

# **INJECTING THE AFRICAN SPIRIT OF HUMANITY INTO ASSESSMENT OF MUSICAL ARTS IN THE CLASSROOM.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*African music scholars are currently grappling with the challenges of refocusing indigenous musical arts for classroom practice, and developing an Africa-sensed musical arts curricula that use culturally appropriate pedagogies derived from viable theoretical, philosophical and performance practices of indigenous music. The African spirit of humanity encourages participation by all in a bid to bond participants in a performative learning situation. The philosophy framing an assessment model should derive from the humanity ideology of musical arts education indigenous to a culture area. This model should enable and recognize demonstration of innate attributes and differentiated but compatible skills of every participant in the learning activity. The rigid assessment yardsticks transferred from Western elitist music education practice, and used in the assessment of African musical arts compromise this innate musicality. In this paper, we advocate assessment initiatives that should advance the humanity virtues of indigenous intellectual and praxial paradigms as well as epistemological logic into contemporary realities, and illustrate with two differently rationalized examples.*

Keywords and definitions: Assessment (determination of merit); Cultural expert (grounded exponent of a culture's epistemological principles); Ensemble Thematic Cycle ETC, (the re-cycled, collective ensemble-theme framework for spontaneously composing a piece of music); Humanity purpose (utilitarian/humanitarian objectives and benefits); Humanity conscience (devoted to what is virtuous and humane) Ignorant expert (posing and imposing as an authority in a subject a person has no cognitive and actual intellectual grounding); Musical arts (a singular term for the conceptual synthesis of music, dance, drama and costume); Soft science (potency of intangible designs to systematically effectuate measurable tangible outcomes)

**Position statement<sup>i</sup>** The purpose of musical arts education informs its curricula provision, methodology and evaluation criteria. Assessment design should ideally derive from the objectives of musical arts education indigenous to a culture/society. Indigenous African education paradigms prioritize humanity conscience in knowledge creation, practice, and transmission as well as assessment practices. There is then the need to understand the indigenous ideology, purposes and epistemology that underpin the production deployment and assessment of African musical arts practices. This mandates cognition of the deep and surface rationalizations of cultural knowledge conceptualizations of Africa. Reinstating the original common theoretical, philosophical and creative principles, as well as the assessment canons appertaining remain problematic in fashioning contemporaneous classroom musical arts education in Africa. Africa-derived policy and execution will infuse virtuous creative disposition and enterprise in learners while affirming their cultural integrity in the global perspective of demonstrating creative and performative competences. Two different instances of incorporating and assessing indigenous principles of knowledge acquisition in contemporary African musical arts education sites will be cited in the discussion of this position statement: An instance from Kenya is about excluding indigenous expert-instructors in assessment practice while a different instance from South Africa is about actuating and interacting the innate creative aptitudes of students' from different cultural backgrounds in group assessment paradigm.

## **1. Overview of indigenous African musical arts purposes and epistemology that inform assessment ideology and principles**

At the sub structural level, almost all sub Saharan African culture groups evidence common philosophical conceptualizations, humanity foundations and theoretical frameworks of musical arts logic and practice. A common philosophical foundation was experiencing and enacting the cosmos in a cohered community. An example of generic African creative/performative philosophy that determine compositional structures is the ensemble principle of individuality in conformity deriving from life and nature: Uniquely differentiated (individuality) thematic components are combined to constitute the basic sound framework (structural identifier) of a piece; every performance of a known piece must be a contingent version (re-composition) of its standard format – not an exact repetition in length and content, unless for an exceptional effect/affect or formulaic purpose. Cherished are the capability and humanity genius for creative originality and spontaneity that is, demonstrating personal attribute in expressing commonality. Cultural peculiarities or differences that distinguish the musical sounds, dances and visual-dramatic manifestations of human groups in Africa then derive from factors of geographical location that furnish ecological tangible resources and intangible spiritual sensitizations. The factor of languages also enables identification of cultural provenance in songs.

We posit that original African intellectual authority that manifest in indigenous knowledge constructs and practices predate hegemonic scholarship interpretations, revisions or sophistications, and often inventions of Africa. The original African knowledge integrity as well as expressions should start taking centre stage in classroom education as well as intellect-affirmation in and about Africa. African knowledge lore must then be explicated primarily in terms of its veritable intellectual lenses: theoretic logic, humanity intentions as well as discursive voice, grammar and terminology. The philosophy and epistemology framing the soft science of African musical arts define the manifestations. Modern literacy scholarship voices often perceive and portray only surface impressions of the indigenous collective and singular, non-scripted African wisdoms. These result from applying exogenous mindsets to researching, perceiving and interpreting their unique logics, vocabulary, grammar and humanity depths. The depth of indigenous African musical arts *is* often felt as the intangible but effectual raw/rough potency, which generates prodigious outcomes in experience.

The indigenous intellectual fountains remain contemporaneously valid and momentous for re-building currently elusive humanity conscience as well as consciousness in the global milieu. The epistemology of indigenous knowledge productions are both memory preserved and symbolically coded. Hence some music instruments encode extra-musical data. The mode of transmission, which prescribes creative re-enactments advances a given state and content of knowledge legacy. Contemporaneous respectful literacy exploration, interpretation, explication and transmission have become imperative. Knowledge inculcation must, however, privilege the original intellectual perspectives, which we argue, is the mother of any elitist academic knowledge advancements, re-inventions and purifications.

In Africa, the musical arts *is* a soft science of mind wellness as well as human systems management. The synergy operated as a singular spirit force. The scientific aspect of the rationalization informed the peculiar features of presentation, effectual outcomes and performance validation. The original divine mandates of some types of musical arts and

sciences in indigenous culture groups, at least of Africa adopt design that effectually rally, monitor, manage, sanction as well as validate cultural polity systems - political, social, economic, religious, educational and attitudinal. The medical science aspects of structural-formal conformations and expressions subtly maintained psycho-physiological wellness. As such aspects of Africa's indigenous musical arts formulations performatively instill normative social and moral dispositions as well as induce mass routine mental and physical fitness. The societal creative aspirations then inform structural and formal logic as well as the various media of expression. Academic study of African musical arts and sciences must therefore reckon with the extra-artistic (sub structural) intentions that underscore indigenous theoretical rationalizations. In indigenous African perspective, therefore, *assessment of a public performance was primarily objective, more in terms of efficacy in accomplishing the prescribed creative and performative intentions of humanity import.* Nevertheless there was pervasive evaluation of aesthetic merits and above average creative capabilities. This was expressed mostly as spontaneous practical appreciation that also reflects extra-artistic effectualness.

Deriving from the theoretical explications by indigenous musical arts knowledge experts<sup>ii</sup> some key philosophical and theoretical principles, which underpin indigenous African creative and performative expressions have been elicited. The creative and performative principles should underlie classroom transmission emphasis and appropriate assessment criteria, and therefore need to be pointedly fore grounded:

- The philosophy of inclusivity, often coerced, underpins structural and formal logic, and derives from indigenous humanity ideology; hence terse structural features to accommodate modest capabilities.
- The philosophy of duality informs tonal concepts of the melodic and the melorhythmic. Melorhythm instruments such as the drum or bell resonate as rough timbres, thereby rough sonic energy that subtly massage body and brain tissues. The tone levels so produced camouflage fundamental pitch essence, which the voice or melody instrument can articulate. Also the duality of tense and calm passages is a basic health principle of performance form that is therapeutic -

- accords psychical equilibrium imbuing physiological wellness. Assessment of a performance does not, therefore, generate psychological tension in a performer
- The developmental principle of recycling a thematic statement in performance time (internal variation technique) regenerates the potent (psychical) energy of a theme. Such constant fission and fusion of enclosed structural impulses (pitch/tonal/rhythmic) generate proactive, motive and psychical energy that produce profound effects/outcomes with minimal creative elements (philosophy of profundity in minimality)
  - The science of repetition or re-circling of a topos (a distinctive and memorable rhythmic/melorhythmic pattern), on the other hand is applied as anesthetic: a calmness or sleep inducing therapy in indigenous self or group medi-care. It is also the common African phrasing reference topos, which coheres ensemble creative individualities as a phrasing reference in composite ensemble creativities.
  - The component thematic structures that constitute an ensemble texture sonically translate and sensitize functional relationships in a nuclear family. The social-musical roles and terminology include the mother, father, co-acting siblings, baby, and occasionally the complimentary obligato role of a visiting relative in family affairs. Assessment tasks should accordingly prioritize, engender and instill consciousness of group more than Ego interests in life orientation
  - Ensemble Thematic Cycle (ETC) is the temporal aggregate of the differentiated lengths and musical/social roles that furnish a known ensemble theme. The composite textural theme constitutes the re-cycled basic performance form/identity of a piece in indigenous African compositional theory.
  - Some indigenous structural idioms/features are signifiers, such as the cadential topoi, alert figures etc.
  - External elaboration (development) of a theme in indigenous performance theory commands sensitivity to activities and emotions transpiring in a performance context. It as well entrains acuity of creative acumen for spontaneously integrating/interpreting contingent stimulations in composing the final performance outcome (form and content) of a standard format. This is the (humanity) purposive principle of Performance Composition - a developmental

- theory and philosophy of creative alertness that marks indigenous African exercise of creative genius. The performance composition canon curbs tendency for egotistic demonstration of fanciful creative skill. As such a transcription of an indigenous piece is only a framework for re-compositions that elicit and develop original creative genius, which performance assessment should take into account.
- African cultures exhibit common characteristic harmonic theory: A theme is given gestalt (holistic) harmonic complementation in horizontal axis, not vertical note by note chordal harmony. The outcome is layers of independent but compatible, inter-complementary melodic/melorhythmic themes. Each component theme thus makes independent musical sense if isolated (humanity philosophy of complementation of individualities). Such horizontal harmonization (matching of individualized themes), is still commonly encountered in contemporary communal vocal music outside classrooms all over Africa. Every learner at any level of Africa-sensed musical arts education should demonstrate capability to intuitively and spontaneously harmonize any melodic theme as per its holistic logic, exercising own cultural theme-matching idiom. The intuitive consciousness of cultural concord that underlies the African horizontal harmonic concept engineers spiritual bonding among co-participants.
  - Physiological health science marks indigenous choreographic vocabulary along the peculiarities of gender emotions (Nzewi M, 1999b) and physiology: Womanly dances routinely massage and tune reproductive organs from early age, hence maternity dances (now perverted into ubiquitous sensual-entertainment dancing). Manly muscles vibration dances massage body parts and tissues that are applied to the hard activities of subsistence labor that could otherwise induce muscle stress. Body organs were then playfully exercised to effectively cope with routine deployments. Hence African dances are poetic expressions (Agawu K, 2003, Nzewi M, 2007a)
  - African spirit manifest theatre, commonly misperceived and discussed with the English terminology of masquerading (make belief), enacts mystical/mythical science, and symbolically interacts cosmic/nature forces; depicting object lessons, life ideals, community mores and ethos, in other words total theatre enactment of

a human group's world view. Children's autonomous musical arts types (Campbell P. S, 2007) including spirit manifest species, sparked creative imagination and transacted life education as well as modeled social-religious dispositions from early age

- Overall, the soft science of musical arts serves as a proactive spirit force that binds and bonds, accords psycho-physiological wellness, and also effectually executes diplomatic agenda, sanctions polices, good governance and normative morality. Hence Israel Anyahuru, a male Igbo *mother-musician* asserted that 'all specialist musicians are sacrosanct' Nzewi M, et.al. 2011:77).

Theoretical features and societal rationalizations of the musical arts as sampled above equally command deep cognition beyond surface impressions. Community philosophy as well as meanings under grid the structural, formal, sonic and visual conformations. For instance, the structural and formal ramifications of mind-soothing solo music types such as flute tunes played by a cow herd in the field (Nzewi M, 2007b), or solo bow music played for solace in the privacy of the home, implicate, evoke and virtually interact community according psychical equanimity in situations of inevitable aloneness.

The indigenous theoretical-philosophical rationalizations of musical arts creativity and practice sketched above should inform curricula orientation, design and content, also assessment criteria and objectives in modern African musical arts education, given culture-sensed mindset.

The methodology and spirit of proactive play, albeit systematic, are the African indigenous paradigms for embodying, there from knowing and assessing theory, content and objectives of musical arts and science education. Viable indigenous language and gestures of assessment could be forthright, metaphorical or motivational; inspiring and approving every effort, including instances of natural handicap or a participatory attempt by a cultural outsider.

No normal person is born a failure. Humanity conscience, that is acute consciousness for the good interest of any and all humanity, is a key philosophical disposition in indigenous African community practices. It stipulates that the design and assessment of any education process should not program to produce or designate failures; accordingly structural interactions are designed to forestall failure, and correct anti-social inclinations thereby. A formal and procedural principle that spots and dispels antisocial dispositions is performing in a circle for collective other-consciousness. Coerced acts of taking turns to enact self while enclosed in the intangible spirit force of the circle, dispels self inhibitions while tempering obnoxious exuberant tendencies. Thus indigenous knowledge transmission and assessment in the musical arts command an *inclusive, intellectual and participatory (IIP)* paradigm that accommodates all able and disabled recipients, and ideology of personhood emancipation. Assessment emphasizes how effectual (in accomplishing deep level musical arts rationalizations) more than how affective (in offering surface level aesthetic joy), which also applies to the skill and personhood development valuation and evaluation of children's autonomous musical arts intentions, creations and exhibitions.

## **2. Interrogating musical arts education and assessment paradigm in the current African school system**

A brief tendering of the contemporary perceptions of the potencies of the musical arts is imperative for proposing indices of assessment of its transmission design and outcomes in classroom education. With respect to the potentials of indigenous music to enable contemporary issues of nation building and reckoning in Africa, Onyeji (2012:52) posits that: 'The impact of indigenous music in shaping the social and cultural integrity of the nation is significant to the overall image of the nation'. He thus endorses the pertinent views, deriving from research, expressed by scholars about the general capacity of music to impact social and cultural integrity and cultural living in societies. These include: music's powers as a device for social ordering, influencing people's conduct and expressing feelings about themselves, others and situations, also expressing inter-human emotions as well as soul connections and community belonging (DeNora 2000, Stokes 1994); facilitating social integration, conflict transformation/resolution and acting as an



exercise in cooperative learning that promotes positive interdependence, individual accountability, equal participation and simultaneous interaction (Skyllstad 2007); communicating valuable information through song texts, dance features and dramatic enactments (Hanna 1977, Kruger 1999, Nzewi, 1980 ); medium for constructing new identities, shifting existing ones, and also building self confidence and self worth of learners (MacDonald *et al*, Smith 2006); platform for promoting positive social identity (Dibben 2002, North, Hargreaves and Tarrant 2002); development of human cognitive processes and capacities and social adaptability (Blacking 1977, 1995). Specifically with respect to Africa some scholars have discussed music: as frequently a means to an end (Wells 1994) as woven into a web of domestic, social and political activities (Gunther Schuller cited in Wells 1994); as opening the gate to spiritual, mental, emotional, psychological, social and mystic realms (Okafor 2005); as ‘a living spirit working in those who dance and sing’ (Hornbostel 1928:59); as communal therapy, humanizing communion, and sharing of emotions of human-being-ness as well as a communion of both the living and the dead (Nzewi 1999, 1980)

The current realities, which undermine the original humanity ideals that informed education and assessment practices then include:

Farcical entertainment intention has become elevated as a central aspiration in musical arts education philosophy, theory and expressions in contemporary mind sets and objectives, including in classroom creativity and transmission. It should be interrogated and contained.

The societal engagements as well as humanity virtues and values such as marked indigenous African creative and performance world view and humanity attributes remain severely sidelined in policy statements and curricula designs as a result of ignorance about them, and how they were inculcated.

Elitist priorities such as super star cult, ego scholarship and command-control dispositions, also fashionable theoretical preoccupations that engage the academia have taken centre stage in contemporary education rationalizations.

The capability of musical arts to inculcate, monitor and manage mind wellness, social morality, and spiritual disposition and thereby humanity conscience and consciousness is under-stressed.

These fallouts in education and public transmission agenda have given rise to a judgmental society in which the musical arts *is* perceived as a performance by a few ‘talented’. The rest of humankind becomes mere detached consumer-audience generally ignorant of the configuration of the content as much as they miss the mind and physical health values of active participation.

The philosophy guiding an assessment design is predicated upon educational objective and curriculum – to deliver humanity-purposed musical arts knowledge; or to contrive fanciful, often discriminatory music education priorities that glamorize aesthetic fancies for elitist consumption? Herbst et al (2003) argue: “In the traditional African context, the reason for composing, (orally) therefore, is not merely a quest for individual aggrandizement or self-recognition, but to build onto and contribute to the rich body of music that exists with a social, artistic, cultural and philosophical reference.”

The foreign models of theoretical content and practice as well as assessment design that currently furnish school curricula statements, content and education practice in the musical arts in Africa need urgent revision. They warp the social-cultural integrity and innate genetic memory of impressionable learners, as much as indigenous teachers. They inevitably instigate the aberrant sense of cultural self and life imagination that conflict contemporary Africans right from school education. Elitist assessment templates further fabricated for the exotic knowledge paradigms frustrate teachers who thereby opt for fanciful devices to cope with the ill-understood exotic curricula content and assessment demands.

An assessment design informed by indigenous paradigms that is being advocated should cater for purposive creative intention, and should take account of the practical, embodied-knowing methods of musical arts transmission in Africa. Concepts, contents and skill

expectations should enhance rather than estrange the human-cultural locations and actualities of learners. Particularly, practical activities should aim at socializing class members and the school environment through activity-intensive experiencing of theory in group creative and performance industry at any classroom level. This will nurture culture conscious intellectual originality and sublime conscience in posterity.

The following example of a recent experience in curricula policy and design will illustrate the persisting bureaucratic mentality, which characterizes contemporary national leadership in Africa: In a recent Center for Indigenous Instrumental Music and Dance Practices (Ciimda<sup>iii</sup>) field course interaction with musical arts education practitioners, a curriculum specialist in a southern African country lamented his job frustration. In 2010 his country had decided to revise the curriculum for arts education, which has so far evidenced tokenistic inclusion of African indigenous musical arts knowledge. The top education policy making bureaucrats in his country preferred to import a European music scholar as the expert to pontificate on the revision of the country's music curricula. The foreign 'expert' scholar arrogantly accepted, although lacking any research, emotional, intellectual or experiential contact with the authoritatively unique musical arts philosophy, conceptualizations, theory and practices of the country's indigenous cultures – a typical case of the 'ignorant expert' (Nzewi M, 2006). His exogenous curricula, which did not take account of the cultural musical arts genetics, sensibility, experiences and future of the learners ensured perpetuation of cultural knowledge estrangement in the country.

The learners in the country thus became condemned to remain mentally frustrated in efforts to assimilate the strange, exotic logic and grammar of musical arts expressions foreign to their innate cultural mentality and knowledge heritage. To compound the educational policy debacle, the teachers are inadequately trained to deliver the foreign knowledge principles. They are constrained to parrot the curricula content and assessment prescriptions as per extrinsic and ill understood knowledge transmission textbooks.

### **3. Repositioning the African spirit of assessment in contemporary practice – Educational research models**

Our research informed approach to culture-sensed classroom education enables us strive to update and the indigenous African philosophy of education and assessment in the soft science of the musical arts. It commands championing all-inclusivity as well as collaborative spirit in contemporary education practice. There may be the odd students and learners who for any mental indispositions, would wish to assert their modern fundamental human rights to reject and fail a prescribed course. Such indisposition could derive from dysfunctional upbringing, traumatic learning experiences with teachers/educators and peers, or could be a demonstration of acquired, subconscious self-defeatism. Otherwise all learners at any level need to imbibe the ideology that a learner who opts to reject any worthy knowledge offered is disadvantaging own intellectual development not the teacher's: all humanity knowledge enriches, and could come useful when least expected. Assessment strategies infused with humanity conscience could counter such conscious or subconscious failure pre-disposition by coercing positive participation, and thereby containing insecure sense of self.

The enthronement and nature of competition in modern imagination of life and achievement deserve interrogation in the context of education assessment. Competition to choose winners of material prizes while imputing defeat or failure to evidence of genuine effort and hard work is arrogant assumption of God-image. Sublime humanity spirit should eschew intimidating or undervaluing anybody's or any group's expressive integrity. Hence festivals aimed to interact, test, compare, rate, approve, exchange and advance skills as well as special genius, and also bond participants and audience in the spirit of collaborative play (Mans M, et al, 2003) are the indigenous African norm. The intensive socialization entailed tames obtrusive ego, and exorcises isolation syndromes or individualism that incurs anti-social disposition. No corruptive material prizes to be won or lost were dangled as incentive or motive for participation. Prestige could accrue in festival exhibitions for enhanced inter-personal or inter-communal relationships including inter-borrowing of remarkable musical arts types for diplomatic reasons. Recognizing,

exchanging or interacting competences as per innate individual attributes that occur enhance skill.

Indigenous African education and assessment philosophy does not ordinarily condemn or designate unexpected outcomes/happenstance as mistake, ignorance or poor creative/performative capability<sup>iv</sup>, a defeating or fear-generating occurrence. The unexpected occurrence could spark spontaneous exploration of intellect - aplomb to creatively accommodate the unintended or happenstance as perhaps supra-human sign. Exploring the possibilities of such unexpected happening, otherwise termed mistake, is a positive mark of creative presence and genius that could result in innovative outcome.

#### **4. Examples of assessment design for African musical arts at two tertiary education sites**

The following are two illustrative reports on the nature and experiences of assessment designs in two unrelated contemporary educational sites in Africa. The two examples discuss teaching and assessment of African musical arts in tertiary education sites where teachers expected to drive Africa-sensed education and assessment ideology are groomed. The experiences reported below argue for adapting African indigenous paradigms in assessment philosophy, design and implementation in contemporary classroom knowledge transmission and assessment sites.

##### 4.1 Education research experience in Africa-sensed assessment-The Kenyan case

*The discussion in this section is drawn from my personal experiences and observations as a postgraduate student at Kenyatta University, music lecturer at Maseno University, an assessor of practical music at the Kenya Certificate of Secondary education (KCSE) examination, and the Head of music department at Maseno University in that order.*

*In Kenya, there are two public universities that offer music as an academic study namely, Kenyatta University and Maseno University. The students are virtually all from Kenya cultural backgrounds. Kenyatta University employed traditional cultural experts from different ethnic groups in Kenya to instruct/mentor students in the performing of*

*indigenous Kenya instruments and dances in the Department of Music. As a postgraduate student in Kenyatta University, I received instruction on how to play a fiddle from these traditional experts who I believe were charged with this task because they are the specialized custodians of this knowledge and practice. The overall course grade consisted of a continuous assessment test (CAT), and the final examination. But during these assessments, the traditional experts were conspicuously excluded in the panel of assessors. Instead, the assessment panel was constituted of modern music professors who were assigned to teach African music content in the classroom, but who were not groomed in the creative or performative paradigms taught by the traditional experts. During the assessment, the traditional experts were either involved as co-performers in the dance and ensemble or they were merely relegated as spectators. I always questioned myself why my knowledgeable indigenous instructor was not included in the panel. This in itself was intimidating to me as a student because at the back of my mind, I knew that the panel of academic assessors could not be familiar with the indigenous indices for determining my competence as well as the competence of other individual students. The assessors did not even ever participate in the mentorship process of the students. At that point in time I could not do much as a student but to comply, or else I risked failing for interrogating the assessment morality of my lecturers.*

*After completing my degree, I got employed as a lecturer at Maseno University. I then decided to go back to Kenyatta University to carry out a research to establish how the assessment policy of African musical arts was structured. My objective of doing this research was to establish why the traditional experts/instructors were not involved in the assessment of their students during the practical performance examinations. The responses I got from the interviews with the lecturers of African music can be summarized as follow:*

- 1. The traditional experts/specialists are not trained in modern pedagogical and testing skills.*
- 2. The traditional experts/specialists are not involved in the development of the curriculum and syllabus. The curriculum is developed by the African music professors in the department.*

3. *The traditional experts/specialists' opinions were deemed not relevant in determining criteria and scheduling of the CATs and the final examination assessments.*

*These answers sounded irrational to me because if the “unspecialized (but knowledge competent) artists/instructors” could interpret the curriculum made by professors and apply unique systematic procedure to teach/mentor/instruct its contents to the point of some students being awarded an “A” grade by the professors, then how could they be limited in pedagogical skills? Whose pedagogical skills and approaches were they limited in, that the non-practicing scholars were referring to? Were the scholars pegging the so called limitation on extraneous yardsticks of Western classical pedagogical approaches and skills? In my opinion the traditional specialist practitioners were adequately trained by cultural standards. They were adept in African theoretical and pedagogical approaches, having acquired these through group heuristic skills and apprenticeship/mentorship system instituted by their authoritative traditional knowledge system. They were therefore well grounded in the cultural practice of the music they transmit systematically and effectively. We believed that the department employed these traditional expert knowledge exponents because the academically trained lecturers were deficient in these areas. Another objective of employing them was to provide a link between the classroom music practice and the practice of music in culture, thereby preserving and transmitting the indigenous practice in institutions of higher learning.*

*The traditional specialist artists employed original Africa-sensed knowledge acquisition dynamic and discourse, based on group heuristic skill acquisition in dances and ensemble performances and apprenticeship for instrumental genres, to instruct/mentor the students. Then non practicing academic assessors could be regarded as “ignorant experts” who pose as authoritative experts and assessors in indigenous knowledge lore that is beyond their intellectual/practical competence/exposure. Otherwise they should have been teaching the particular subject component. They obviously employed extraneous, sophisticated marking scheme assessment convention. The award of isolated individual marks for team production outputs in dances and ensemble performances is*

*unwarranted. Rather the indigenous assessment ideology of overall group achievement (score) to be equally shared by all collaborating participants would have been ideal.*

*This tradition of isolated assessment of individuals based on the abstracted roles played/performed (major or minor) within group effort also occurs in practical assessment of Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education Examinations. The practice is contrary to the African philosophical rationalization where approval is primarily based on holistic presentation and evaluation of collective merit before recognizing any individual extras. After all, as already posited, ‘all fingers are not equal’ (African adage), but each contributes its unique capability to enable a holistic achievement of the hand (group).*

An assessment design should be derived from the original practice of a music tradition. If the practice of the music involves group participation then every participant within the group is entitled to the awarded group score in classroom education. Such indigenous design inculcates collaborative group spirit and bonding that enhance socialization as well as other African humanity virtues. We strongly propose that those who should participate in the assessment of a creative performative “product” must be those who have credible knowledge, and are involved in the “process” of mentoring in the knowledge specialty they are to assess. This is because assessing competency does not mean assessing the end product only, but also the production process as the case may be.

#### 4.2 Education research experience in Africa-sensed assessment-The South African case

The African philosophy of life education generates self-confidence. It eschews stringent control mentality, recognizing that everybody is uniquely capable and creative, given opportunity and enabling environment. This philosophy has guided the delivery of the modules in African music at the Music Department of the University of Pretoria, South Africa, since 2001 that adopted the practical, African heuristic learning and assessment paradigm in tertiary education.



*Students and learners are mobilized to collaborate in groups, peer or otherwise, to independently collaborate in creating, rehearsing and performing original, holistic musical arts pieces as a practical forte in experiencing the philosophical and theoretical lectures. The ensuing productions are performed in public concerts for assessment that emphasizes originality and effort, while eschewing elitist conventions and inventions of excellence and perfection - subjective ascriptions that are in any case not quantifiable or attainable by any human. The lecturer does not preview students' group creativity and production endeavor, although guidelines are provided at the beginning of the courses. Group scores are earned in this practical learning design for all the African music modules.*

*The first year, second semester module introduces the students to conscious study of African music for the first time. The students are primarily Caucasian, with a few black Africans and occasional student/s from other races. All the students have backgrounds of prior literacy knowledge and training in exclusively Western classical music theory and instrumental practice. The African music class receives initial lessons on playing African music instruments employing oral and modern literacy approaches. The theoretical component explicates some unique generic philosophical and theoretical principles already outlined, which grid indigenous musical arts creativity and performances in all Africa south of the Sahara. The class is thereafter required to independently organize itself into a production team to rehearse a piece written by the lecturer for an inter-cultural ensemble of African and European classical instruments. The piece, which is informed by indigenous compositional theory and holistic creativity logic, incorporates dance, singing, dramatic gestures and improvisation on instruments as per African norm.*

*The composition is performed in a concert, and the class gets a group score out of the 70% allocated to the practical component of the semester course. Every participating member of the class is credited with the group score. The humanity objective includes generating other-consciousness and collaborative group spirit among the first year students from various backgrounds. A written, reflective essay on individual student's experiences of the rehearsal and performance process including a personal analysis of*

*the piece earns a personal score out of the remaining 30%. All first year students irrespective of background or specialization aspirations participate. Failure is severely obviated, and has not occurred so far since 2001.*

*In the second year the African music module is a full session course. A greater percentage of the year-mark in the course (60%) is allocated to a practical group creativity and production component. The students who have already gone through the first year module are now, irrespective of specialization ambitions, required to form themselves into groups of not more than seven members. Each group is required, during the year, to independently create, rehearse and perform a musical arts piece incorporating music, dance, drama and costume (when affordable), and making use of African and European classical instruments and themes assessed in a public concert. Group mark is earned as per originality in creativity and production. The production processes interacts the emotional, creative and practical competencies of students basic to the indigenous African philosophy that every human is inherently creative, while upbringing shapes the expression of such talent whether in the musical arts or other life engagements. This course design, apart from liberating original creative potentials, is expected to socialize and manage students' respective humanity dispositions for collaborative endeavor. As in the first year course, assessment ideology ensures that nobody who participates is expected to fail. Every participant therefore earns the same mark her/his group scores irrespective of specialist nature or magnitude of in-put. Personal scores out of the remaining 40% in the course is normally allocated to individual reflective essays on the experiences of the group production activity combined with answers to examinations on normal class lecture topics delivered as per official time table through the year. Each group independently organizes time to create and rehearse outside class periods. Assessment takes place during a public concert.*

*Chances of subjective assessment of individuals by teachers/lecturers, is limited in group assessment. The underlying humanity principle is that in such small group activities it becomes difficult for a student to isolate self or exhibit any obnoxious social attitudes among peers. Rather, members of a group experience bonding in the spirituality*

*enriching environment of collaborative musical arts creativity and production activities for the common good of all participants. Negative dispositions that may occur become socialized and purged in the spirit of play generated by egalitarian creativity and performative collaboration. The humanity virtues of self discovery and self confidence as well as other-recognition/respect also accrue during the discipline of contributing positive in-puts toward equally shared benefit. Slight differences in scores occur only between groups as per merits of final products.*

*There were rare cases of unwarranted absenteeism or blatant demonstration of obnoxious attitudes that a voluntarily formed group cannot manage. Assessment of these group artistic productions also reckons strongly with the societal and humanity values of themes handled as well as the degree of integration of cultural and artistic components. The assessment pointers do not reckon much with the refinements or otherwise of the singing, dramatic, choreographic or performance skills exhibited. As per African humanity spirit, everybody or group that has demonstrated original creative aptitude and genuine effort is automatically a success, as no human assessor can claim to be omniscient in creative and performative genius. The independent and original collaborative productions (recorded on DVD during public presentations), by the students over the years have been astounding in terms of the originality of themes and the production industry as well as interrogation of relevant topical societal and humanity issues. The original productions are proofs of every human's latent capability in the performative arts irrespective of age, race, culture, or life orientation.*

*A few third and fourth year students selecting the African music specialization module have preferred to embark on independent original, holistic musical arts theatre production instead of field research work, or a library research study. Students who opted for the musical arts theatre production capably originated, scripted, composed, choreographed, rehearsed and impressively produced on stage own-created total theatre works of about one hour duration and thereafter submitted the required production essay. They competently actuated latent holistic creative and expressive capabilities that*

*query the academic micro-specializations currently enforced in academic transmission of musical arts knowledge.*

*Assessment takes into overall creative, direction and management roles and industry entailed in independently producing the holistic theatre work. Independent opinions of members of the audience who watched the students' staged works rated the finished musical arts theatre products as of impressive merits. Yet the students had no previous specialist studies or experiences in scripting, composing, choreographing, acting, and generally directing or producing, apart from sensitizations in the second year group creations.*

In the literacy aspects of the above learning and assessment designs, preference is given to narrative scholarship: Narrative style prompts genuine expression of a person's original thoughts and experiences without scholarship artifice. A captivating story, stronger if dramatically enacted, captures audience/reader's imagination. The desired knowledge in any discipline including the hard sciences becomes deeply ingrained in the mind of the learner/audience whether in the classroom or public space. Narrative or dramatized transmission of knowledge elucidate tedious themes, and is mentally engaging whether literacy or oral, especially for tender learners. Hence folktale narratives constituted a primary medium of abiding education in morality, societal conscience/consciousness/virtues, and life skills acquisition in indigenous cultures.

## **5. Reflections**

Chasing fanciful refinements often distracts attention from the humanity and intellectual merits, also the actual purpose and substance of knowledge productions. The inflated ego that conflicts or inflicts some assessors/reviewers and educators also need to be queried for humanity conscience. How many adjudicators are free of the canker of subjective prejudice or in some instances the arrogance of the 'ignorant expert'?

Twisted psychology or prejudiced ego is often encountered in post graduate proposal applications, and reviews of academic articles and books for publication as instances. Disparate opinions are received from different ostensibly objective scholar-reviewers; Some who are quite ignorant of the subject area of the topic accept to review or pontificate on a manuscript. An illustration with a postgraduate applicant's experience could shed light on on-going scholarship ego-displays that frustrate aspiring intellectuals. In this instance a Masters degree aspirant had the research proposal rejected five times by a Departmental Research Committee. Each time, different members of the Committee representing different micro-specializations in music gave differing criticism on different aspects of the proposal. No consensus. After revision and re-submission as per every Committee instructions/comments, the same committee members would suddenly find fresh faults in aspects they previously deemed acceptable. The candidate became perturbed about such learned inconsistencies that often characterize demonstrations of academic brilliance/authority. Some committee members who continued to revise their previous opinions were inventing dubious genius on a proposal topic outside their various disciplinary competences. The specialist in the disciplinary area of the research topic was not invited to advise the Committee, none of whom is in the specialization area to start with. Upon the fifth revision a committee member who had been participating and commenting marginally on the proposal during previous re-submissions, suddenly demonstrated diabolical genius. This member wrote copious mal-informed comments that demonstrated ignorance of the research proposal theme. The unrelated prejudicial write up condemned the entire proposal at the point the rest of the committee was ready to approve it. Curiously the rest of the committee members who no longer had problems with the fifth revision differed to the obnoxious scholarship attitude of this member, and acquiesced to the perjured comments. The candidate upon reading the inapplicable but condemnatory comments on the fifth proposal re-submission became totally traumatized, and vowed never again to aspire for academic pursuits. This is not an isolated sample, but an instance of the more extreme demonic assessment practices that reflect prejudice, abject subjective disposition or arrogance of ignorance.

The above example is not intended to question the need for reviews and assessments; rather to recognize and caution devious privileged practices. Some fanciful subjective assessment interventions, inventions and criteria in contemporary education practices at any level are often inhumane, whereas sober assessment spirit and practice do liberate the intellect while ensuring standards. Standards have always been critically imperative, and particularly marked old knowledge inventions, constructions, transmission and performances. Standards but not nebulous excellence or perfection, must be maintained as benchmark for extending the state of knowledge and exploring original genius.

## 6. Conclusion

There is escalation of deleterious trends in social, political, economic, educational, religious and particularly technological practices as well as inventions that are inflicting and traumatizing humanity globally. Updated musical arts education and assessment policies as well as designs infused with humane conscience as per indigenous African paradigms, has been argued as having potential for redressing and re-instilling sober dispositions and humanity consciousness. A sublime creative intellect in the soft (humanity) science of the musical arts can re-constitute the theory and practice as an intangible spirit force capable of prodigious effective-affective services in contemporary societal milieu. And purposive education as well as humanity-sensitive assessment practices can effectively regenerate and re-instill social-cultural integrity, virtues as well as the positive life orientation appertaining, from tender age. Installing cultural sensibility in African citizenry should command involving indigenous experts in classroom sites as much as possible. Compatible expanded world view and models are welcome. Circumspection is needed in embracing the jargon of hegemonic 'best practices' invented to silence Southern cultural epistemologies globally.

Assessment ideology and design must essentially respect and elicit noble creative intellect as well as the peculiar capabilities of all learners while practically inculcating knowledge principles and life virtues. Reflective discourses, oral or/and written, narrative or technical, which explicate theory and practice, are equally imperative. Critical reflection enhances and enriches individual perceptual insight and analytical capability in global knowledge encounters. Then the transmission as well as advancement of intellect

appertaining would eschew obnoxious brilliance, ensure sustainable humanity, and enshrine knowledge inventions on earth that engender spiritual disposition. Finally, as per the evidence of extant African indigenous philosophy and epistemology provided, musically enacted knowledge is memory embedded-embodied knowledge; memory embedded-embodied knowledge is enduring knowledge assessed in virtue-laden enactments of life.

## 7. Recommendations

We have argued that the objective, content and method of knowledge transmission inform the assessment modalities, given adequate curriculum rationalization in the case of contemporary classroom practices in Africa. We assume an Africa-sensed musical arts policy, education design and curriculum content in Africa in making the following basic recommendations on assessment spirit and practice at all levels:

- Cognitive research based knowledge and literature on African indigenous knowledge lore and epistemology are becoming more available. Three levels of Africa-sensed curricula models for musical arts and meta-science education have been developed at Ciimda and recognized by the West African regional conference of the Pan African Society for Music Education (Pasmae). Countries could critique and adapt to suit national policies and designs. The South African Department of Basic education has adapted it for the Indigenous African Music stream in its Grades 10-12 stream.
- Practice-based, embodied knowledge acquisition that prioritizes group creativity and production is advocated. Assessment for group-shared score becomes imperative
- Humanity conscience recommends that no creative outputs, group or individual that demonstrate originality and effort must be deemed or designated as failures
- Contemporary productions must as much as possible incorporate indigenous, conventional and/or inter-cultural creative/performance principles as much as possible for inter-human enlightenment and respect globally.
- Group oral as well as individual written reflective discourse should be assessed to compliment practical performance scores. Oral discourse should include

- assessment of own and other peer productions as learning exercises in analytical/critical capability and language
- Whoever teaches, guides or supervises a learning venture must be involved in its assessment as much as related and applicable assessment competences should be taken account of in awarding the final score
  - The school currently represents the viable community site for value-virtue socialization of particularly young people especially in urban milieu. Possibilities of organizing mass performances of musical arts should be accommodated in national education policy, possibly as final end of week school activity. It would provide all-inclusive psychotherapy and socialization activity for learners, teachers and workers in a humanity-conscious school environment. Such activity constitutes public assessment of cultural arts transmission in a school
  - Effort should be made to perform school learners' musical arts creations on a regular basis in public during school events, and possibly offer them for mass media presentation. Every public performance is an assessment site that could sample audience evaluative opinions
  - Classroom musical arts and meta-science periods should as much as possible deploy learners to source local folktales, also contemporary life experiences as community interaction in education - society awareness. These should be discussed, re-created and enacted as theatrical sketches involving the entire class in production duties and artistic roles. Tests have shown that it is possible for a class to accomplish a complete total theatre production of a folk tale in two or three class periods. Production process and output should be reflectively analyzed and possible scripted towards a publishable documentation of folktales. All activities, inputs and attendance by all class members should be recorded in a research and production portfolio, and count towards final group as well as individual assessment
  - Establishing school performance arts club/s is recommended for school and community relations protocols as well as bonding of participants. Credits for final scores must accrue as incentive for performances. Any income generated must be



shared between school and all participants as well as used for equipping and managing a club's activities

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<sup>i</sup>

The discursive and scholarship commitment will primarily emphasize and share unique indigenous African knowledge authority on humanity educational practice that predates any published research literature about African knowledge creation and transmission heritage. This has primarily informed reflections, advancements and tests in contemporary learning sites.

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Extensive residential field apprenticeship studies with articulate indigenous Igbo creativity and performance theorists, principally Israel Anyahuru, Tom Ohiauraummunna, Egbe Ikpeazu, Nwankwo Ikpeazu among others between 1975 and 1977. Their abiding elucidations continue to be tested and validated over years of analytical and performative discernment along with theoretical frameworks sampled from various other African musical arts sub cultures.

<sup>iii</sup>

CIIMDA Centre for Indigenous Instrumental Music and Dance Practices of Africa – Education, Research and Performance - for Southern African Development Countries (SADC). The report here is part of the field research findings during culture-sensed education empowerment activities carried out in the Centre, funded by the Norwegian Foreign Office from 2004 to 2011.

<sup>iv</sup>

See Agawu, K: 2003 Chapter 5 pp 108-110