study in music, such as performance studies, Christian worship, African musicology, music theory and composition, specialties of faculty and performative competencies of many faculty are hardly adequate to proficiently prepare students in tandem with societal expectations. Also, the emphasis of the church music programmes on church music practice does not provide sufficient rooms for the development of the intellectual dimension of church music education. This challenges the scholarly ability of faculty who obtained all their graduate and post graduate music education from the institution(s).

The application of technology to music education has gone beyond sound technology and notation to sound production, music broadcasting, and streaming. The manifest of artificial intelligence in music composition, and performance presents new challenges to majority of faculty who had no significant measure of music technology in their music education. These and other factors necessitate faculty development. Thus, there is need for further development of the faculty of church music in the theological institutions, in the various areas of performance studies, musical instruments and instrumentation, music technology, music research and scholarship, among others.

Furthermore, church music curricula in the Nigerian Baptist Convention were designed by foreign missionaries at the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso; these have provided basis for the church music programmes in other theological institutions of the Convention as they draw their curricula from that of the Faculty of Church Music, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso. Although the church music curricula have undergone several reviews, the curricula have retained their foreign disposition through emphasis on Western concepts of church music, and worship in theory and practice. These challenge the contextual relevance of the church music programmes.

Also, the curricular have not leaned towards societal expectations on church music as emphasis is placed on Western art music which has proven not to be streetwise in contemporary times, especially in most parts of Nigeria. Also, the curricula repeat piano, theory, ensemble studies, conducting, and sight-reading in several semesters, without providing for Nigerian gospel music, which has proven to be the most selling genre in Nigeria's church music in the twenty-first century. These and more call for the review and update of church music curricula in the theological institutions.

The church music education in the theological institutions

is being outweighed by increasing students' enrollment, ageing of musical resources, poor maintenance culture, and inadequate musical instruments. These reduce students' practice time, slow students' musical skills acquisition and adversely impact faculty and students' rating. These, in part, contribute to the increasing number of church music graduates not being able to attract ministerial interest.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To realize the gains of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- a) establish faculty development programmes for church music educators in the Nigerian Baptist Convention
- b) review and update church music curriculum to include contemporary and indigenous musical styles
- c) enhance resources such as facilities, equipments, and funding for church music education in the realm
- d) encourage collaboration between church music educators and pastors in the Nigerian Baptist Convention;
- e) develop church music education policies and guidelines for the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

Strategies for the Implementation of the Recommendations

To implement the recommendations, the following strategies are stipulated. There is need for the Nigerian Baptist Convention to:

- a) collaborate with church music departments and faculty in its theological institutions for faculty development,
- b) establish a church music education committee in the Nigerian Baptist Convention,
- c) allocate budget for regular resource enhancement in the faculty and departments of church music;
- d) improve the quota of church music education in the Convention's theological education curricula.

CONCLUSION

This article discussed the revitalization of church music education in the theological institutions of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. The study identified the challenges of church music education in the terrain, and recommended solutions to the challenges for livingness. Revitalizing church music education in the Nigerian Baptist Convention requires multifaceted strategic collaboration that should involve the leadership of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, heads of the theological institutions, faculty of the departments of church music, and pastors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. The collaboration is capable of addressing the identified needs, and improving the standard of the church music education towards meeting societal expectations. Church music education is over three decades old in the Nigerian Baptist Convention; the time for its revitalization is now.

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