

The Role of Music Education in the Rehabilitation Of Nigerian Prisoners: A Case Study of Enugu Prison in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Music education can be defined as a process of training and study in the acquisition of skills and knowledge in music for effective functioning in the society. It has a greater impact to play in the life of a prisoner for effective participation in the society. It has been observed that prison that is meant for correctional, rehabilitation and transformation of prisoners have been shifted to mere punishment. There is a need to prepare prison inmates for life outside prison and to facilitate their integration to enable them contribute meaningfully to the socio-economic development of their various societies. Efforts have been made to rehabilitate prisoners by providing them training in skills acquisition in trades such as carpentry, tailoring, woodwork, welding e.tc. Exploration of the contributions of music to the rehabilitation of prison inmates within and outside prison seems to be ignored in the rehabilitation process. With the acquisition of necessary skills in music life after prison will be easier and will make inmates to contribute meaningfully to the society after prison. Therefore, this paper investigates the roles music play and can play in the rehabilitation of prison inmates in Nigeria, using Enugu prison in Enugu State of Nigeria as a case study. It makes a proposition for a kind of semi-formal music education programme aimed at equipping inmates with musical skills for potential living outside prison.

Introduction

Musical sounds or tones are produced by vibration set in motion by the human voice or other sound producing mechanism. Thus music can be defined as an art of creating and making pleasant and organized sound with human voice or other musical instruments. According to Obiechta (2005), "music is a performing art because it involves singing, dancing, and playing of musical instrument," some people earn their living through music making. Music is very important in human life. The role music plays in man's life cannot be estimated. It is used for social functions. Music is also used for entertainments people acquire musical knowledge and skills for better living so that they can contribute meaningfully to the society.

Music education can be defined as the art of imparting musical knowledge and musical skills to the learner. If musical knowledge and skills are acquired very well, a person may earn his living through it and contribute meaningfully to the society. In the Nigerian prisons, craft such as carpentry, tailoring, shoe making etc are taught neglecting music. It is because of this, that this paper entitled the role of music education in rehabilitation of prisoners in Nigeria with the help to throw light on the role of music education in the life of a prisoner after prison. There are a lot of talented musicians in the prison, that if develop their talent will earn their living well and contribute meaningful to the society.

An overview of prison rehabilitation

Rehabilitation (a form of remedy) of prisoners is a global need that aims at refocusing prison inmates to pursuing better forms of living and to contribute their very best to societal development after prison terms. Human right provisions around the world mandate handling of prisoners in a manner that respects their basic human rights. This includes assistance by the government to enable them develop basic morals, skills and desire to become better persons in the society on released. Thus, efforts are made to ensure that while incarcerated, inmates will still experience human care, humanness and simple love. Though these are not always guaranteed, countries around the world have embraced different rehabilitation efforts targeted at prisoners and prison as a societal structure. Although rehabilitation also entails structural, which targets better living conditions, better health and care provisions, improvement of prison infrastructure, etc., the focus in this presentation is on aspects of rehabilitation that target prison inmates as human beings. Such forms and processes of rehabilitation intend to ensure adequate re-integration of inmates in their various societies after their prison terms.

Rehabilitation therapy for prisoners is common in the developed countries. This focuses on addressing psychological needs of prisoners. In the same token, church groups and ministers of God have been on the lead for moral rehabilitation of prisoners around the world by organizing prison ministrations, moral lessons, music ministrations, material gifts, etc. charity organizations and non-governmental organizations have also played their part in giving prisoners a sense of belonging through material gift, words of encouragement, moral advice, etc. Prisoners have also been encouraged to pursue skills acquisition which they could employ for livelihood in the society. Many of them have learnt wood work, masonry, carpentry, tailoring, arts and crafts, metal works and mechanic, farming etc. In consistent with Onyeji's (2009) report, prisoners in South Africa have employed their skills in building projects that led to donation of houses to very poor people. They also regularly apply their learnt skills in the up-keep of prison facilities. Most importantly, he disclosed that some correctional centers have organized choral groups made up of prisoners that perform during their church services and have also done some presentations on the national television, South African broadcasting corporation (SABC). These choral groups aim to reach the emotional depth of inmates, to reawaken their sense of aesthetics, creativity and team spirit that could be employed in the wider society on release. In the Nigeria context, prison rehabilitation has taken similar forms and processes as found in many countries of the world. Prison inmates have been encouraged to develop their basic skills in ways that would benefit them on release such as in the learning of trades and handicrafts. Church, charity groups, government establishments, parastatals, individuals, social associations, fellowship groups, etc. have also contributed greatly to giving prisoners a sense of belonging leading to some forms of rehabilitation. Quite often also national youth service corps members visit prisons in Nigeria, including Enugu prison, with material gifts to alleviate their problems. Sadly though, some of the gifts do not get to the targeted recipients as confirmed by some inmates

Music Potentials amongst Prison Inmates

Singing of songs and music making appear now and then in the rehabilitation activities of churches and fellowship groups that visit prisons. Also personal/self-motivational efforts of inmates through music are noticed in prisons. However, it does appear that the role of music for

rehabilitation of prisoners in Nigeria is ignored or unrecognized by government and prison officials. While music is a special vocation that could be employed in life-long human economic/creative empowerment, it is not considered as a special form of rehabilitation that could be of immense benefit to prisoners on release. Although many of the inmates may possess talent and skills for music as possible vocation, this aspect of prison rehabilitation has not been pursued. It would be necessary at this point to present a general survey of the potential of music and music education in human social transformation that could be explored in the rehabilitation of prisoners in Nigeria and elsewhere. This would offer a framework that justifies the proposition for music as an instrument for social rehabilitation of prisoners for effective functioning in the society.

Music education and social transformation

According to Onyeji (2009:38), “the means for social transformation vary. The specific choice and nature of its application is determined by the needs and realities as well as available tools to an individuals or society”. For instance, McCammon (2007), states that Boal and Brecht sought transformative social interventions through theater. Brecht advocated a theater from where the audience members were active learners who could use their learning for social transformation. While Boal engaged participant rehearsing strategies for personal and social change. Music offers a platform for social transformation also. This could be pursued by means of music education.

According to Akumah (2004), “Education is generally perceived to be the process of discipline through training and study in the acquisition of skills and knowledge” (p. 202). His definition highlights two key facts-acquisition of skill and knowledge. In another definition, Ezeocha (1985), sees education as “preparing men to face and surmount the challenges of life. This means that it prepares men for worthwhile living”. This definition relates education to the provision of social needs of man. In his contribution, Okafor (1992) views education as “a process of acculturation through which the individual is helped to attain the development of his potentialities, and their maximum activation when necessary, according to right reason and to achieve thereby his perfect self-fulfillment”. His definition points at an all-round development of the potentials of a person for effective functioning in the society. Going by the general definitions of education given above, music education could be defined as a process of training and study in the acquisition of skills and knowledge in music for effective functioning in the society. It encompasses a broad training for the acquisition of skill and knowledge of theory, practice, creativity, education, appreciation and performance of music in acquired through the processes of music education offers one enabling grounds for social integration, proper functioning and social transformation in a given context.

There is the perception that the words, thoughts and deeds of individual human beings are profoundly influenced by the nature of the social circumstances in which they occur (Martin, 1995, 1995; Mueller, 2002). This has motivated studies in sociology of music to focus on “music as a social product, social resource and social practice (Martin, 1995),” and “music as device of social ordering; music’s social powers (DeNora, 2000).” Many experts are increasingly becoming aware that music may influence people’s conducts, experience of passage of time, and feelings about themselves, others and situations (DeNora, 2000). Hargreaves, Marshall and North (2003) believe that “all musical behavior is social because musical meanings are socially and culturally constructed”. Musical thought promotes social cohesion and communicates many

messages through song texts and dance features (Kruger, 1999: 124). According to Skyllstad (2007: 1053), “music plays positive role in facilities social integration, and conflict transformation”.

The above submissions corroborate the position that music is a potent tool for social change resulting from its intrinsic nature to influence and effect change in people. As a vocation, it offers enormous opportunity for self-exploration in creative terms. It offers the platform for social interaction that influences personal views as well as motivates empathy for fellow humans and social/emotional integration in any given context. In most societies of the world, the result of musical creativity takes precedence over the background of the musician. This accounts for the success of many pop musicians who may not necessarily be morally upright. Thus, music could offer ex-prisoners the means of transcending their background and reach out to the society in their new and rehabilitated selves. If properly explored, it could motivate prison inmates to discover their hidden creative talents they could develop for life-long skills in their various societies after prison. This is in addition to music’s potential to alleviate emotional stresses and mental frustrations of prison term. Therefore, music could be employed in the dual processes of calming the emotions of prisoners to cope with prison conditions and at the same time equipping them with skills needed for social transformation and re-integration in the society on release.

Music and rehabilitation Programs in Enugu prison

According to the superintendent in-charge of Enugu in Nigeria at the time of this research said that, since the establishment of Enugu prison, it has grappled with changing phases of perspectives on prison terms like any other Nigerian prison. According to him, it is a contemporary view that prison term should not be essentially to punish offence but to educate offenders on the alternatives to crime as well as to empower them to pursue those alternatives on release. In his view, various options exist in these alternatives which can be achieved first through mental, moral and emotional rehabilitation and individual choice to pursue decent life on release. As such, the prison makes provision for moral transformation of prisoners through exposing them to church programmes and activities, fellowship groups and ministrations by pastors. Indeed, churches within Enugu appoint chaplains to conduct services for prisoners and give moral talks to them.

Some rehabilitation activities of the prison include inculcating a sense of respect for the dignity of labour through farming, and clearing of fields. They also engage in hired labour for private individuals. Most importantly though, older prison inmates that have acquired skills in carpentry, woodwork, shoe mending, tailoring, etc. assist new and interested inmates to acquire the various skills. Such skills are applied in the daily lives of inmates to keep prison infrastructure. It is believed that on release, ex-prisoners could start off with such skills in their various societies as means of livelihood instead of going back to crime. It would be possible to have them reintegrate themselves with such skills in their societies while looking for other means of survival instead of crime.

On the role of music as a means of rehabilitation for prisoners, the superintendent emphasized his belief in the prospect of music as a rehabilitation tool; though two other prison warders disclosed their lack of awareness of how that could be pursued in the prison context. Mr.opara disclosed that prisoners sing songs on their own during gathering and labour, which they think helps them cope with stress. But that equipping prisoners with musical skills has not been considered in the Nigerian context. According to him , the prisons band here in Enugu is

for warders only . The warders mentioned that some inmates have shown some signs of creative ability in music but the prison is not considering any prospect in developing that as a means of rehabilitation at the moment . The warders however agreed to the possibility of an ex- prisoner becoming a respected musician later in life . They also agree that such skills could transform the perception of ex –prisoners and lead to their effective contribution in the society. They could reach out to potential offenders and change their attitude to life

The researchers interaction with selected inmates (who pleaded anonymity and this was respected) showed that although they do not specifically think of becoming professional musicians , they believed in the possibility of an ex-prisoners becoming a respected musician if he/she has the talent. According to one of them :We sing songs (gospel and popular,etc.), and dance to music . some of us are good in music but we do not think seriously about it since no one would help us in producing albums .we do not have instruments and no one is ready to teach us . We sing onye sub achara (the song below) sometimes when we are clearing the fields . It helps us do the work without much pain. Have not also thought ionabout having prison choir since most of us are not trained in music. But we like it if the department of music could assist us with such services once in a while.

From the response , it appears that while the prison establishment in Enugu has not thought of music as an instrument for rehabilitaton and social transformation of prisoners , they believe in the possibility. Although they have their concerns about sponsorship of the training programme, they accept the prospect of acquisition of musical skills through music education as a means to proper intergration of ex-prisoners in their various societies . mental and emotional stresses of prisoners while in prison.

The role of music education for rehabilitation of prisoners in Nigeria
As a vocation, training in music has the prospect of empowering people in varied ways . some core prospects of music education that could benefit prisoners in the rehabilitation process includes the following :

1. Music education enables skill acquisition on musical instruments and performance that could be employed in creative and economic basic training on the study and performance of selected musical instruments. Armed with such skills , they could become relevant in their chosen instruments on release.
2. Music education for prisoners could and possibly would lead to talent development of potential musicians locked up in prison. Such talents could be stimulated to blossom and be of immense benefit to the society.
3. Skills and proficiency in music through education of prisoners could lead to social transformmation that would be mutually beneficial to the society and ex-prisoners . in this instance ex-prisoners would be motivated to refocus themselves in their social commitment to the society by pursuing credible means of livelihood through music .
4. Music education of prisoners could lead to creative freedom that may would be empowered to explore their creative potentials as a means of reaching out to the society for social acceptance
5. Such empowered ex-prisoners could become crusaders of moral re awakening among members of the society through their music. This could positively impact on possible deviants leading social transformation

6. Such musical training could become a strong source of motivation for coping with prison life.

Recommendation

Based on the following role of music education for rehabilitation of prisoners a kind of semi-formal music education programme aimed at improving musical skills to interested/talented prison inmates as a form of rehabilitation is hereby proposed. Such programme could involve weekly or bi-weekly training by different experts on different musical instruments (keyboard, guitar, wind instrument, brass, percussion) and in choral music. A prison choir would be a welcome option. The federal Government could pursue this as a rehabilitation programme or department of music could take it up as a form of community service to the Nigerian society.

Conclusion

Rehabilitation of prisoners is important to Nigeria as it is to different countries of the world. This results from the need to re-integrate ex-prisoners to the society to break the cycle of crime and by empowering them to contribute meaningfully to their various societies in different ramifications of life. Different programmes and processes have been engaged in pursuit of this objective. This covers moral, social, economic, mental, and psychological rehabilitation programmes. While music is an objective, it has not been explored in Nigeria due to lack of awareness of its potential and some reservations on the technicalities of its applications. The case study of Enugu prison provides a microcosm of the existing situation in Nigeria. This study highlighted some prospects of music education in the rehabilitation of prisoners and recommends its pursuit in order to explore the internet benefits for Nigerian prisoners and the society in general.

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