

Original Article

# Postgraduate Music Education in South-South Nigeria: Curriculum Gaps, Practical Assessment, and Resource Constraints (2013–2023)

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**Abstract:** *This study investigates certain aspects of the postgraduate music curriculum in the South-South Nigerian universities from 2013 to 2023. It specifically examines the sufficiency of instructional resources, the challenges of practical assessment, and strategies for enhancing postgraduate music education in the area. A survey was adopted as the study's design, and quantitative and qualitative instruments were used to collect data. Postgraduate students, lecturers, and administrative staff at universities offering postgraduate music programmes comprised the study population. A questionnaire, interview schedule, and content analysis of copies of the departmental curriculum were used as instruments for data collection. Findings revealed that although theoretical studies of postgraduate music curricula are well packaged and delivered, there are cascading gaps in the availability of many required instructional resources, such as digital studios, ethnomusicological archives, rehearsal rooms, and performance laboratories. The assessment instruments for practical assessment are not effective either because they are poorly funded, lack required technology tools, have a high student/equipment ratio, and are unavailable due to the unavailability of modern technology-driven production tools, etc. Product assessment criteria are also not uniform across the board. To this end, it is recommended that, among others, addressing them by overhauling learning facilities, taking into consideration the need for periodic appraisal to meet minimum quality assurance benchmarking, etc., should be given priority to ensure the effective implementation and realisation of the objectives of postgraduate music education in South-Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** *Postgraduate Music Education, Curriculum Evaluation, Instructional Materials, Practical Assessment, Nigerian Universities, South-South Nigeria*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The general aims of postgraduate music education are to develop advanced musicianship, scholarly investigation, performance practice, and professional leadership. These objectives can be met if the content and form of instruction inherent in postgraduate music curricula offered by tertiary institutions are properly programmed and justified with reference to global best practices. Postgraduate music includes performance, composition, musicology, ethnomusicology, conducting (choral and orchestral), music education, and music technology. However, the specialisations cannot operate effectively without an appropriate level of instructional provision, particularly regarding staff and methods of practical assessment. In the absence of such provisions, it is practically impossible to achieve the goals set for postgraduate music education; this, in turn, affects the quality of training offered and graduates' professional preparedness and competence (Ajayi, 2016).

Over the years, stakeholders have reached a consensus on the quality of output from Nigerian university graduates. Specifically, most postgraduate music programmes are skewed towards theoretical knowledge at the expense of practical skills, and modern technologies are not well integrated into the learning process. This lopsided nature could negatively affect how well prepared graduates are for professional practice in music performance, composition, conducting, music education, and music production. While practical/hands-on sessions are few due to limited facilities/technological tools to enhance the experience, industry-based training is also limited.

Curriculum evaluation assesses whether educational aims and objectives are met and whether learning experiences are relevant to current professional practice. Facets of curriculum evaluation may be even more relevant to music education, since the discipline is performance-based and demands an adequate linkage between theoretical instruction and practical engagement. The availability of instructional materials, such as rehearsal spaces, musical instruments, recording studios, music technology laboratories, and digital learning resources, underscores the importance of effectively delivering practical courses at scale. Inadequacy impacts students' ability to develop the professional competencies required for effective performance, research, and creative work (Okani et al., 2021). Curricular evaluations are therefore imperative for M.Mus programs to identify what is working well, what is missing, and what improvements should be made.



The central focus of postgraduate musical education is practical assessment, and in fact, it is based on performance activities. These include recitals, ensemble performances, conducting presentations, studio production projects, and ethnographic fieldwork, among others. Practical evaluation provides students with an opportunity to demonstrate their practical skills, creativity, interpretive competence, and scholarly understanding. Nevertheless, owing to inadequate facilities, instructional materials, and weak assessment systems, results are often not appreciable; hence, programs become theoretical, preventing graduates from practising what they have studied.

This study will therefore assess the postgraduate music curricula of selected South-South Nigerian universities from 2013 to 2023. In particular, it will determine the adequacy of instructional materials, ascertain the challenges that militate against effective practical assessment, and suggest ways to improve postgraduate music education in the area.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **A. Postgraduate Music Curriculum and Professional Competence**

This study refers to postgraduate music training as those aspects in the music education programmes of Nigerian universities that follow the 'general education' phase (Weber, 1990), focusing on mastery of the discipline at more specialised and sophisticated levels. At these higher levels, emphasis is placed on knowledge, artistic creativity and professional skills development. Knowledge is concerned with awareness of a subject(s) through study or theoretical learning. Artistic creativity involves recognition given to skilled, imaginative ability, especially in expressing ideas or feelings that are artistically appealing or... professional refers to relating to or connected with a profession which demands that appropriate standards be met [specifically here through variables such as study, critical enquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) and/or practical activities (unless these bring one's competences or the existence/emergence of specific standards into question)].

Given this, postgraduate training should focus on performance-based learning and ensemble participation, integrating students' works with those of the lecturers and their peers in other classes. This implies that they too must engage in studio practice, as well as composition projects. African music specialist Nzewi (2003: 86) reiterates that African music cannot but be participatory. Therefore, he suggests that interaction of students through playing together (ensemble), observation, listening, improvisation and exchange; and their involvement with the community's performance of its music are key components that the tertiary level of instruction must incorporate into its curricula for local relevance and community service.

They are also supposed to acquire pedagogical skills. Music pedagogy, curriculum and instructional materials development and assessment training courses taught in addition to supervised teaching within universities, seminars and research, prepare competitive graduates for university, college and other post-secondary teaching positions. The above-designed programme/curriculum implies that the/trainee shall have academic knowledge and teaching skills.

Contemporary postgraduate music programmes also emphasise music technology, studio production and interdisciplinary collaboration. For example, Emielu (2018) noted that modern music training cannot do without digital tools such as Digital Audio Workstations, MIDI controllers, and sound editing software. In the same vein, Adeogun (2019) observed that the composition technology, Sound Engineering and Digital Performance Skills were relevant to the preparation of graduates for contemporary professional practice due to advancements in communication technologies. These technological tools help increase creativity and promote versatility and innovation in the learning environment through virtual ensembles and multimedia presentations.

Interdisciplinary collaboration with theatre arts, media studies, and cultural studies broadens professional opportunities. Such collaboration brings film scoring, dance accompaniment, multimedia production and other performance contexts right into the academy for student learning and experience. By integrating theoretical knowledge, performance practice, music technology, pedagogical training, and interdisciplinary exposure, music programmes can produce culturally grounded graduates who are competent in traditional Western and contemporary cross-cultural styles, meeting industry demands.

### **B. Instructional Materials in Postgraduate Music Education**

Instructional materials are key to any successful postgraduate music education. Resources such as musical instruments, rehearsal studios, digital audio workstations, libraries, archives, multimedia equipment, and other technological facilities are required for mastery-level training. Mastery courses are, by nature, highly specialised in either research, performance, or creative production. The absence of music technology laboratories, which was observed by the authors, is in concert with Odusanya et al. (2025) who posit that modern rehearsing and training in higher music education is increasingly dependent on technological and digital devices. For a mastery student, being given access to successful academic instructional materials will allow for experiential learning, thereby facilitating creativity, constructivism, professionalism,

etc. On the flip side, any areas where those resources are lacking will result in too theoretical training that will hinder artistic growth, reduce graduates' preparation for dismissal from practice.

Green (2008) maintains that learning resources exert an important influence on a student's engagement and achievement. The use of instruments, practice rooms, and audio-visual materials supports both active and ensemble performance-based learning, interpretative knowledge, generic stylistic knowledge and context-based learning, which involves the setting of a performance within its historical or cultural background. Virtual learning environments can enhance reflective learning and, more generally, access to digital resources. However, even the best course design will not help students learn if there is no opportunity for them to do so and turn theoretical knowledge into practice in work-related contexts. Applied areas need specialist spaces (e.g., conducting, composition, ensemble performance) and equipment.

At the postgraduate level, library resources are equally important. Books, journals, manuscripts, recordings and digital databases underpin research, thesis writing and creative projects. Library facilities that allow students to access or borrow music scores or books on CD/DVD expansions of recordings provide a solid academic resource for postgraduate studies, along with institutional libraries containing literature on music education, Indigenous music, material culture, and history, etc. Repositories such as eprints also extend individual capability to collect and organise publications for students.

In the Nigerian context, Oikelome (2010) observed that inadequate funding and the lack of facilities have continued to hamper music performance practices nationwide across various tertiary institutions. Outdated facilities, low availability of rehearsal rooms and inadequate studio work not only affect activities related to ensemble performance, conducting, as well as composition activities, but also production practice-oriented courses such as rehearsal management for media productions; coordination of ensembles for media productions and studio production, which are relevant for students taking a career in music production, broadcasting and digital media. Similarly, Fisher (2014) stressed the availability of special-purpose facilities and resources which cover areas such as rehearsal management of media productions; ensemble co-ordination of media productions and studio production needed for music students pursuing a career in music production, broadcasting, and digital media.

The increasing incorporation of music technology into postgraduate programmes reinforces the demand for current teaching materials. Tools such as digital audio workstations, MIDI controllers, and multimedia production software enable students to create, record, edit, and present music at a professional level. These tools help improve creativity and technical skills, and bring the training of a postgraduate student more in line with modern industry standards. The absence of such software would result in artificially limited exposure to modern production techniques, thereby adversely affecting the effectiveness of postgraduate music teaching.

### **C. Performance-Based Assessment in Postgraduate Music Education**

Performance-based assessment is a vital aspect of music education, but in most Nigerian institutions, it is often hampered by structural and resource-related constraints. Practical courses such as recitals, composition projects, ensemble activities, and studio work are usually sidelined because facilities are grossly inadequate, equipment and tools are scarce, and there are few contact hours in the timetable. An audit of postgraduate programmes in music in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria revealed poor assessment practices, with written examinations given greater weight than practical components (Iyare & Popoola, 2016). Due to the unavailability of practice rooms, instruments, and studios, theory lessons prevail to the disadvantage of graduates who would later assume leadership roles in ensembles and other areas. Nzewi (2003) posited that music education in Africa is essentially practical-oriented; hence, performance assessment cannot be dispensed with.

Performance-based assessment is the bedrock of postgraduate music training, as it focuses on how well a student can apply their knowledge in real-world situations. Indeed, musical skills, including conducting, are best learned not through theoretical instruction but through active participation in rehearsals, performances, and microteaching (Oduşanya, 2024). So, the term 'performance-based assessment' should not only refer to written examinations; it should also include recitals, composition (traditional research that encourages innovation and new forms), conducting (microteaching), ensemble performance, and self/peer-evaluation through action research or reflective practice. Indigenous knowledge performance genres require specialists who have attained practical mastery through hands-on training using rehearsal-based pedagogy (Oduşanya & Idolor, 2023).

These methods cultivate professional knowledge, technical skills, and artistic imagination. Medina (2013) points out that performance-based assessment motivates students to actively learn by doing: "When we act on what we know, we can see if what we think will happen matches what actually happens. Existing knowledge applied in action produces new data for further testing" (p. 103). Experiential learning that occurs through performers' reflective processing parallels the principles Dewey (1980/1934) sets forth in *Art as Experience*, where he discusses how artisans learn in their creative practice.

Authentic assessment strategies that mirror professional practice have also been shown to strengthen practical skills. Frey (2018) highlighted that live recitals, ensemble conducting, recording studio production, ethnomusicological fieldwork, and research-led creative output are all made possible through the use of specific assessment tasks. These activities allow instructors to gather performance-based evidence, including technical competence, artistic expression, stage presence, collaborative ability, leadership qualities, rehearsal technique, and score interpretation as both a conducting and ensemble-directing candidate, among others. Graduate-level lecture recitals and performance theses will also further integrate applied musicianship with scholarly inquiry.

Despite its centrality, practical assessment is constrained in many African universities by minimal facilities, large classes, and limited instructional contact time. Nzewi (2003) argues that, since written examinations may dominate academic assessment in settings without rehearsal rooms, studios, or instruments, this type of assessment cannot adequately evaluate performance competence. When such facilities are readily available, however, performance-based assessment provides the students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery, creativity and innovation. Therefore, postgraduate curricula should be developed to emphasise authentic experience-oriented forms of assessment reflecting best practice in professional performance and pedagogical research (Medina, 2013; Frey, 2018; Nzewi, 2003).

#### **D. Indigenous Content and Africanisation of Postgraduate Music Curriculum**

The postgraduate music curricula of many institutions are still centred on Western knowledge systems. A study in the South-South zone shows that these are largely based on Euro-American theory, history and analytical methodologies, while African indigenous knowledge systems and performance practices are hardly seen (Iyare & Popoola, 2026). This means students spend more time being tutored on Western music concepts, to the detriment of local musical elements such as indigenous instruments and African performance practices. It is usually assumed that there is not enough time, and that there are few experts in African idioms and ethnomusicology, as well as in ensemble-based traditional performances, so they relegate such content to the background.

Postgraduate music scholars thus urge the decolonisation and diversification of postgraduate music curricula to coincide with the implementation of culturally responsive educational frameworks (Iyare & Popoola, 2026). Through a process of curriculum redesign that considers students' musical heritage and lived experiences, learning can become more meaningful and relevant within context. This would involve integration of African instruments, traditional repertoires, indigenous rhythmic structures, oral traditions as well as philosophical foundations in the curriculum and in assessments. The inclusion process would also contribute to cultural awareness which is important for ensuring exposure to music that mirrors the learners' sociocultural background. Iyare and Popoola (2017) contend that culturally sensitive music education leads toward inclusivity where all musical heritages are respected and revered while intercultural understanding is fostered through exposure to a wide range of musical expressions thus minimising cultural alienation in educational environments.

Effective integration of indigenous content, however, requires more than rhetorical commitment. Institutional policies must formally recognise African musical practices by allocating credits and assessment weight to indigenous performance, composition and ethnographic fieldwork, as well as providing the necessary instructional materials and staff (performers) if these do not exist externally to the institution. Adequate performance opportunities should also be provided. This approach strengthens both theoretical understanding and practical competence while capitalising on the increasingly symbiotic relationship between education in music or culture(s),<sup>1-3</sup> and the professionalisation,<sup>4-6</sup> preservation<sup>7</sup> 8 and innovation<sup>9</sup> 10 of African music traditions.

By situating African music knowledge in conjunction with global practices, postgraduate music programmes can develop culturally anchored graduates with versatile competencies that are relevant to local as well as international scholarship, performance, composition and music education. This model of a balanced curriculum enhances relevance, identity formation and professional preparedness in postgraduate music.

#### **E. Institutional Factors Affecting the Implementation of Postgraduate Music Curriculum**

The effectiveness of postgraduate music curricula depends on a number of institutional factors such as funding, staffing, infrastructure, policy support and overall institutional commitment. Postgraduate music education by its very nature demands specialist facilities, practical learning environments and up-to-date technologies. In their absence, even the best curriculum will not produce the expected professional competence or research output. The lack of needed instructional resources and institutional support is reported by Adeogun (2019) to seriously undermine higher education music programmes.

Limited access to scholarly materials also militates against effective postgraduate learning. Departmental libraries in many institutions have few books, journals and reference materials, often kept in trust for accreditation visits by the National Universities Commission (NUC). Thus, students lack adequate access to literature required for research and thesis writing.

Poor internet services make it impossible for students to access digital journals and other online resources that are essential for the study and practice of contemporary music.

Human resource limitations certainly have implication for quality of postgraduate music education. A good number of the universities music departments are bedeviled with inadequate personnel, hence few lecturers handle many courses at the postgraduate levels. This reduces the chances for proper mentorship and specialized skills-acquisition- since these among others form core at postgraduate level. Laboratory/Studio and Instrumental facilities are not left out as they also suffer neglect. Even at present, save few instances, there is absolutely no training/ re-training workshop/ Seminar in effective mode of using Digital Audio Workstation (DAW), Remixing, or should studio Recording etc enquired up-to-dated obsolete equipment/machineries which may perhaps never be found anywhere in today's digital world hence all these factors have really submerged the graduates further into on-going crisis for too long time now instead appropriate measures been put in place regular basis upgrade them.

Infrastructure deficiencies also impair practical training in music courses. Rehearsal halls, recording studios, ensemble rooms and music technology laboratories are either inadequate or non-existent in many universities. In this situation lecturers have no option than to concentrate on theoretical instruction at the expense of practical training (Emielu, 2018). Lack of contemporary technological tools – digital audio workstations, MIDI controllers and multimedia production systems deprives students opportunity for hands-on practice with current trends in music production. A trend that is consistent with Okani et al. (2021) observation that studio composition labs and multimedia suites in Nigerian universities are either outdated or not in existence.

Empirical studies also attest to the magnitude of these infrastructural problems. For instance, an audit of universities in South-South Nigeria found that obsolete facilities and a dearth of digital and studio facilities were one of the main challenges militating against successful implementation of postgraduate music curricula (Iyare et al., 2016). Thus there is need for modern equipment to be procured, electricity supply to be improved and reliable internet connectivity to be put in place to support music technology education and research (Amaegbe, 2013).

Efforts to secure adequate funds for postgraduate music departments in Nigeria are thwarted by herculean obstacles. These include poor state of facilities, dearth of equipment and obsolete technology (Effiong, n.d.). It equally slows down the pace at which digital libraries are built as well as access to current research publications among students and academic staff. It seems that if one is not a part of this 21st century system operating through the internet, one cannot be in attendance at a higher institution given the fact that it operates majorly based on digital scholarly communications and hence advance technological frontiers that will enhance staff and students' quality training and produce research outcomes (Bayero et al., 2021; Okani et al., 2021).

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

This study used a descriptive survey research design to evaluate postgraduate music curricula of three South-South Nigerian universities; Delta State University, Abraka; Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt and University of Uyo. The use of descriptive survey design facilitated the systematic gathering of data from a specified population in order to ascertain the efficacy, relevance and challenges of implementing the postgraduate music curriculum. Osuji (2017) stated that studies that are based on questionnaires and designed to elicit responses from a representative sample can conveniently be described as falling within the purview of descriptive survey research.

The subjects were drawn from postgraduate music students and their lecturers in these institutions which included Masters and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) programmes. The postgraduate students at the two institutions were fifty-six (56) in number. This number was deemed adequate due to the fact that the population of postgraduate music students in the universities selected is not very large, as well as the need to enhance representation while minimising sampling bias. Further consultation was done with lecturers and Heads of Departments to supplement information on curriculum implementation and institutional challenges.

Data for the study were collected with a structured questionnaire entitled Evaluation of Postgraduate Music Curriculum (IPMC) and supplemented with oral interviews, participant observation and consultation of Heads of Departments to enrich and triangulate findings. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section requested demographic information about respondents, while the second consisted of nineteen Likert-scale items to evaluate curriculum content, implementation strategies, instructional resources and programme relevance. Simple percentages were used to answer research questions 1, 2 and 3. Content validity of the instrument was established through expert review by specialists in Music Education and Curriculum Studies. Data generated by the questionnaire was analysed and presented in tables and charts in order to ensure clarity and ease of interpretation.

#### **IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study was based on the Stufflebeam's CIPP Model of programme evaluation. The CIPP model (Context, Input, Process, and Product) is a theoretical model that can be used in evaluating an educational programme to inform improvements and decision-making. Stufflebeam (2007) reveals that the model is intended to provide stakeholders with formalised information for judging programme effectiveness, supporting design decisions, and identifying whether a programme ought to be continued unaltered, modified or improved. Adding on, Fitzpatrick (2011) observes that the model embeds formative and summative evaluation within it hence provides a diagnosis on how well an educational programme is implemented as well as the outcomes realised through its implementation.

Within this framework, context evaluation concerns an analysis of the needs, goals and objectives of the programme. In this study, this dimension will be related to the relevance of postgraduate music curricula to academic, professional and societal needs and how these are addressed in the design of programmes. The second subcategory within input evaluation considers what resources are actually available for use in implementing a curriculum and these may include: staffing, funding, teaching/learning resources (e.g. library/media/ICT), technology and the physical environment or context within which learning occurs among others. Resources also need to be maintained and managed if they are to be used effectively.

Process evaluation assesses the real implementation of the curriculum. It includes, for instance, an inspection on whether the instructional activities are being implemented as intended, how effective teaching and learning strategies are and what strengths and weaknesses have been encountered during programme implementation; and whether practical training, performance-based learning and research activities are being implemented as per curriculum design.

Content evaluation is directed towards programme outcomes and entails questions about overall effectiveness. Were the objectives, and in particular the three central concerns identified above, realised by postgraduate music students, performance-competence-research composite or otherwise? And how well did the curriculum deliver graduates? Context, input, process, and product evaluation were integrated to provide comprehensive data through which postgraduate music curricula within selected universities could be assessed in as holistic a manner as possible.

#### **V. FINDINGS**

##### **A. Adequacy of Instructional Materials**

Findings on the adequacy of instructional materials for postgraduate music education show that there is a disjuncture in terms of resource access across the sampled universities. Majority of the respondents claimed that traditional instructional materials such as music manuscripts and orchestral instruments were employed for skill acquisition. This implies that approximately half (48.4% agree + 53.6% strongly agree) engage directly in practical works doing something. Thus, it can be assumed that students may be exposed to some practical experiences within these programs, but such modern resources as journals and digital databases as well as online learning systems are largely inaccessible reportedly because their institutions lack subscription or have very poor internet access.

With regards to cultural relevance of instructional materials, 38.7% of the respondents indicated that idioms from Western and African were used in teaching, however, 23.2% perceived predominance of western musical traditions. This implies that even though there are trials to incorporate African content, Western-oriented instructional resources still seem to take a lead. In summary thus, it can be inferred from the results that basic instructional materials are available but technology oriented and culturally responsive resources remain inadequate for effective postgraduate music training.

The study also found that there were some gaps between theoretical and practical instructional facilities. Lecture theatres, classrooms, textbooks, printed scores and whiteboards were generally available and adequate in teaching theoretical subjects such as musicology, history, analysis and research methodology but the same proficiencies did not apply to many of the practical subjects as well. For example, digital recording studios, music technology laboratories, composition rooms, ethnomusicology resource centres and performance venues were either too few or nonexistent in the majority of the departments. As a result students enrolled for Performance Major (music), Composition Major (music), Conducting Major (music) MMus (Coursework) Master's Degree in Music by Course work nad Mini-thesis alternatively Dissertation as well as Music Production Studies experienced insufficiency of hands-on learning experiences.

Furthermore, the current modern musical devices that include digital audio work stations (DAWs), MIDI controllers and sound reinforcement systems were neither in existence nor were they sufficient. Rehearsal spaces were inadequate thus practice areas for ensemble, choral and instrumental training were overcrowded. Musical instruments i.e keyboards, drum sets, orchestral instruments and indigenous African instruments were scarce and mostly in poor state. Consequently, students had to depend on their own personal instruments or those borrowed from private teachers hence further disadvantaging the already marginalised.

These results imply that despite the availability of basic teaching and learning resources, practice-oriented, technological, and culturally inclusive resources are still limited. This situation compromises curriculum implementation, undermines the development of practical skills and disorients professional competences and quality of postgraduate music education in the sampled universities.

### **B. Factors Hindering Practical Assessment**

Findings from the study show that a number of factors prevent practical assessment from being effective in postgraduate music programmes. Among these factors are the lack of cultural inclusivity, weaknesses in the organization of the programme structure, pedagogical inefficiencies, and lack of resources for instruction. In response to many questionnaires administered by this white paper or interviewees were spontaneously expressed that western musical traditions were prevalent during the actual implementation of the curriculum while African pedagogical philosophies and indigenous performance practices were side-lined. The cascade effect could be observed in relation to the design and implementation of practical assessments specifically those regarding African ensemble traditions and performance-based learning.

Teacher preparedness was also a big issue when it comes to practical assessment. For example, poorly structured lesson, inadequate instructional materials and lack of planning reduced student's engagement in performance based activities. Furthermore, the competence of the staff and the limited time allocated for 'practical oriented' courses did not facilitate the implementation 'learning-by-doing' characteristic to music education'. The result was most often irregular or very superficial practical assessment among the sampled institutions.

Resource constraints were reported to be a significant challenge to suitable practical assessment. Inadequate funding resulted in the unavailability of musical instruments, studio equipment and technological gadgets that supported performance based assessment. The state of existing facilities declined due to poor maintenance. In some instances, digital studio software, audio interfaces and multimedia teaching resources were either unavailable or not functioning. This forced students to share scarce instruments and facilities hence minimized practice time and quality of performance in recitals, conducting demonstrations and studio projects.

Large student enrolments and limited facilities made individualised assessment difficult. Some institutions used theoretical examinations to assess music performance skills because of the lack of examination facilities, as well as rehearsal rooms, instruments and studios. This practice of institutional assessment implied a bias towards written paper based examinations as opposed to practical assessment. Students' exposure to modern music production technologies such multimedia classrooms; computer laboratories, online learning platform was limited hence contributing to poor acquisition contemporary professional skill by students.

Overall, the study showed that structural inadequacies, technological and material resources insufficiency and pedagogical shortcomings combine to inhibit effective practical assessment in the universities under study in South-South, Nigeria. Adequate funding, maintenance of facilities, teacher re-orientation and more concerted effort at synthesizing indigenous/ traditional music practices with western or contemporary ones will ensure more robust practical assessment and successful implementation of music postgraduate curricula.

### **C. Recommendations for Enhancing Postgraduate Music Education**

While there is much that is found to strengthen the strategies in postgraduate music education, the insufficiency of the present curriculum is especially underscored by learning resources and practical training. It is advocated that postgraduate music curriculum exposes students evenly to western African musical traditions and global musics. This will enhance cultural inclusiveness and widen musical horizon of students. More so, it has been highlighted that improved availability of instructional materials such as music manuscripts, musical instruments; rehearsal spaces performances venues modern digital music would be teaching aids.

A recurring view was that the department should have and use studio facilities to support training in composition, arrangement, sound recording and engineering and digital music production. Other suggestions from respondents included the need to improve performance-based evaluation as well as benchmarking postgraduate training programs with international ones. The reorganising of curricula to give more emphasis on practice-based learning by increasing credit weightings of recitals, studio projects, conducting demonstrations, ensemble performances and composition portfolios was also stated to be necessary so that students acquire professional competencies alongside their theoretical knowledge thus making it more industry relevant.

Adequate funding and resource provision were also seen as important in order to improve programmes. Therefore, respondents suggested that the departments needed to get musical instruments, upgrade recording studios, maintain

facilities among others. On-going development for lecturers in music technology and digital pedagogy which would assist lecturers to provide quality teaching of contemporary composition, multimedia performance and digital music production as these areas change rapidly. Also it was perceived that working with industry produces such as studio producers, composers, instrument players, sound engineers could be a way of enhancing students' exposure into real life practical situations on their training programs; bettering the assessment regarding performance and improving professional skills development.

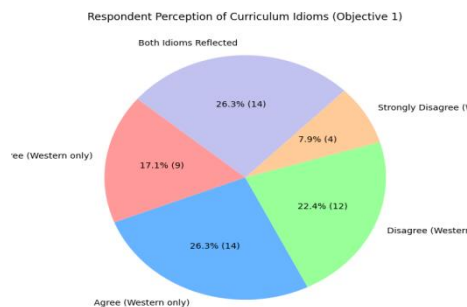
Finally, it was recommended that digital music production should be integrated in postgraduate programmes through Software based composition, virtual instruments and multimedia performance platform, and this would form the bedrock for improving practical competence, creativity and preparing music students for career opportunities in music performance, teaching, research as well as in the contemporary music industry. The current study also proposed specific recommendations to create a solid tangible framework for improving postgraduate music education to meet up with cultural and professional demands/obligation of the society.

## VI. DISCUSSION

The postgraduate music curricula for the selected South-South Nigerian universities are more theoreticized than performance/practice based. The curricula though involve areas of studies such as performance, composition, conducting, ethnomusicology and music technology but they are seriously limited by the non-availability of requisite instruction materials/facilities. Therefore because the emphasis has been on research and analytical work rather than performance practice studio production ensemble and conducting practice experience, it is obvious that the primary objectives of advanced postgraduate scholarship in music involving integrating higher research/analytical work with artistic creativity and professional competency in musical performance/production have not being well realized.

### A. Adequacy of Instructional Materials for Implementing Postgraduate Music Curriculum

The availability and quality of instructional materials is a bedrock upon which postgraduate music education can be said to be anchored on effective teaching. In spite of this, the study has shown that there are vast gaps in the provisions made by the sampled universities studied. For instance, whereas there are basic library materials, access to current music journals as well as digital repositories and subscription based databases such as JSTOR and Project Muse are unavailable. A lecturer stated that some important resources were not subscribed to thus making it impossible to do advanced research or even stay abreast with new knowledge. This puts postgraduate students at a disadvantage needing up-to-date literature for thesis development and scholarly discourse.



**Figure 1: (Showing Respondents' Perception of Curriculum Idioms, Field Work 2026)**

The analysis of respondents' perceptions of curriculum idioms showed varying views in as far as cultural representation on the curriculum is concerned. Responses indicated that a good number of the participants perceived the curriculum to be Western oriented while others recognized that both Western and African idioms were embraced. The prevailing pattern implies that despite some efforts to include African musical traditions, Western musical content continues to predominantly mark postgraduate training. These results bring home strongly the importance of more balanced and culturally relevant structured curriculum.

The study also found paucity of musical instruments and where they were available. Except for the relatively better ones at Delta State University, the instruments at others facilities were either out-dated or not functioning. As a result many students depend on personal instruments for practical's thereby affecting ensemble rehearsals, recital preparation conducting practice and performances as collaborative learning which is needed for developing overall music skills are limited.



Technology integration also surfaced as a big challenge. Music technology laboratories, digital recording studios and multimedia teaching facilities were largely inadequate or were non-existent. For example, an instructor at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education observed that the use of analogue equipment has made it impossible to teach modern music production. The lack of digital audio workstation software, MIDI controllers and multimedia production tools means that students are hardly exposed to current music production trends.

Instructional materials were also reported to be predominantly Western-oriented, with scanty resources reflecting African musical idioms and indigenous traditions. Over 60% of respondents indicated that culturally relevant textbooks and teaching materials were unavailable in their institutions. This situation inhibits culturally responsive music education and minimizes opportunities for students to interact with their musical heritage.

Furthermore, practical courses such as ensemble performance, composition, conducting and studio production were often taught theoretically because of insufficient equipment and facilities. Emielu (2018) stresses that the actual use of technological and practical resources is necessary to enhance creative ability and professional competence while Adeogun (2019) contends that practice-based and technological components should be combined to keep up with the demands for current music work by graduates.

Overall, the study reveals that educational resources are very essential for correct implementation of the curriculum. Lack of libraries, music instruments, rehearsal rooms and music technology resources constrained opportunities for experiential learning in postgraduate programs. More efforts should be made to address these challenges and develop new facilities to enhance postgraduate studies in Music within South-South Nigeria university.

### B. Factors Militating Against Practical Evaluation of Postgraduate Music Curriculum

Several constraints which militate against effective practical evaluation in postgraduate music education were reported by lecturers in the south-south Nigeria universities. Too much is at stake with practical assessment in music education since musical skill or competences are best demonstrated through performance, creativity and technical application, but lecturers lamented that there really has been little to show as such since some facilities needed for an expository and rewarding performance-based evaluation do not exist. For instance, where students shall be assessed or evaluated through their composition on recording studio; on sound production and music technology courses it was discovered that there were hardly enough of such facilities to enable such goals attain up to fifty percent. Rehearsing ensemble and conducting from scoring activities has also got challenges as adequate rooms are scarce thus practically based components would either be minimised or totally removed hence exposing learners to a gap situation where little or no learning experience exist.

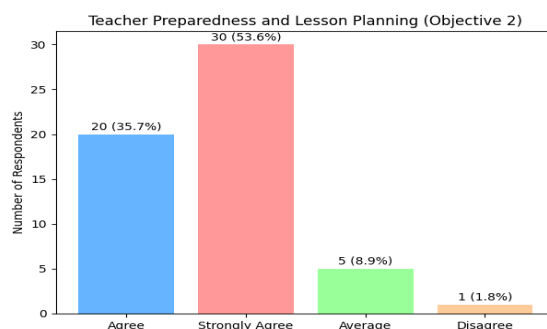


Figure 2: (Showing the Teachers' Preparedness and Lesson Planning, Field Work 2026)

The findings also indicated that teacher preparedness also has its significant impact on practical assessment. Majority of the respondents, 30(53.57%) strongly agreed and 20(35.71%) agreed on the statement of teacher preparedness having a significant impact on practical assessment. Five (8.93%) respondents expressed average effect while only one(1.79%) respondent disagreed thus indicating proper lesson planning and instructional preparedness as the factors that increase student participation, improve teaching-learning interaction as well as facilitate effective practical assessment.

Inadequate funding was identified as a major setback that not only affects staff recruitment, instrument procurement and facility maintenance but also the quality of available academic staff considering that most lectures are generalists with little or no specialization in areas such as music technology and ethnomusicology thus, crippling the teaching of practice-oriented courses. Moreover, instructional materials were predominantly Eurocentric with a paucity of resources that are culturally-relevant to Africa musical heritages; hence alienating students from their indigenous idioms and compromising the authenticity of culturally-grounded performance assessment.

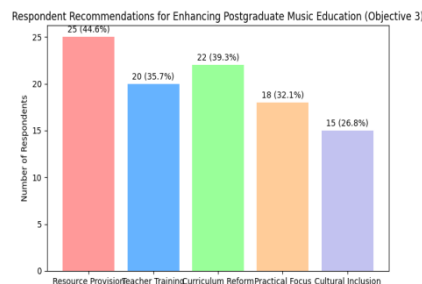
Other obstacles to the effective practical assessment included: not enough time allocated for lesson preparation by teachers; very limited opportunities for students to undertake hands on practical exploration of concepts and ideas; inadequate professional development for teachers to direct teaching efforts in the student centred directions envisaged by outcomes based education policy; large student/ instrument ratios in Practical Music/ Music Technology classes and instrument specific graded examinations scheduled at inopportune times. These circumstances reinforce theoretical instruction at the expense of performance based learning opportunity. Consequently, written examinations continue to be the preferred mode of assessment even with the practical focus of music learning and teaching.

These outcomes lend credence to the view of Nzewi (2003) that a performance-based assessment is the bedrock of African music education which thrives on active participation and experiential learning. With inadequate facilities, instructional materials, and structured processes for evaluation, graduates may be found wanting in ensemble coordination, improvisation, conducting, studio production, among others.

Overall, the research highlights that good instructional materials, proper facilities, uniform procedural assessment and effective internal moderation strategies are required to ensure a reasonable balance between theoretical knowledge and practical skills as well as ensure quality postgraduate music education in South-South Nigerian universities.

### C. Recommendations for Enhancing Postgraduate Music Education in the South-South Region

The study proffers varied strategies to enhance postgraduate music education in the selected South-South Nigerian universities. A principal recommendation from this finding is the need for a total curriculum change. The majority of the respondents suggested that, in postgraduate programmes, African and Western musical traditions should be taught. They also stressed that Nigerian music theory, history and performance practice should not be sidelined in postgraduate education as they would help in grounding non-Nigerian students culturally as well as in providing a general overview of Music both locally and globally.



**Figure 3: (Showing Recommendations for Enhancing Postgraduate Music Education in the South-South Region, field work 2026)**

Analysis of responses from the 56 participants identified that the most common responses were increased instructional resources (25), revised curriculum structure (22), teacher training and professional development programs (20) and more practical experiences including ensemble performance and conducting opportunities (18) and increased levels of cultural material taught within current topics(15). Clearly implied in this is that provision of resources, restructuring of curriculum, orientation of practical are at the heart of these students’ concerns.

Practice-based learning was strongly emphasised by respondents. Performance, studio production, ensemble and composition projects were recommended for greater credit allocation to build experiential learning. However, students require access to well-equipped recording studios, modern music technology laboratories and dedicated rehearsal spaces in order to develop professional competencies through hands-on training. Green (2008) adds that these types of experiential learning environments are crucial for encouraging creativity, interpretation and technical proficiency within music education.

Staff capacity building also emerged as a critical factor. Continuous professional development in areas such as digital music production, multimedia performance and indigenous music pedagogy would equip lecturers to deliver contemporary and culturally responsive instruction. Partnerships with industry professionals such as producers, performers and sound engineers could bridge the gap between academic training and real-world practice. Culturally relevant learning materials (eg textbooks, audio-visual resources and performance tools) could be developed to support context-based learning. More practical engagement through supervised ensemble rehearsals and performance-based assessment would strengthen interpretative skills, leadership abilities and collaborative competence among postgraduate students.

Finally, some of the experts recommended that there should be a provision for curriculum monitoring and review at intervals. This helps to get feedback on the efficiency of the programmes in meeting current technological demands, adequacy of preparation, relevance to existing educational policy standards and satisfaction with in jobs outside the university among graduates, students and public consumers etc with a view to making necessary adjustments. If possible this can even be done by Directors of academic planning or other quality control officers from the NUC or Ministry at periodic interval say once every three years etc. Thus it can checkmate most problems as regard postgraduate education associated with global pedagogical practices than some aspect of cultural safeguards envisaged.

## VII. CONCLUSION

This study focused on the postgraduate music curriculum of selected South-South Nigerian universities between 2013 and 2023. It examined the instructional materials, practical assessment and highlighted implementation challenges. Results show that while the curriculum is configured to incorporate both theoretical and practical aspects, implementation is largely hampered due to paucity of facilities. Recording studios, music technology laboratories, rehearsal rooms, musical instruments were grossly inadequate or non-available hence students could not optimally engage in performance-based learning implying show of skill acquired.

The study also found out that lack of funds, low technological equipment available for teaching especially in the developing country Nigeria, poor maintenance culture and high student-staff ratios as some other factors militating against effective practical based assessment. In response to these challenges music departments relied mainly on theoretical/ written examinations whilst studio production ensemble performing and conducting were rarely examined hence graduates entered into the field inadequately equipped practically.

The results imply the need for improved instructional resources and better functional assessment tools to develop stronger postgraduate music education. This is in agreement with earlier findings that performance-based areas such as conducting, ensemble practice and studio training are often subjects of tokenism in the Nigerian University music curricula, hence the inadequacy in the level of graduates' professional preparedness (Odusanya, 2025). Also shown is the imperative set-up of modern music technology laboratories fully stocked with digital audio workstations and recording studios as well as expansion of rehearsal rooms and provision of adequate musical instruments. This could not have been overemphasized on stating the need for curriculum re-structuring towards making emphasis on performance based assessment. Finally, there tends to be a call here for more funds to be earmarked for both infrastructural development and equipment maintenance/procurement.

Continuous professional development for lecturers in these areas is equally important. Collaboration with music industry practitioners such as producers, performers and sound engineers should be encouraged to provide students with real-world learning experiences, internships and improved employability. Taken together, these actions will increase practical competence, effectiveness of curriculum and quality of postgraduate music education in South-South Nigerian universities.

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