



# POLICY BRIEF

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## **Integrating the African Xylophone to Strengthen Cultural and Creative Arts Curriculum Implementation in Nigerian Primary and Secondary Schools: Policy Recommendations**

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### **Executive Summary**

Nigeria's Cultural and Creative Arts (CCA) subject, introduced as a compulsory part of the 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum since 2008, officially supports the use of local musical instruments to help students build cultural pride, spark creativity, develop hands-on skills, and preserve heritage through music, arts, drama, and dance.

Despite this clear national policy overseen by Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) federally and State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) at state level, actual rollout across schools has been inconsistent and weak. Most teaching stays theoretical because few teachers are trained music specialists or know how to play indigenous instruments like the xylophone and schools often favour Western instruments instead of local ones. These issues leave many students missing out on engaging, practical cultural learning, weakening Nigeria's goals for identity, talent nurturing, and tradition-keeping in the face of modern influences. To close these gaps, the policy brief urges the National Assembly to push forward targeted changes:

- Advise Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) to reinforce the CCA syllabus with explicit, mandatory xylophone modules for primary and secondary levels.
- Introduce legislation requiring integration of indigenous music training (including xylophone skills) into pre-service and in-service teacher education programs via the National Teachers' Institute (NTI) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), with certified workshops for CCA teachers.
- Advise UBEC to partner with local experts such as Yama Chorale Africa (a sociocultural ensemble in Akwa Ibom dedicated to promoting and teaching African instruments) for structured training of teachers and students.
- The national Assembly may wish to call on awareness campaigns through the National Orientation Agency (NOA) to shift societal perceptions, emphasising CCA's role in national development and how Nigerian National Anthem can authentically be rendered using African musical instruments such as the xylophone.
- National Assembly may also wish to mandate dedicated UBEC funding for procuring xylophones and other indigenous instruments for all public primary/junior secondary schools, including bulk manufacturing partnerships with local artisans and groups like Yama Chorale Africa for affordability, authenticity, and sustainability.



## Introduction

The Federal Government of Nigeria, through the 2008 reform and nationwide rollout of the 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum, developed by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), under the Federal Ministry of Education, formally approved the teaching and practical use of indigenous musical instruments under the subject Cultural and Creative Arts<sup>1</sup> within basic education. The curriculum, introduced Cultural and Creative Arts (CCA) as a compulsory core subject across Basic 1-9 in primary and junior secondary levels.

The curriculum explicitly recognises indigenous musical instruments like the xylophone, since it holds deep cultural significance alongside others as essential for music education. That is why the CCA mandate is to integrate indigenous music, fine and applied arts, drama/theatre, and dance to promote creativity, cultural identity, aesthetic appreciation, and practical skills.

Nationwide implementation of this policy is coordinated by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) at the federal level and the State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs/UBEBS) at the state level. Within this established framework, the African xylophone is explicitly recognized as a valid instructional instrument for music

education in the Cultural and Creative Arts (CCA) curriculum. Consequently, introducing xylophones into Nigerian schools constitutes the faithful execution and strengthening of existing federal education policy, rather than the introduction of an entirely new policy.

Building on this foundation, research findings show that Akwa Ibom State is one of the few states that has approved the inclusion of African musical instruments in its 2023–2029 Education Curriculum Framework, with the xylophone specifically listed for practical training, supported by an approved instructional workbook for schools<sup>2</sup>.

However, nationwide implementation remains inconsistent and largely dependent on ad hoc donations, sporadic pilot initiatives as found in few schools in Akwa Ibom State, leaving only a few schools equipped with instruments. Against this back drop, this persistent breach reveals a national implementation gap requiring legislative intervention.

## Issues:

The implementation of the Creative and Cultural Arts (CCA) curriculum in Nigerian schools, particularly its music component, encounters significant systemic barriers that hinder effective delivery and achievement of its objectives. A major challenge is the lack of teacher competence and specialisation<sup>3</sup>: most schools do not

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<sup>1</sup>See “Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council”, *Revised 9-Year basic Education Curriculum Implementation Strategy*. [https://nerdc.gov.ng/content\\_manager/Revised%209%20Year%20BEC%20Implementation%20Strategy%203.pdf](https://nerdc.gov.ng/content_manager/Revised%209%20Year%20BEC%20Implementation%20Strategy%203.pdf).

<sup>2</sup>See Government of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, “Approved Booklist for Basic Education From Primary 1-6 September 2023 – July 2029, p. 35.

<sup>3</sup>Iruoma Amaka Ugoo-Onkonkwo, “Extent of Effectiveness of the Music Aspect of CCA in Upper Basic Education in Anambra State as Perceived by the Students”, in *International Journal of Music and*



have qualified music specialists, with one teacher often responsible for handling the entire integrated CCA programme. Many teachers also lack the skills to play indigenous musical instruments, further limiting hands-on learning.

Compounding this issue is the fact that African indigenous instruments, in particular, remain neglected or underutilized in most formal schools<sup>4</sup>, as instructional focus has historically prioritized Western instruments over local ones.

Attitudinal and managerial factors also play a significant role, for instance, negative societal and parental perceptions often view arts education as “non-serious,” only paying attention to English, Sciences and Mathematics while poor coordination, limited access to professional workshops, and pressures from urbanization and globalisation contribute to the erosion of traditional cultural practices.

Collectively, these gaps result in predominantly theoretical teaching, reduced student engagement, diminished cultural transmission, and an overall failure to fulfil the CCA curriculum’s core goals of

talent development and heritage preservation.

### Cross Countries Experiences

Some African nations have long demonstrated remarkable success in integrating xylophone-like instruments into their school curriculum, where these idiophones<sup>5</sup> serve as central elements of cultural expression, social life, ritual, and identity. For instance:

- In Ghana, Gyile<sup>6</sup> (xylophone) is central in basic and senior high curricula, emphasizing indigenous rhythms, ensembles, and heritage with community involvement. In its Music Curriculum for Secondary Education, Xylophones is integrated<sup>7</sup>.
- In Zimbabwe, marimbas<sup>8</sup> serve as gateway instruments in primary/secondary syllabi, for decolonisation and skill-building. Through its “Heritage Based Curriculum”<sup>9</sup> (HBC). The Heritage-Based Curriculum (HBC) Framework for Primary and Secondary Education 2024–2030 aligns these levels with Higher and Tertiary Heritage-Based Education in Zimbabwe. It focuses on what pupils should know, understand,

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*Performing Arts*, Vol. 1 No. 1, December 2013, pp. 29-36.

<sup>4</sup> Ebele Ojukwu, & Elizabeth Obielozie, “Cultural and Creative Arts Programme in Nigeria: Indigenous Instruments as Panacea”, in *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities* Vol. 2 No 6, December 2016, pp. 136-148

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.contemporary-african-art.com/african-musical-instruments.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Emmanue Boahen & Felicia Annin, “Gyileas Agenre in Dagaabaland, Ghana”, in *Akanpaadgi J A Social Sci Humanities* 1:3, 2015, pp. 21-40

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Education Republic of Ghana, “Music Curriculum for Secondary Education (SHS 1 - 3)”, Setemeber, 2023, p. 35.

<sup>8</sup> Gideon Masamba & Wonder Maguraushe, “The Uptake of Chromatic Marinbas by Learning Insitutions in Zimbabwe”, in *African Musiclogy Online*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2025, pp. 69-81.

<sup>9</sup> Ndongwe Evershine, “The Heritage Based Curriculum: Challenges and Opportunities”, in *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*, Volume 12, Issue 8, August 2025, pp 8-11



value, and demonstrate through their learning, while emphasizing the preservation and integration of indigenous knowledge across school and non-formal education settings.

- In South Africa the marimbas is also used in schools to promote creativity and transformation to fulfil requirements for Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS)<sup>10</sup> which talks about inclusivity.

### **Lessons for Nigeria**

- ✓ Make indigenous idiophones (xylophones) a core gateway element in CCA, emphasizing what students should know, value, and demonstrate regarding their cultural identity. This will align with national goals for preserving indigenous knowledge, similar to Zimbabwe's focus on non-formal and formal settings
- ✓ Involve local musicians like the "Yama Chorale Africa"<sup>11</sup> known for teaching and constructing the xylophones in Akwa Ibom to train students/teachers on how to play the xylophones.
- ✓ Position xylophones to promote creativity, inclusivity, and post-colonial transformation. Develop practical modules

### **Rationale**

This brief is motivated by the urgent need to address the persistent implementation gaps in Nigeria's Cultural and Creative Arts (CCA) curriculum, particularly in the music education component, as outlined in the

2008 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum reform. Despite federal approval for integrating indigenous musical instruments to foster cultural identity, creativity, and practical skills, nationwide execution remains fragmented and ineffective. Research highlights inconsistencies across states, with only isolated successes – such as Akwa Ibom State's 2023–2029 Education Curriculum Framework – demonstrating the potential of xylophone inclusion through approved workbooks and practical training. However, broader challenges, including inadequate teacher specialisation, prioritisation of Western instruments, negative societal attitudes toward arts education, and resource shortages, have led to theoretical rather than hands-on teaching, eroding cultural heritage and student engagement. This brief draws on cross-country experiences within Africa like; Ghana, Zimbabwe, and South Africa to advocate for targeted policy enhancements, emphasising the xylophone as a culturally significant idiophone that can serve as a gateway for decolonizing education, promoting inclusivity, and aligning with national goals for heritage preservation.

### **Legislative Intervention**

To overcome the identified barriers and ensure consistent implementation of the CCA curriculum with a focus on indigenous instruments like the African xylophone, the following legislative measures are recommended:

- The National Assembly may wish to advise the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council

preservation, and modern application of African musical instruments within structured musical performance and education.

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<sup>10</sup>See Department of Basic Education Republic of South Africa, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)

<sup>11</sup>Yama Chorale Africa is a sociocultural music ensemble dedicated to the promotion,



to reinforce the primary and secondary schools' curriculum by strengthening CCA syllabus with explicit, mandatory xylophone modules.

- The National Assembly may wish to introduce legislation mandating the integration of indigenous music training into pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes under the National Teachers' Institute (NTI) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE). This could involve a compulsory certified workshops on playing and teaching of xylophones for all CCA teachers
- The National Assembly may wish to advise the UBEC to adopt Yama Chorale Africa – a sociocultural music ensemble dedicated to the promotion, preservation, and modern application of African musical instruments within structured musical performance and education – to train the CCA teachers/students on how to play the xylophones.
- The national Assembly may wish to call on awareness campaigns through the National Orientation Agency (NOA) to shift societal perceptions, emphasising CCA's role in national development and how Nigerian National Anthem can authentically be rendered using African musical instruments such as the xylophone.
- The national Assembly may also wish to mandate UBEC to allocate dedicated funding for procuring indigenous musical instruments, including xylophones, for all public

primary and junior secondary schools. This should include provisions for bulk manufacturing partnerships with local artisans and organisations like Yama Chorale Africa in Akwa Ibom to ensure affordability, cultural authenticity, and sustainability.

## Conclusion

Integrating the African xylophone into Nigerian schools is not merely an enhancement but a critical step toward fulfilling the existing CCA curriculum's mandate for cultural preservation, creativity, and identity formation. By addressing systemic barriers through targeted legislative interventions, Nigeria will bridge implementation gaps, foster inclusivity, and counteract the erosion of traditional practices amid globalisation. Ultimately, prioritising indigenous instruments like the xylophone will nurture a culturally confident generation, contributing to national unity, economic diversification through creative industries, and sustainable development.

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