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# Music Education in a Digital Era: Analyzing the NCCE Curriculum for Student-Teacher Efficacy

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## Abstract

Scholarship on music teacher curriculum is replete in literature. There is however thin or nothing done on the 2020 edition of the NCCE Music Curriculum on student-teacher preparation for the digital economy hence the need for the study. This study therefore investigates the document toward equipping the music student teacher with skills to fully explore music in a digital economy. The research adopted a qualitative research design. Grounded theory guided the study. The population of the study is the Nigerian Music Lecturers at the Colleges of Education for the National Certificate in Education Programme at Southeastern Nigeria. Purposive sampling was adopted to select four Colleges of Education in the Southeastern region. In each of the Colleges, five Music Lecturers were sampled. The total sample for this study was 20 music lecturers. Data were collected through interviews and a review of the NCCE Music Curriculum document. Interview and curriculum content were analyzed using thematic analytical tools. The study revealed the inadequacy of the curriculum to train students that navigate in a digital economy starting from its philosophy, objectives, facilities, personnel, courses, mode of instruction et cetera. We argue the philosophy of music should be humanness as an end not as a means. Serious care should be taken in this technology-driven economy such that humanness which is the core value of music is not sacrificed. There is a need for lecturers to upgrade themselves by acquiring skills, knowledge, and methods pertinent to this era towards preparing students to function effectively in the digital economy. Our thesis as well is that the government should fund education by providing the necessary facilities for the preparation of the teachers because quality teachers birth quality education and quality education begets a robust and digitalized economy.

**Keywords:** Nigeria music teacher education, NCCE 2020 Music curriculum, Digital economy, Blended learning, Computer technology

## Introduction

The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), the body that is responsible for Colleges of Education in Nigeria has the sole right the review the National Certificate in Education (NCE) programme which is the minimum qualification for entry into the teaching profession in Nigeria (National Policy on Education [NPE] 2014). Curriculum review generally has ever come by as a result of “general dissatisfaction with the existing education system which had become irrelevant to national needs, aspirations, and goals” (NPE 2014:4). More so, the NCCE music teacher curriculum has been critiqued in literature extensively on the technicality of the document, the divorce of the content from the student’s experience, teaching methodology, and so forth (Adeogun, 2006 & 2018; Ugwu, 2018, 2021). All these spotlights might have birthed the 2020 edition of the NCCE curriculum but of critical importance is the digitalized nature of our society.

Society is a dynamic phenomenon; education, and teacher education in particular cannot be otherwise. Ideally, society should be the content of the school curriculum

because it sponsors the schools hence the schools serve the society. We are now in a digitalized society and digital technologies have led to growth in the music world even before the internet became advanced enough that users could share and download music online. People could download virtually any song they wanted through file-sharing. Stream services like Spotify have revolutionized how people consume music. Innovative music technologies are also integral to the creation of a lot of modern music software-based virtual instruments and MIDI technology allows people to use millions of sounds in the production of their music which musicians can program and manipulate in complex ways. This offers a great deal of creative potential to technology-savvy composers and producers. Technology has changed how people create music. Composers can produce their scores from their home studios. Musicians can play for fans around the world through live-streamed performances. Songwriters can record albums and release them as digital distribution at streaming platforms without ever landing or signing a record deal. Advancements in digital technologies led to monumental shifts in most aspects of music. Compact discs ostensibly improved the quality of studios for consumers and minimized manufacturing and distribution costs. (Onwuegbuna, 2022; Pereverzeva, Davydova, Zhilina, Meleshkina & Baidalinov, 2018).

Going by all these influences of digital technologies on music in the society serious effort must be made by curriculum planners and implementers so that we do not train students that will be absurd and incompetent to navigate musically in our digitalized economy. The content of our curriculum should not be at variance to a great extent from the real-life world in society. Hence our worry.

## Conceptual Framework

Digital economy refers to economic activity that uses electronic communication and digital technologies to provide goods and services. The digital economy requires a strong infrastructure, high-functioning internet, strong mobile networks, and telecommunication. Its main building blocks include but are not limited to the internet, e-mail, digital automation, digital payment, and social media.

The digital economy is built upon the traditional economy which can easily be differentiated thus:

Traditional economy	Digital economy
Factories	Data centers/cloud computing
High street shop	Internet website
Newspaper ends/word of mouth.	Social media reviews
Transportation	E-sales- digital downloads
Banks and cash points	E-banks
9-5 commute	Working from house
Physical assets	Google ranks/brand image
Construction	Website development
Real estate	Domain ownership
Cash- cheque payment	e-payment, cashless society
Labour and capital	Automation and AI

Source: [www.economicshelp.org](http://www.economicshelp.org)

From the above table, it can be seen at a glance the issues that drive the digital economy such as cloud computing, internet websites, social media reviews, digital downloads, working from the house, brand image, website development, domain ownership, artificial intelligence, and so forth.

## **Review of Related Literature**

Hedano (2002) studied what is new in The New or Digital Economy and found out the dynamics, not static efficiency. In his words, it is more about new activities and products than about higher productivity. What is really new in the New Economy he continues is the proliferation of the use of the Internet, a new level and form of connectivity among multiple heterogeneous ideas and actors, giving rise to a vast new range of combinations.

In this era of the digital economy, education has gone digital. Digital education or technologies enhance learning. It is an innovative use of digital tools and technologies during teaching and learning. Digital learning on the other hand is any type of learning that is accompanied by technology or instructional practices that makes effective use of technology. It encompasses the application of a wide spectrum of practices, including virtual learning.

Another educational concept that emerged in this digital economy is blended learning or hybrid learning, also known as technology-mediated instruction. It is an approach to education that combines online educational materials and applications for interaction online with physical place-based classroom methods. Blended learning is a mixture of online and in-person delivery where the online portion effectively replaces some of the face-to-face contact time rather than supplementary. Driscoll (2002) defining blended learning identified four different concepts:

- i. To combine or mix modes of web-based technology (e.g., live virtual classroom, self-paced instruction, collaborative learning, streaming video, audio, and text) to accomplish an educational goal.
- ii. To combine different teaching methods on multiple theories (e.g., constructivism, behaviorism, cognitivism) to produce an optimal learning outcome with or without instructional technology
- iii. To combine any form of instructional technology) e.g., videotape, CD-ROM, web-based training, film) with face-to-face training.
- iv. To mix or combine instructional technology with actual job tasks in order to create a harmonious effect of learning and working (p.13)

The methodological approaches in the digitalized era feature a proliferation of the use of the Internet, a heightened form of connectivity, and a vast new range of combinations. This methodological connectivity and combination via the internet has so many challenges identified in the literature: lack of electricity connection, lack of knowledge of internet usage, less adequate training for personnel, and lack of other facilities. Hedano (2002) reported a lack of electricity as a major barrier to internet usage.

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Kabanda (2018) asserted thus:

It is important to give people the capability to use the Internet effectively. This capability (or rather capacity) includes knowledge and skill formation, training in how to interact with digital technologies wisely, find useful information, and so on. The level of education, quality of pedagogy (including learning by doing and tapping into local knowledge), exposure, and other such issues matter in engaging artists (and others) to understand the opportunities (and even the limitations) the Internet brings. It is important to ensure that the technology and development policies for artists (and others) do not simply focus on connecting people to the Internet (or other new technologies) (p.5).

Barneva, Kanev, Shapiro & Walters, (2021) investigated students' competence in digital technology and where they perceived the source of their competency. The respondents offered a variety of sources; however, a key theme appeared within the data. About 52% indicated they became competent in various areas on their own, while approximately 30% indicated computer technology courses and approximately 18% indicated other coursework. It should be noted that all music industry majors take an internship, and this may be the source of acquiring technical skills. Some students take a minor in another discipline and this might be the source of computer technology courses or other coursework.

## **Problem Statement**

The problem of this study therefore is that the digital economy has brought a lot of technological influence on music creation, consumption, dissemination, performance, and more importantly, education. It is believed that these and more might have brought about the promulgation of the 2020 NCCE music curriculum. This document is being used in training the students whereas little or no study has been done on it. Of need therefore is an investigation of the curriculum as it reflects the pertinent and peculiar features of the digital society afore mentioned such that our students can cope with the trends of the digital economy. Specifically, the study explores how skillfully crafted the 2020 NCCE curriculum content is towards equipping music students to operate in the digital economy. Of need too is an understanding of the training of the personnel that would prepare these student teachers and the adequacy of the availability of the facilities for instruction towards preparing the student teachers to navigate in the digital economy.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The term "grounded theory" was introduced to the research lexicon by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1960. It refers to a method that facilitates the development of new theoretical insights on research founded on directly gathered data, rather than initial hypotheses, offering a route whereby researchers could aim to produce. The overall impact of this means that there are firm justifications for the preparation of research proposals that can indeed eschew hypothesis testing as the starting point of research and instead specify objectives based on developing new conceptual models, frameworks, or theories. These outcomes can be evaluated using Glaser and Strauss' criteria of *fit, grab, work, and modifiability*. Thus, the view that research is something based on existing theories can be challenged,

offering the alternative proposition whereby theories and hypotheses can be the results of a research project.

## Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design, guided by grounded theory, which was initially proposed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1960. Grounded theory focuses on developing theories from data collected in the field rather than testing hypotheses, as is typical in quantitative research. The relevance of this theoretical framework to the current study lies in its ability to facilitate a deeper understanding of the NCCE Music Curriculum document, specifically regarding how it prepares prospective music teachers.

Given that the trainers are the primary implementers of the curriculum, they were deemed the most appropriate individuals to provide insights into their training experiences and the availability of the necessary resources.

The study population comprised Nigerian music lecturers at Colleges of Education offering the National Certificate in Education Programme in Southeastern Nigeria. To select participants, purposive sampling was utilized, targeting four Colleges of Education within the region. Within each college, five music lecturers were sampled, resulting in a total sample size of 20 lecturers.

Data collection involved a comprehensive content analysis of the NCCE Music Curriculum document, as well as structured interviews and a review of relevant literature. Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the data, allowing for the identification of key themes and insights relevant to the research objectives.

## Findings

**Research Question 1:** How skillfully crafted is the 2020 NCCE curriculum towards equipping music students to operate in the digital economy?

The answer to Research Question 1 was obtained through content analysis of the document.

A review of the NCCE document revealed that the philosophy of the 2020 NCCE document for the training of the would-be music teacher has no digital economy in focus but rather the traditional economy. The objectives of the curriculum have remained the same as ever except for the addition of Number K on page 93 which deals with producing professional specialists like Music Librarian, Music Production and Management, and so forth. Admission has remained the same. Facilities as well have remained the same except for a mention of a “fully equipped digital recording studio on page 94. Staff offices remained the same. Among the specialized facilities on page 95, there was an addition of digital cameras and an electronic podium/screen board. The number of academic staff was raised to 12 minimum against the previous document which was a minimum of 8 academic staff. Tutorial and Administrative staff remained the same. The mode of teaching has an insignificance change. Graduation requirements have some alterations. Education courses and general courses were reviewed downward to 24 and 16 as against 30 and 18 credit loads respectively. The teaching practice credit load has remained as before. Music courses were reviewed from 64 to 48, thereby making the graduation requirement 94 credit loads against 118 credit loads previously.

Commendable for the new review is an opportunity for students to specialize in an area of interest such as African Music, Music Education, Composition, Performance, and Music Technology, unlike the previous document that conscripted the students to write their project on Music Education alone.

In addition to the above analysis, the following courses (Mus 117, Mus 127, Mus 217, and Mus 322) were specifically reviewed to ascertain how the curriculum is crafted to prepare the students to function competently in the digital economy. The significance of their selection is that they are technologically based as technology is indispensable in the digital economy.

#### **MUS. 117: MUSICAL INSTRUMENT TECHNOLOGY I**

Knowledge of the materials used in the construction of selected African and European musical instruments. The effect of atmospheric conditions: heat, temperature, humidity, etc. on construction materials. The construction of an African or Western musical instrument and equipment e.g. recorder, speakers, guitars, xylophone, drums, etc.

#### **MUS. 127: MUSICAL INSTRUMENT TECHNOLOGY II**

Construction of an African or Western musical instrument and equipment, e.g. recorder, speakers, guitars, xylophone, drums, etc. introduction of musical acoustics: modes of sound production, transmission, electro-acoustical equipment such as microphones, loudspeakers; basic elements of architectural (room) acoustics good and bad absorbers and reflectors

#### **MUS 217 - MUSIC TECHNOLOGY III**

Studies in how synthesis tools and software can be used for creative purposes. Methods of digital recording, processing, synthesis, and score typesetting. Studies in the electronic means of creating, filtering, and modifying sound. Introduction to digital audio software such as Cakewalk, Cubase, Sonar, Nuendo, Fruity Loops, Finale, Sibelius, Adobe Audition, etc., and study of factors affecting the fidelity of digital audio sounds. Practical application of the knowledge of electronic techniques and software to produce jingles, film sound tracts, pop songs, multi-media tracts (computer-based, orchestration, notation and audition), live electronic music, etc

#### **MUS. 322 - MUSIC BUSINESS AND MEDIA**

This course is set to the study of talents in business and their duties: professional pop musician, composer-arranger, producer, artiste and repertoire manager, promoter, artiste manager, etc.

Studies in patronage, unionism, copyright protection, signing on the label, promo, choosing an Entertainment Law Attorney, publishing, marketing, etc. Studies in choosing various media of dissemination – cassette tapes, LPs, CDs, TV, Internet, etc; and production of video clips, video cassettes, and VCDs.

The above courses Music Technology I, II, and III can be summarized as tending towards traditional economy as the major emphasis was on African and Western musical instrument construction and the acoustic with nothing

on Website development, Cloud computing, and skills on AI. In Mus 322 “Music Business and Media” the business nature in the digital economy like sales management systems, event and facility management systems, and so forth were sidelined whereas the cassette tapes, LPs, CDs, et cetera of the traditional economy were upheld.

A critical study of the technological courses captured above and the Music Business showed that they are crafted towards the traditional economy and not the digital economy.

**Research Question 2:** What is the training of the personnel that would prepare these would-be music teachers?

The lecturers’ specialized areas were Theory and Composition, Ethnomusicology, and Music Education. There was an insignificant number of lecturers affirming their competency in impacting the digital economy skills like Website development. Some lecturers have ideas about audio editing and video editing and as such learned the skill on their own. There were zero Computer Music Technologists in all the colleges studied.

**Research Question 3:** What is the adequacy of the availability of the facilities that will enable the preparation of the students to function effectively in the digital economy?

To find the availability of the personnel and facilities that will enable the preparation of students to function effectively in the digital economy interview was conducted and the following were some of the responses.

An interlocutor Dr Egwu from Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education Owerri stated thus “We don’t have a Computer Music Technologist in the department. Buttressing his fact further said we don’t even have a Technologist at all. He also intimated that the department does not have a digital camera or digital studio. There is no Electronic podium or Screen Board (oral interview held on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2023).

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of July an interview by phone with Okeke Martha about the availability of the identified theme did not reveal a different answer from the above at the Department of Music Federal College of Education, Ehamufu, Enugu State does not have a Computer Music Technologist. As a participant observer (Dr Ugwu), having recently conducted research on these colleges of Education in the South there was no digital studio, digital camera, electronic podium, or screen board found.

An interview with Dr Iwundu on instruction strategies on 27<sup>th</sup> July revealed that “so many variables like power failure, poor or non-internet connectivity make it difficult complementing our face-to-face instruction. Yes, we know about technology-mediated education and hybrid learning but we have no resources for implementing them”. Dr Ngozi lending his voice to instruction procedure stated thus: how many of the trainers have the skill and knowledge to use digital technologies efficiently to enhance their instruction? Buttressing his view more he said, some of these students have the

technological expertise that their trainers do not have (oral interview on 2nd August, 2023).

## **Discussion of Findings**

The debate on a philosophy of music education in Africa has been protracted as it is yet to be resolved (Elliot, 1995; Okantah, 2000; Herbst, 2003; Reimer, 2003; Adeogun, 2006; Amuah, 2009; Ugwu, 2018). The globe is dynamic and the curriculum has to be so for relevance. The document upholding the utilitarian function of music as a means of teaching other subjects in this digital era is absurd. It therefore negates musical experience as in the words of Reimer (2003) which everyone who interacts with music should have. Serious caution, therefore, should be taken in this digital era so as not to be overwhelmed by technological infusion at the expense of musical experience. The Praxis ideology of Elliot was critiqued by Remier (2003) when he retorted that there is knowledge or experience that one acquires as he meddles with music and as such should be the cause for music in the curriculum. However, in Remier (2009) he started advocating for synergy. This study also advocates for synergy not in terms of praxis as opined by Elliot but as it relates to technology. Music is an end; technology is a means. The philosophy of music in the digital era should have humanness as a core and creativity in connectivity without sacrificing the utilitarian constructs of music. The use of “synthesis tools and software for creative purposes; digital recording, processing, synthesis, and score typesetting; creating, filtering and modifying sound electronically; application of the knowledge of electronic techniques and software to produce jingles, film sound tracts, pop songs, multi-media tract, computer-based orchestration, notation and audition; live electronic music, etc” (NCCE, 2020, p. 102), should not be to the detriment of music humanness.

As revealed supra (Oehrle, 1998; Obioma, 2013; Ugwu, 2018), there was no significant change in the objectives, staffing, facilities, courses, and so forth. The little change was that out of the 39 core courses, only 1 course Mus 217 (Music Technology III) is crafted towards digital knowledge. However, there was a significant change in the downward review of the graduation credit load from 118 to 94 and an opportunity for students to research on one’s interest area: African Music, Music Education, Composition, Performance, and Music Technology unlike before now where every student is mandated to do a project on music education.

The mode of instruction has changed a little from studies Obanya 2004; Adeogun, 2015). This though insignificant was a ripple effect from the COVID-19 pandemic which is not all-encompassing because of the lack of internet facilities and erratic power supply.

Graduation requirements have some alteration as Education courses, and General Courses were reviewed downward to 24 and 16 as against 30 and 18 credit loads respectively. Music courses were reviewed from 64 to 48, thereby making the graduation requirement 94 credit loads against 118 credit loads previously. A downward review of music courses is worrisome as one



stands to doubt the competency of the music graduates at the end of their training. This concern was also raised by Professor (Mrs) Blessing Ijoma in her Diamond lecture at Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri Imo State held on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2023 at the 60 years of the College celebration (1963–1923). She blamed the incompetency of the students on the overloaded curriculum where the students had to battle with too many Education courses at the sacrifice of their subject specialty. In her words “Are the students going to teach Education or Engineering” She then suggested making a Teacher Education 5 years programme: 4 years for the subject area then 1 year for the Education certificate, and that is how it is done in developed countries. We so much agree with the Professor’s suggestion, especially in this digitalized era. Instead of overloading the curriculum by creating other courses let there be a restructure where the connectivity paradigm in course structure will be upheld.

Further investigation from the lecturers revealed a lack of crucial personnel, computer music technologists, who are core to actualizing digitalism in the system. The insignificant few who know of these modern technologies concur with the study of Baniva et al (2021) which showed that over 50% of the student who is competent and can navigate in the digital era acquired their skills on their own.

Arising from the themes generated from the document, there was a gross lack of digital studios, digital cameras, electronic podiums et cetera. There is zero availability of the facilities that will *suggest* having in mind the preparation of the would-be music teachers to navigate in a digital economy. This finding concurred with Pereverzeva et al (2018) on the lack of digital technologies. It also agrees with Ugwu, (2018) about the lack of musical instruments in the colleges of Education in the Southeastern States of Nigeria.

It will be a mirage hoping to train teachers that will be able to navigate in the digital economy without knowledge empowerment and skill formation, training on how to interact with digital technologies wisely, and as well how to find useful information. The government in addition to funding education will be a strong policy to protect intellectual property. There should be provision of electricity as Kebanda (2018) retorted.

## **Conclusion**

The reviewed concept of the digital economy refers to economic activity that uses electronic communication and digital technologies to provide goods and services. It requires a strong infrastructure, high-functioning internet, strong mobile networks, and telecommunication. Its main building blocks include but are not limited to the internet, e-mail, digital automation, digital payment, and social media. The digital economy no doubt birthed concepts such as digital education, digital learning, e-learning, and so forth which should be crafted into the curriculum for optimal relevance such that the humanitarian value of music is not sacrificed for technological expertise.

We argue that the philosophy of music education which should also inform individual music lecturer's philosophy in the digital economy should be humanitarian. There should be caution in the use of electronic communication and digital technologies in providing knowledge such that music as a humanistic art is upheld. Serious efforts should be made to curtail technicality in this era of technology so that the values, cultural enrichment, and humanness of music can be maintained even when we use technology.

Education is not cheap, and leaving it alone for the government could be disastrous hence we continue to advocate for philanthropic acts. The government should prioritize funding education. Erratic electricity, lack of technological know-how, poor internet service, and a host of other issues should be addressed towards operating digital education for the digital economy of the now.

It is worrisome as the study revealed that some trainees have technological expertise the trainers do not have, hence the retraining of the lecturers is imperative towards the development of their teaching styles to enable students to navigate in the digital economy. Connectivity with departments like computers, and workshops on skill acquisition to survive in the digital economy is needed. Lecturers can enroll for personal technological development.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations arose from the study.

- ❖ The philosophy of music other than being a means to an end should be an end. Music has the potency to inculcate what no other subject of the curriculum can and that is musical knowledge or experience. Restructuring of courses for interconnectivity with other departments in the College is necessary to avoid overloading of the curriculum. More so, a restructure of the curriculum whereby education will be taken as a certificate course at the end of the training such that would-be teachers would acquire competency for their subject area is advocated.
- ❖ The government should fund education and provide all the necessary facilities such as electricity, digital technologies, internet facilities, and so forth.
- ❖ The lecturers' retraining, knowledge upgrade, as well as their philosophy, are crucial so that their instruction will be attuned with the digital era teaching peculiarities.

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