

Exploring Locally Built Musical Instruments as a Veritable Source of Sustainable Income for Nigerian Undergraduate Music Students in Higher Education



Julius Oluwayomi Oluwadamilare^{*1}, Olaoluwa Marvelous Ayokunmi², Joseph Oladipupo Babalola³

Abstract

Music Entrepreneurship in Higher Education in Nigeria, although relatively new as a course of study offered in some institutions under the Department of Music or as part of General Studies, is gaining appreciable ground in the curriculum. Since entrepreneurship focuses on job creation for self-reliance, this paper aims to explore collaboration with selected artisans of locally built musical instruments, which will serve as a veritable source of sustainable income for undergraduate music students. The study adopts a qualitative research design, incorporating interviews with selected Yoruba musical instruments' builders, retailers and repairers in Ilesa, Ile-Ife and Ibadan from South West Nigeria. It also includes interviews with selected undergraduate students of music from universities within the study areas, alongside data gathered from secondary sources. Findings of the study show the willingness of artisans to engage in collaboration, as well as a desire among music students to acquire skills in instrument construction, maintenance, and sales of Yoruba musical instruments. By implication, the study suggests that the collaborations have the potential to enhance sustainable income for the undergraduates and internally generated revenues for the music departments. The recommendation is based on the need to expand the context of music entrepreneurship in Nigerian higher education to include the use of local materials for the construction of Yoruba musical instruments in order to promote a more sustainable economy.

Keywords

Collaboration, Higher Education, Music Entrepreneurship, Sustainable Income, Yoruba Musical Instruments

¹ * Department of Music, University of Ilesa, Ilesa, Osun State, Nigeria. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-5583-1239> Email: julius_oluwadamilare@unilesa.edu.ng

² Department of Music, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

³ Department of Music, University of Ilesa, Ilesa, Osun State, Nigeria.



Introduction

Locally built musical instruments play a vital role in promoting cultural heritage, preserving traditional craftsmanship, and fostering community engagement. These instruments reflect the community's values, history, and cultural narratives, symbolizing cultural pride and identity. The significance of locally built instruments extends beyond cultural preservation. They bring people together through music, encouraging cultural exchange and collaboration. Local music education programs also benefit from these instruments, providing hands-on experience in traditional craftsmanship. Moreover, preserving traditional playing styles and documenting historical instrument-making techniques also ensures the continuation of musical heritage.

The economic benefits of locally built instruments are substantial. Artisans generate income from instrument sales, thereby supporting local economies through tourism. Sustainable cultural industries emerge and also create opportunities for cultural entrepreneurship. Furthermore, educational institutions can integrate these instruments into curricula to teach cultural history, context, and traditional craftsmanship. Despite the importance of locally built instruments, challenges persist. Globalization and cultural homogenization threaten traditional practices, while limited resources and funding hinder preservation efforts. The loss of traditional knowledge and skills also poses a significant risk.

Yoruba musical instruments hold immense cultural significance in Nigerian society, particularly among the Yoruba people. These instruments are an integral part of Yoruba tradition, mythology, and identity. They play a vital role in communicating between humans and the divine, preserving history and mythology through storytelling, and providing entertainment during celebrations. Traditional Yoruba instruments include the Gudugudu, Goje, Agidigbo, Shekere, Gangan (talking drum), Agogo, Sakara drum, and Bata drum, etc. Gudugudu is a time-keeping drum for the dundun family of drums that are said to mimic speech. The Goje is a one-string instrument commonly used to accompany songs, sometimes alongside other indigenous instruments. The Agidigbo, a thumb piano, is used in traditional Yoruba music, while the Shekere, a beaded instrument, is used in Yoruba folk music. The Bata Drum, a double-headed drum, is used in Yoruba rituals.

Beyond their cultural significance, Yoruba musical instruments also possess economic potential. Local production of these instruments employs artisans and contributes to local economies through sales. Additionally, there is a growing global market for Yoruba

instruments, with opportunities for export and cultural tourism. However, challenges exist, including the decline of traditional craftsmanship, limited market access, and competition from synthetic instruments. To overcome these challenges, collaborations with international musicians, online marketplaces for instrument sales, and cultural exchange programmes can help revitalize the industry. Ojo (2017), Adegbite (2015), and Oyeade (2020) explored the cultural significance and economic potential of Yoruba musical instruments. Their studies highlight the importance of preserving Yoruba musical heritage and promoting sustainable entrepreneurship in the industry.

The goal of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria is to equip university students with the information, abilities, and drive necessary to support entrepreneurial success in a range of endeavours. In Nigeria, entrepreneurial education is available at every educational level, from elementary and secondary schools to graduate university degrees. It is an ongoing process of learning. The competitiveness of the knowledge economy depends on the idea of lifelong learning. It encompasses all life periods, all educational and training levels, and the various types of apprenticeships.

Music entrepreneurship in Nigeria encompasses a multifaceted spectrum of tasks and responsibilities, ranging from conceptualizing innovative ideas to coordinating intricate projects within the vibrant music industry. This process involves adeptly organizing various aspects such as indigenous instrument construction, talent scouting, event planning, marketing strategies, and financial management. Additionally, music entrepreneurs in Nigeria must master the art of effective management and oversee the seamless execution of diverse projects while navigating the dynamic landscape of music business trends and developments.

Furthermore, a key element of music entrepreneurship in Nigeria involves courageously taking calculated risks by investing in emerging talents, exploring new market opportunities, and experimenting with unconventional business models. By embracing these challenges and opportunities, music entrepreneurs in Nigeria play a crucial role in shaping the local music scene, driving creativity, and fostering sustainable growth within the industry.

Sustainable development, a vital aspect for the growth of various industries, intersects with music entrepreneurship in Nigeria, creating a dynamic environment where innovation and economic viability are paramount. The fusion of sustainable practices with the creativity and business acumen required in the music sector highlights the potential for both social and economic progress in the country. By fostering an ecosystem that values both environmental

responsibility and cultural expression through music, Nigeria can pave the way for a more inclusive and prosperous future.

Moreover, the symbiotic relationship between sustainable development and music entrepreneurship opens up avenues for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and the creation of sustainable business models that can potentially transform Nigeria's industry landscape. Embracing sustainability in the realm of music entrepreneurship not only aligns with global trends but also positions Nigeria as a forward-thinking player in the international market, attracting investments and partnerships that drive growth and innovation in both sectors. As stakeholders continue to explore the synergies between sustainable practices and the music business, the potential for positive impact and long-term success in Nigeria's economic and cultural spheres becomes increasingly promising.

The primary objective of this research paper is to delve into the potential of establishing collaborative partnerships with skilled artisans specializing in the creation of traditional, locally crafted musical instruments. By fostering these relationships, the aim is to provide a steady and reliable source of income for undergraduate music students, thereby contributing to their financial stability and supporting their academic pursuits. Through this exploration of collaboration with artisans, the intention is not only to promote the preservation of cultural heritage and artisanal expertise but also to create long-lasting opportunities for sustainable economic growth within the realm of musical instrument craftsmanship.

Literature Review

Music entrepreneurship is an emerging field within higher education, particularly in African contexts such as Nigeria. This literature review synthesizes recent research findings related to music entrepreneurship in higher education, emphasizing the significance of entrepreneurial education and the necessity for contextually relevant curricula.

Recent studies underscore the critical role of entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) in fostering entrepreneurial intentions among students in Ghana, which is pertinent to Nigeria's context as well. Puni et al. (2018) emphasize that integrating entrepreneurship education within music programs can significantly enhance students' confidence and abilities to navigate the complexities of the music industry. This integration could create a new generation of music entrepreneurs who are more equipped to contribute to Nigeria's cultural and economic landscapes.

Moreover, the findings from Olutuase et al. (2020) highlight the necessity for curricula that not only impart knowledge but also provide practical experiences and networking opportunities within the music industry. This approach aligns educational outcomes with market needs, better preparing music students for the workforce. By focusing on experiential learning, universities can address the high unemployment rates in Nigeria, particularly among graduates in creative industries.

The effectiveness of entrepreneurship education hinges on its contextual relevance, which is crucial for music entrepreneurship in Nigeria. Moshtari & Safarpour (2023) stress that educational programs must reflect the unique challenges and opportunities faced within the Nigerian music industry. By developing curricula that are tailored to local realities, higher education institutions can enhance the entrepreneurial capabilities of music students, enabling them to create viable businesses and contribute to the cultural economy.

Furthermore, Pitan (2016) emphasizes that collaborations between academia, industry, such as local instrument makers, and government are vital for fostering a supportive environment for entrepreneurship. Such collaborations can lead to the establishment of incubators and internship programs that provide practical experiences for music students, bridging the gap between education and real-world application and ensuring economic sustainability.

Collaboration is a key factor in the success of entrepreneurship, particularly in the creative industries. Ononye et al. (2022) highlight the value of peer-to-peer interactions in developing skills and improving performance. By fostering environments where music students can collaborate, share ideas, and learn from each other, Nigerian universities can enhance students' entrepreneurial mindset. This collaborative approach can lead to innovative projects and ventures, ultimately contributing to a robust music entrepreneurship ecosystem. Furthermore, collaboration is necessary with artisans who are involved in the local instrument-making. This can expose music students to entrepreneurial skills relevant for economic growth and sustainability while in school and after graduation.

Methodology

The study's design is meticulously crafted to encompass a comprehensive research approach, incorporating oral interviews with a diverse group of individuals closely linked to the Yoruba musical tradition. This encompasses engaging with seasoned instrument builders, reputable retailers, and proficient repairers situated in the culturally rich cities of Ilesa, Ile-Ife, and Ibadan

within South West Nigeria, such as Ayanlola Musical Instruments, Ijokodo, Ibadan, Ologo-Aara Instruments, Ilesa, and Omo Odua Local Instruments Venture, Ile-Ife.

Furthermore, these oral interviews extend to include the insights of selected music students enrolled in prestigious universities within the targeted areas, fostering a multifaceted exploration of this intricate musical landscape. To enhance the depth and breadth of the study, the methodology also integrates extensive utilization of library resources and online platforms, thereby ensuring a well-rounded investigation that delves into both the traditional roots and contemporary manifestations of Yoruba musical practices.

Discussion

The landscape for undergraduate music students in Nigeria presents a myriad of challenges, particularly concerning career opportunities and sustainable income generation. This literature review synthesizes recent research findings on the interplay between education, career adaptation, and income sustainability for music graduates in Nigeria. It highlights the necessity for curricular reforms, entrepreneurship education, and inclusive practices to better prepare students for the competitive job market they face.

The aspirations of undergraduate music students often clash with the stark realities of the job market. Many students enter music programmes with a focus on performance, yet the sector is oversaturated, resulting in a significant number of graduates becoming 'enforced entrepreneurs' (Bennett & Bridgstock, 2015). The disconnect between student expectations and the actual career paths available necessitates a paradigm shift in educational focus toward entrepreneurship and portfolio careers. By cultivating an entrepreneurial mindset within music programmes, students can be better equipped to navigate diverse career opportunities that extend beyond traditional performance roles.

Graduate unemployment rates in Nigeria further complicate the situation for music students. As highlighted in research, integrating entrepreneurship education into music curricula is vital for empowering students to create their own opportunities, whether through teaching, instrument construction, performance, or establishing music-related businesses. Public-private partnerships are proposed to develop programmes that provide practical skills and experiences, enhancing students' employability and potential for sustainable income (source).

Omolade Omolola (a.k.a. Ayanlola), a renowned Yoruba indigenous instruments maker, during the interview with him, mentioned that several undergraduate students who usually have their industrial attachment with him in his workshop are doing well in the vocation. He added that those students are either from the Polytechnic, Ibadan, Obafemi Awolowo University, the University of Ibadan, or other tertiary institutions around that are offering Music as a course of study.

Research indicates that career adaptability skills—such as self-efficacy and personal goal orientation—are critical for higher education students in Nigeria (Ebenihi, Rashid, & Bakar, 2016). For music students, developing these skills is paramount in navigating the unpredictable nature of the music industry. Institutions must prioritize programs that enhance career adaptability, enabling students to build confidence in their abilities and set realistic career goals. Such initiatives can lead to better job placements and sustainable income as students transition into the workforce. Olu Busuyi, a Music product of the then Osun State College of Education, Ilesa, now the University of Ilesa, is a seasoned and successful talking drum maker who testifies that it is a skill he acquired during his SIWES in a Yoruba indigenous drum maker in Ilesa that helped him to sustain himself all through his school days, and now, it is his full-time business.

Inclusivity in music education is another critical factor influencing career success for diverse student populations. Marginalized students often face barriers such as limited resources and a lack of information, which hinder their ability to pursue sustainable careers in music (Fitzpatrick, Henninger, & Taylor, 2014). Addressing these challenges through mentorship and support systems can improve retention and success rates within music programs. By fostering an inclusive environment, music education can contribute to a richer community and wider income opportunities for graduates. Hence, exposing music students to the entrepreneurship opportunities inherent in Music as a course in their curriculum is of high benefit during and after their course of study.

The literature underscores the necessity of career training and mentoring programs to enhance employability among higher education students in Nigeria (Okolie et al., 2020). For music students, the establishment of career training centers within music departments is crucial. These centers could offer essential guidance, workshops on entrepreneurship, networking opportunities, and mentorship from industry professionals. Such initiatives are vital for

equipping music graduates with the local instrument- making skills needed to secure a sustainable income post-graduation.

Despite some existing career-related activities, their effectiveness in providing necessary guidance and skills often falls short (Okolie et al., 2020). Thus, music programmes can prioritize dedicated career centers that focus on the unique needs of music students, such as the aspect of Yoruba indigenous music technology, ensuring tailored support that enhances self-employment and income sustainability.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the interplay between education, career adaptability, and sustainable income generation remains a complex issue for undergraduate music students in Nigeria. By integrating entrepreneurship education, enhancing career adaptability, and fostering inclusivity, music programmes can better prepare students for the realities of the job market. Addressing these challenges through exposing them to Yoruba indigenous musical instruments making will be crucial for improving the employment outcomes and income sustainability of music graduates in Nigeria.

Recommendations

While substantial progress has been made in identifying the challenges and potential solutions for music students in Nigeria, several knowledge gaps remain. Future research should focus on the long-term impact of entrepreneurship education on the income sustainability of music graduates, the inclusion of collaborative activities/learning experiences with the artisans who are indigenous musical instrument makers, the effectiveness of mentorship programmes and career training centers specifically tailored for music students, strategies for fostering inclusivity and addressing the unique barriers faced by marginalized populations in music education. A recommendation is also made on the need to broaden the content of music entrepreneurship in higher education in Nigeria, on the use of local materials for a sustainable economy.

References

- Adegbite, A. (2015). The cultural and economic dimensions of Yoruba musical instruments. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 27(2), 145-158.
- Bennett, D. & Bridgstock, R. (2015). The urgent need for career preview: Student expectations and graduate realities in music and dance. *International Journal of Music Education*, 33, 263 - 277. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0255761414558653>
- Ebenehi, A.S., Rashid, A.M., & Bakar, A.R. (2016). Predictors of career adaptability skill among higher education students in Nigeria. *International Journal for Research in Vocational Education and Training* (IJRVET), European Research Network in Vocational Education and Training (VETNET), European Educational Association, 3(3), 212-229. <http://doi.org/10.13152/IJRVET.3.3.3>
- Fitzpatrick, K.R., Henninger, J.C., & Taylor, D.M.(2014). Access and retention of marginalized populations within undergraduate music education degree programs. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 62 (2), 105-127. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0022429414530760>
- Harrop-Allin, S. (2017). Higher education student learning beyond the classroom: findings from a community music service learning project in rural South Africa. *Music Education Research*, 19, 231 - 251. <http://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2016.1214695>
- Moshtari, M. & Safarpour, A. (2023). Challenges and strategies for the internationalization of higher education in low-income East African countries. *Higher Education*, 87, 89-109. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-023-00994-1>
- Ojo, O.A.(2017). Preserving heritage: The economic potential and sustainability of Yoruba traditional music entrepreneurship. *African Creative Economy Journal*, 5(1), 34-49.
- Okolie *et al.* (2020). Career training with mentoring programs in higher education. *Journal of Education and Training*, 62, 214-234. <http://doi.org/10.1108/et-04-2019-0071>
- Olutuase, S. O., Brijlal, P. & Yan, B. (2020). Model for stimulating entrepreneurial skills through entrepreneurship education in an African context. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 35, 263 - 283. <http://doi.org/10.1080/08276331.2020.1786645>
- Ononye, U. *et al.* (2022). Academic resilience, emotional intelligence, and academic performance among undergraduate students. *Knowledge and Performance Management*. [http://doi.org/10.21511/kpm.06\(1\).2022.01](http://doi.org/10.21511/kpm.06(1).2022.01)
- Ottih, L. O. (2016). *Entrepreneurship: Personality, process & Enterprise*. Pearl Publishers International.

- Oyebade, T.E. (2020). Yoruba musical instruments as cultural capital and tools for sustainable development. *International Journal of Ethnomusicology*, 12 (3), 210-225.
- Pitan, O. S. (2016). Towards Enhancing University Graduate Employability in Nigeria. *Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology*, 7:1,1-11, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09766634.2016>.
- Pitan, O. S., & Atiku, S. O. (2017). Structural determinants of students' employability: Influence of career guidance activities. *South African Journal of Education*, 37, 1-13. <http://doi.org/10.15700/SAJE.V37N4A1424>
- Puni, A., et al. (2018). Entrepreneurial education, self-efficacy and intentions in Sub-Saharan Africa. *African Journal of Economic and Management Studies*. <http://doi.org/10.1108/AJEMS-09-2017-0211>