

MUSIC AND ORIENTATION: A PANACEA FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

With proper orientation, music has the capacity to ignite the passion for both national development and social integration in Nigeria. The thrust of this research investigated and identified the placement of music and orientation as a panacea for national development, cohesion and social integration. In consideration of the Nation's multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multicultural, meta-political diversities and inclinations, this study examined the role of music and orientation in promoting national unity and social amalgamation. It underscored the significance of music in Nigerian culture and its potential for fostering national unity. Consequently, the research investigated how music and orientation could contribute compositely to national development and achieve social integration. Adopting the African communal life concept of Nketia, the methodology involved qualitative approach, empirical study and library sources. Findings from the research reveal that musical configuration and instruction with proper focus, character orientation and coordination can serve as a panacea to achieve social integration in a changing world. The study recommends that Music Departments across the tertiary institutions in Nigeria should partner with the Federal Government, National Orientation Agency, National Institute for Cultural Orientation, Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria, and other agencies, integrating music instruction and enlightenment into national development plans, thereby promoting music programmes that celebrate Nigerian diversity and unity.

Keywords: Orientation, social integration, national development, panacea

Introduction

During a discussion in 2011, Prof. Anthony Mereni had remarked that if given the opportunity in Lagos State, he would solve the challenges of Lagos Traffic with the power of music and the mind. A deeper reflection on what transpired during that discussion gave rise to the topic of this research,

"Music and Orientation: A Panacea for National Development and Social Integration in Nigeria". Nonetheless, delving into the power of using music to solve the challenges currently bedeviling national development, socio-economic, political, moral, cultural, scientific and technological developments as observed in Nweke and Nwoye (2017), the study explored the potentials of music and orientation in promoting national development, solving issues that affect the progress of the country, and serving as a tool for social awareness and integration in Nigeria. With its rich cultural heritage and diverse musical traditions, music has long been an integral part of the Nigerian society.

There are agencies in Nigeria with inherent capacity to partner with music institutions for national development. Some of these agencies are National Orientation Agency (NOA), National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO), Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON), formerly Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON), and Voice of Nigeria (VON). The National Orientation Agency, for instance, is a unit of the Information Ministry dedicated to fostering national unity through enlightening the masses via the use of music for strategic public education and advocacy. "I'm A Real Nigerian" (NOA theme song), a song for national pride, "Nigeria will Survive" (Veno Marioghae), "Nigeria, My Beloved Country" (Funmi Adam), "We are Nigerians" (Princess Anath), "Which way Nigeria" (Sunny Okosun), and "MAMSER" (Onyee Nwankpa) are classic examples of music for national orientation, pride and patriotism.

Statement of the Problem

The problem that this study sought to address is the challenge of promoting good citizenship, national development and social integration in Nigeria, a country marked by significant cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity and conflicts. Despite the country's rich cultural heritage, Nigeria continues to face significant challenges related to dichotomy, social disintegration, banditry, herdsmen arising from ethnic and religious strives, which often manifest tension and bloodletting conflicts.

The question is, can music function as a panacea for national development and social integration? Rhetorical as this may sound, this question is rooted in the understanding that music has the potential to bring people together, promote cross-cultural understanding, and foster a sense of national identity and unity. Affirmatively, the problem of this study is that music has not been seen

as panacea for the development and social integration of the citizenry. By examining the role of music and orientation in promoting national development and social integration, this study identified the ways in which music can be used to address the challenges of social fragmentation and division in Nigeria.

The objectives of this paper highlight the importance of music and orientation in shaping national development and social integration, exploring the role of music in promoting national unity and social cohesion, identifying the ways in which music can be used as a tool for shaping respectable citizenship, fronting law-abiding citizenship, creating awareness and consciousness, internalization of national values and coexistence as a nation. Additionally, the research tried to create spirit of empathy and kindness for the elders and the needy among the populace.

The research questions guiding this study are:

- How can music contribute to national development and social integration in Nigeria?
- Which agencies can partner with music to achieve social integration in Nigeria?
- How can these partnerships be engaged for national development and social integration in a changing world?
- What role can music play in promoting national unity and social cohesion in a culturally diverse society like Nigeria?

These research questions guided the study's investigation into the potential of music and orientation to promote national development and social integration in Nigeria. This study provided insights into the development of effective strategies for promoting national development and social integration in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications

Quite relevant to this study are four major terms which are essential for proper understanding of the various segments of this paper. "Orientation" refers to the process of directing or guiding individuals or groups towards a specific goal or objective within an organization or society. In the context of music and national development, orientation involves instilling a sense of national

identity and unity among citizens. In similar vein, “social integration” refers to the process of creating a unified and liberal society where individuals from diverse backgrounds can interact, share values, and work together to achieve a common goal. In the context of Nigeria, social integration involves bridging the gap in cultural, ethnic, religious, and socio-economic dynamics to promote national unity and development.

Simply put, “national development” involves the process of improving the economic, social, cultural, educational and political well-being of a nation. In the context of Nigeria, national development is engrossed with addressing challenges such as poverty, inequality, and social fragmentation in the process of promoting sustainable development and national unity. The potential transformation power of orientation, through music, can contribute to national development by promoting cultural awareness, good citizenship, and social uniformity. Simply, “panacea” refers to a cure, remedy or therapeutic solution to problem in a particular situation. In the context of music and national development, music, when objectively and purposively performed, has an estimable power to deliver an orientation that acts on the heart and mind of the practitioners and listeners. Additionally, it ignites the passion needed in promoting national unity and social integration in the country. Consequently, music has the ability to transcend cultural and socio-economic divides, promoting cross-cultural understanding and fostering a sense of national identity, and unity.

Research Methodology

The research methodology employed in this study involved empirical study, library sources, and interviews with music professionals and scholars. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the role of music and orientation in promoting national development and social integration. The use of interviews provided insight into the perceptions and experiences of music scholars.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of structural functionalism by Emile Durkheim and Herbert Spencer (cited by Ologundudu, 2020) which views and interrogates society as a complex system, with its component parts having the capacity to create social unity, promote solidarity and stability, becomes relevant to interrogate this paper. Ologundudu (2020: 92) observes that *structural* looks at how the society

is structured, while *functionalism* addresses and cross-examines “the society as a whole entity in terms of the functions of its constituent elements, norms, customs, traditions and institutions”. Thus, the structural functionalism approaches societal issues via ontological and epistemological perspectives, identifying what is in the society and how it functions. In a country like Nigeria, it is imperative to adopt the structural functionalism theory which is capable of reflecting the cultural norms of the environment and its social structures. These, in turn, become facets to be celebrated and shared.

Further theoretical framework used in this study draws on African communal life, cultural identity and social cohesion by J.H. Kwabena Nketia (1979). These theories provide useful lenses through which to analyze the role of music and orientation in promoting national development and social integration. Cultural identity theory emphasizes the importance of cultural awareness and national pride in shaping individual and collective identities, negotiating their sense of self in relation to different cultural groups. This theory positions cultural identity as dynamic and social construct that are continuously molded and modified by interactions and relationships. It is observed that musical groups reflecting ethnic inclinations have their own distinctive musical forms which they perform in connection with their ceremonies and other activities (Joseph, 2020). According to Nketia (1979):

The musical life of an African community is generally not left exclusively to spontaneous groups or limited to their activities. There are also organized groups, in which roles and responsibilities are distributed among members in some kind of associative relationship. Such performing groups are more or less permanent units within the social organization. (p. 41).

Discussing Music and Orientation and their Application in Nigerian Scene

- *How can music contribute to national development and social integration in Nigeria?*

Specifically, music contributes to the continuity, development, identity and stability of culture. According to Merriam in Enoh (2006: 66): “If music allows emotional expression, gives aesthetic pleasure, entertains, communicates, elicits physical response, enforces conformity to social norms, and validates social institutions and religious rituals, it is clear that it contributes to the conformity

and stability of culture”. Consequently, music has the inherent panacea for national development and social integration in Nigeria. In another dimension, music industry generates revenue and employment to the nation and its people through internal and external performances, sales and royalties.

Furthermore, music plays a significant role in promoting cultural awareness and national pride as children are seen and heard singing the values highlighted in the NOA orientation songs that create consciousness, awareness and internalization of values of co-existence as a nation, thereby fostering a sense of shared identity and belonging among citizens.

Social cohesion theory emphasizes the importance of positive social relationships, a sense of belonging, and an orientation towards the common good of the people, promoting national unity and development. Thus:

In traditional African societies, music making is generally organized as a social event. Public performances, therefore, take place on social occasions- that is, on occasions when members of a group or a community come together for the enjoyment of leisure, for recreational activities, or for the performance of a rite, ceremony, festival, or any kind of collective activity, such as building bridges, clearing paths, going on a search party, or putting out fires-activities that, in industrialized societies, might be assigned to specialized agencies (Nketia, 1979: 21).

Music contributes to social cohesion by promoting cross-cultural understanding, empathy, and cooperation among citizens. The theoretical framework provides a useful basis and context for analyzing the role of music education and orientation in promoting national development and social integration. Drawing on cultural identity and social cohesion theories, the study provided insights into the ways in which music promotes national unity and development. For instance, the highlife music of Eddie Okwedi, “Happy Survival” (released shortly after the Nigeria-Biafra war in 1970), “not only provided comfort, relaxation and entertainment on the dance floor, it also created a reflection on the human losses, carnage, and a psychological atmosphere which has continued to discourage any punter from engaging in any future internal war in Nigeria” (Nwankpa, 2016: 54).

- *What role can music play in promoting national unity and social cohesion in a culturally diverse society like Nigeria?*

With proper orientation, music has the substance to strengthen and foster elements of unity in cultural diversity through shared common values via articulating our languages in music. For instance, *Pulo Dokiari*, an indigenous art choral music composition with local instrumental accompaniment, composed by Onyee N. Nwankpa in 2013, is “a reflection on the sentiments arising from the exploration and discovery of oil in the Niger Delta region” (Nwankpa, 2022: 14). The melo-rhythmic sound structures, configurations and the language of *Pulo Dokiari* are constructed with musical principles and other creative considerations true to the Niger Delta traditional idioms. Thus, through musical orientation (direction, initiation, adjustment, learning, emphasis, and location), various agencies can be engaged for social integration in a changing world.

- *Which agencies can be used to partner with music to achieve social integration in Nigeria?*

The agencies within the Ministry of Information and National Orientation can partner with music institutions, music professional associations and scholars to create music for national awareness, policy dissemination, social integration, national development, patriotism and unity. Ministry of Education is also critical to national orientation as it is expected to educate students on this purpose. Thus, these music partnering agencies include the National Orientation Agency (NOA), National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO), Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON), formerly Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON), and Voice of Nigeria (VON).

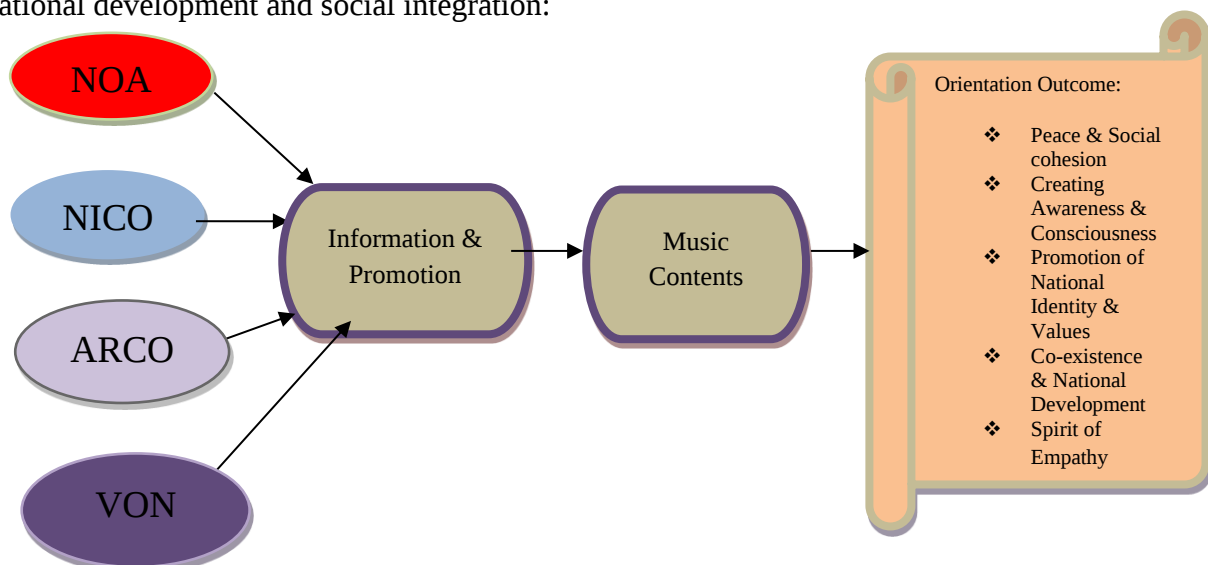
- ❖ NOA is dedicated to fostering national unity and development by enlightening and engaging citizens with accurate and timely information, using music as a strategic tool for public education and advocacy. Furthermore, it provides content and accuracy of information through various media, creating and disseminating content, inspiring and engaging individuals especially the youth into active participation in Nigeria programmes and policies.
- ❖ NICO is committed to preserving the cultural values of the people by influencing their behavior, shaping their character, and defining the identity of a nation. Through music

and orientation, NICO will serve as an agency for identification of various communities and their cultural idioms towards the understanding of their everyday life for shaping and fostering national unity and social integration.

- ❖ ARCON is an agency that focuses on promoting responsible and ethical advertising practices. It functions as the conscience of the society and is expected to check, censor, and monitor all forms of materials put in the public space concerning the nation programmes and policy, thereby ensuring transparency and decency of contents that will ensure national development through music. Accordingly, music becomes the oil with which *palmfruit* is eaten.
- ❖ VON represents the Voice of Nigerian, that is, Nigerian's viewpoint in external broadcasting. VON, in collaboration with Music institutions, can project respectable images, identities, values, characters, and cultural idioms of the nation for socio-political, economic, and cultural development.

Collaboration of Music and Orientation with Agencies in a Changing World

Through the diagram below, the authors expose the strategies for musical achievement for national development and social integration:



Music, as an epitome of applied studies and performance, play a significant role in promoting social integration by nurturing a sense of shared identity and belonging among citizens for national development. This can be achieved through music that promotes roles of how to be a good citizen of the country, music performances that ignite cultural awareness, national pride, and social unity

(as in the *Nigeria National Anthem*). Thus, applying proper orientation with music can effectively help individuals understand their roles in contributing to national development and social integration.

- *How can these partnerships be engaged for national development and social integration in a changing world?*

Effective collaboration with public orientation agencies such as NOA, ARCON, NICO, and VON will create the musical nexus for national development and social integration in Nigeria. Proper collaboration and partnership with Music institutions and professional organizations such as the Association of the Nigerian Musicologists (ANIM) and the Society of Music Educators of Nigeria (SOMEN), with their component units, will foster a great connection via musical creativity that strengthens honest and conscientious citizens, cultural awareness, spirit of empathy, national unity, pride and development, as well as advocates freedom, equity, and need for a democratic society. Consequently, the role of music and ways in which music is used in its activities can be properly and strategically harnessed and objectified to project and promote national identity, values, character, cultural idioms of diverse areas of Nigeria. In addition, the music institutions can develop activities and programmes that engage the various cultural structures in performances and other areas of creativity with a focus to achieve integration, unity, respect to diverse cultural values, promotion of national values and ideals of co-existence. Therefore, it is imperative that proper music advocating virtues and societal ideals should be used for orientation and public awareness. For instance, the music, *Which Way Nigeria?* by Sunny Okosun not only provided and still provides a feeling of patriotism, empathy and nostalgia for Nigeria, but also ignites the conscience and consciousness for our dear country's future. Another example of music which provokes national peace and unity is *Nye Anyi Udo Gi* (Grant us Thy Peace), composed by Onyee Nwankpa in 1987 and was recorded by the Anambra Broadcasting Service Television (ABS TV) Enugu, 1989.

Another level of orientation that lifted the spirit of the citizens of Nigeria, using music, was in the Federal Government's programme in the 1980s named MAMSER: Mass Mobilization for Social Justice, Economic Recovery and Self-reliance. Again, composed in 1988 by Onyee Nwankpa, the text of MAMSER is as follows:

The Federal Government's objectives in MAMSER are:

Provision of Social Justice and Welfare for the people;

Eradication of alienation and marginalization of the Masses from decision making process;

Maximization of production and the assurance of equitable distribution of economy;

Establishment and an operation of truly democratic political system, and

Promotion of National unity by removing areas of tension.

Mass Mobilization for Social Justice, Economic Recovery and Self-reliance.

Using Music as Effective strategies for promoting national development and social integration in Nigeria

The following are strategies for promoting national development and social integration:

- In an interview in January 2026, Professor Anthony Mereni argued that playing and listening to appropriate music via the radio or MP3 can calm the drivers and diffuse tensions among the road users. Thus, radio stations need to work with music institutions, music professional associations and scholars in terms of creating the appropriate music to achieve this objective.
- Creating music to encourage compliance to traffic rules and regulations is an innovation that will improve national orientation and enhance both community life and structural functionality.
- Creating music for unity and solidarity such as the National Anthem that evokes emotion for nationhood and nationalism, just as institutional and organizational anthems capture their philosophy, vision, mission, aim, and nostalgic feelings.
- Performances of ideal music repertoire, an answer to challenges affecting social integration in Nigeria.
- Creation and implementation of music policy advocating social harmony and tolerance.

- Creating programmes that promote strength in diversity; downplaying the divisive issues, as reflected in Laz Ekwueme's (2025) *Christmas Carols from Nigeria*, in different languages, including Edo, Urhobo (Okpe), Kalabari, Igbo, Efik/Ibibio, Hausa, and Yoruba.
- Engaging national agencies in publicity, creating awareness and greater orientation with catchy music tunes on national values and ethical conduct.
- Partnering with ANIM, SOMEN, and their institutional components in providing solid and educative orientation, using the medium of music.

Conclusion

No doubt, music used in the process of creating and internalizing orientation has potentials to promote national development and social integration in Nigeria. Thus, the analysis of the samples highlights the importance of music education in shaping national identity, patriotism, mobilization and unity.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, some recommendations are presented:

- Music should be integrated into national development plans and in partnership with various orientation agencies to promote cultural awareness, national pride, and social cohesion.
- Music institutions, in collaboration with the aforementioned agencies, will promote music that celebrate Nigerian diversity and unity to foster a sense of shared identity and belonging among citizens.
- Community-based music initiatives should be encouraged to promote social cohesion and national unity at the grass roots level.

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