

Artistic Research and Indigenous Epistemologies: National Survey Evidence for Reforming Nigerian Music Scholarship

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Abstract

Nigerian music scholarship has continued to debate decolonisation, yet there has been little empirical evidence showing how scholars and practitioners engage indigenous epistemologies or how these engagements justify the institutionalisation of Artistic Research. This study, therefore, investigated how experienced Nigerian composers, performers, scholars, and scholar-practitioners drew on indigenous musical knowledge and how these practices supported a shift toward practice-led inquiry in universities. A qualitatively driven mixed-methods design was used, drawing on a national survey of 41 participants from universities across Nigeria and analysing descriptive statistics alongside thematic patterns. The findings showed that over 80% of respondents relied on tonal language, polyrhythm, call-and-response, storytelling, and communal performance as core creative resources, and identified indigenous knowledge as moral, historical, spiritual, and communal in character. Seventy-six percent viewed Artistic Research as a highly effective means of challenging Eurocentrism and strengthening epistemic agency. The study contributes empirical evidence to ongoing decolonial debates and demonstrates that Nigerian universities must formally adopt and operationalise Artistic Research to advance curriculum reform and embed culturally grounded pedagogies in music scholarship.

Keywords: Artistic Research, Indigenous Epistemologies, National Survey, Nigerian Music Scholarship, Reform

Introduction

Indigenous musical traditions continue to underpin Nigerian musical life, shaping how communities perform, compose, teach, and understand music. Tonal language, polyrhythm, call-and-response,

storytelling, and communal performance are not merely stylistic features but foundational epistemic systems through which musical meaning is produced and transmitted. Scholars have long argued that these practices embody sophisticated forms of knowledge, creativity, and

social organisation. Yet, despite this deep cultural grounding, Nigerian university music programmes remain largely structured around inherited colonial frameworks that privilege Western theoretical models and text-based research conventions. The result is a persistent disjuncture: indigenous musical knowledge is widely practised and socially authoritative, but it is insufficiently theorised, inadequately documented, and rarely positioned as a legitimate foundation for academic inquiry.

Across the literature, there is broad agreement that Nigerian music scholarship requires epistemic realignment. Studies have highlighted the limitations of curricula that marginalise African performance traditions and rely heavily on Western analytical paradigms. At the same time, many Nigerian composers, performers, and scholar-practitioners already engage in forms of practice-led inquiry, experimenting creatively, reflecting in action, and generating knowledge through performance. These activities align closely with global understandings of Artistic Research, where artistic practice itself functions as a mode of knowledge production. However, a tension remains: while Artistic Research is internationally recognised as a rigorous field with established methodologies, Nigerian universities

have yet to formalise it through policy frameworks, assessment standards, or curricular structures. Moreover, there is limited empirical evidence showing how Nigerian practitioners currently mobilise indigenous epistemologies in ways that resonate with Artistic Research principles. This gap creates uncertainty about how decolonial aspirations can be operationalised within higher education.

This study addresses that gap by examining how Nigerian music scholars and practitioners engage with indigenous musical traditions and by analysing the extent to which these engagements demonstrate the need to institutionalise Artistic Research in Nigerian universities. Drawing on Decolonial Creativity Theory, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, and Artistic Research Theory, the study investigates how practice-led methods and indigenous epistemologies can reshape the foundations of Nigerian music scholarship. By foregrounding practitioners' lived experiences and creative processes, the study moves beyond abstract calls for decolonisation to provide grounded, nationally representative evidence.

The contribution of this work is twofold. Empirically, it offers the first national-level insight into how Nigerian music practitioners draw on indigenous knowledge in their creative and scholarly practices. Conceptually, it demonstrates

how these practices align with, and indeed demand, the formal adoption of Artistic Research as a legitimate academic method. In doing so, the study reframes ongoing debates about curriculum reform, showing that the question is no longer whether Artistic Research is relevant to Nigeria, but how universities will respond to the epistemic realities already shaping the field.

Literature Review

Music scholarship in Nigerian universities has grown through several phases, beginning with early programmes that adopted Western music theory, history, and performance as the dominant academic standards. Scholars such as Ekwueme (2004) and Euba (1989) note that colonial education systems shaped the curriculum, privileging Western classical models while treating African musical knowledge as secondary. This influence affected research priorities, assessment methods, and the definition of what counts as “scholarly” music practice. As a result, indigenous epistemologies, rooted in oral traditions, communal performance, and cultural memory, remain marginalized in many formal academic structures. Although Nigerian musicians actively use indigenous musical elements, universities have been slow to recognize these practices as legitimate forms of knowledge production.

Indigenous African music carries deep layers of knowledge, including moral teachings, historical memory, spiritual meaning, and communal values. Scholars such as Nzewi (2007) and Nketia (1974) emphasize that African music is not merely entertainment but a system of embodied knowledge transmitted through performance, storytelling, and ritual. These traditions rely on oral pedagogy, improvisation, and communal participation, making them rich sources of epistemic insight. However, gaps remain in documentation, theorization, and institutional recognition. Many universities still lack frameworks for studying indigenous music as a knowledge system. The Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) approach helps address this gap by affirming African epistemologies as valid and essential to contemporary scholarship.

Artistic Research has emerged globally as a field where creative practice itself becomes a method of inquiry. Scholars such as Borgdorff (2012) and Barrett and Bolt (2014) describe Artistic Research as practice-led, practice-based, and performance-centered, combining artistic creation with critical reflection. While widely accepted in Europe and parts of Asia, Artistic Research remains underdeveloped in Nigeria. Many Nigerian scholars and practitioners already engage in reflective practice, experimentation, and performance-based

inquiry, but these activities are not formally recognized as research. Nigerian universities lack policy frameworks, assessment models, and curricular structures for Artistic Research, leaving it present in practice but absent in institutional systems.

Decolonial scholarship challenges the dominance of Eurocentric frameworks in African music studies. Mbembe (2015) argues that African knowledge systems have been historically undervalued, calling for epistemic justice and curriculum reform. These debates highlight the need to center indigenous methodologies and reject the assumption that Western theory is the only valid academic standard. Decolonial thought encourages scholars to rethink research, pedagogy, and creative practice in ways that honor African worldviews. This shift aligns with the goals of Artistic Research, which values embodied knowledge, creative processes, and culturally grounded inquiry.

Several Afrocentric theories provide strong foundations for Artistic Research in African contexts. Euba's (1989) African Pianism demonstrates how indigenous rhythmic and modal systems can guide composition. Nzewi's (2007) Ethno-Musical Hermeneutics frames African music as a philosophical and pedagogical system. Contemporary scholars such as Onyeji, Amatokwu, Nwankpa, and Authority have developed

compositional paradigms that emphasize indigenous logic, structure, and intentionality. These theories show that African creativity is systematic and epistemically grounded. However, they remain fragmented, with no unified methodological framework linking them to Artistic Research. This gap underscores the need for a coherent, decolonial research model.

Existing studies show that Nigerian musicians frequently use indigenous elements in composition, performance, and teaching. Case studies and institutional reports highlight the presence of traditional rhythms, tonal systems, and performance practices in university settings. However, most studies are small-scale or institution-specific. There is a lack of national-level empirical research examining how practitioners engage indigenous epistemologies across Nigeria. This gap limits the ability to design national policies or curriculum reforms. The present study fills this gap by providing national survey evidence from practitioners across multiple universities.

This study addresses these gaps by presenting national survey evidence that supports the institutionalization of Artistic Research and the integration of indigenous knowledge into Nigerian music scholarship.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Decolonial Creativity Theory (DCT), supported by the Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) framework, and guided methodologically by Artistic Research Theory (ART). Together, these theories provide a coherent lens for understanding how Nigerian music scholars and practitioners engage with indigenous musical traditions and why Artistic Research must be institutionalized in Nigerian universities.

Decolonial Creativity Theory (Authority, 2025) is the central framework. DCT argues that African creativity is intentional, structured, and rooted in indigenous epistemologies. It challenges colonial narratives that portray African music as spontaneous or lacking theoretical depth. DCT emphasizes *purpose*, the cultural intention behind creative work, and *precision*, the clarity with which that intention is expressed through indigenous musical logics. This theory is relevant to the study because the survey data show strong use of indigenous elements, clear compositional intentionality, and a desire to resist Eurocentric norms. DCT provides the conceptual grounding for interpreting these patterns as expressions of epistemic agency rather than stylistic preference.

The complementary lens, Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), strengthens the study's decolonial orientation. IKS frameworks (Hoppers, 2002; Dei, 2011) affirm that African communities hold valid, sophisticated knowledge embedded in oral traditions, performance, spirituality, communal ethics, and lived experience. Respondents in the survey identified moral, historical, spiritual, and communal knowledge as central to their musical practice. IKS, therefore, helps explain why indigenous musical traditions function not only as artistic resources but also as knowledge systems that shape creative and scholarly decisions. It also justifies the call for curriculum reform grounded in indigenous epistemologies.

Artistic Research Theory (Borgdorff, 2012; Barrett & Bolt, 2014) provides the methodological foundation for this study. ART positions creative practice, reflection, and documentation as legitimate forms of research. It recognizes artistic processes as sites of knowledge production. This is essential because many respondents already use practice-led inquiry, reflective documentation, and performance-based methods, even when their institutions do not formally recognize them. ART therefore supports the argument that Artistic Research should be adopted and

operationalized in Nigerian universities as a valid academic field and method.

Together, DCT, IKS, and ART form a coherent theoretical structure. DCT explains the decolonial imperative; IKS provides the epistemic grounding; ART offers methodological justification. This combination allows the study to interpret the survey data through a culturally rooted, decolonial, and practice-led lens, while also supporting the broader argument for institutionalizing Artistic Research in Nigerian music scholarship.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitatively driven mixed-methods design to investigate how Nigerian music scholars, performers, and composers engage with indigenous musical traditions and how they perceive the need to institutionalise Artistic Research within universities. The design followed a QUAL → quan structure, meaning that qualitative interpretation guided the analysis and integration of quantitative patterns. This approach was selected because the study's focus on indigenous epistemologies, decolonial perspectives, and practice-based knowledge required an interpretive framework capable of capturing depth and nuance, while still benefiting from measurable trends that could illuminate national-level patterns.

Participants were recruited purposively to ensure representation from individuals actively engaged in Nigerian musical practice and scholarship. Eligible participants were required to be Nigerian music scholars, scholar-practitioners, performers, or composers with a minimum of five years' experience working with indigenous musical forms, and to be affiliated with a university, cultural institution, or recognised professional practice. Recruitment was conducted through professional networks, institutional mailing lists, and direct invitations. A total of 41 respondents completed the survey voluntarily, representing a range of academic ranks and professional roles, with between five and more than twenty years of engagement with indigenous musical traditions.

Data were collected using an online survey created by the researcher through Google Forms (Google LLC, 2024 version). The instrument was designed specifically for this study and included both closed-ended items, multiple-choice questions and five-point Likert scales, and open-ended questions that invited detailed narrative responses. The survey explored four domains: engagement with indigenous musical traditions, familiarity with Artistic Research, institutional practices and challenges, and views on decolonial and practice-led approaches. Participants accessed the survey via a

secure link and provided informed consent electronically before participation. No incentives were offered. Responses were automatically timestamped and stored on Google's secure cloud servers before being downloaded to an encrypted local drive for analysis.

Data analysis proceeded in two stages. Closed-ended responses were first analysed using descriptive statistics, frequencies, and percentages, to identify patterns in participants' experience levels, familiarity with Artistic Research, and perceptions of institutional support. These analyses were conducted using Microsoft Excel for Microsoft 365 (Version 2409). Open-ended responses were then examined using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-phase procedure: familiarisation, systematic coding, initial theme development, theme review, naming and definition, and final reporting. Coding was conducted manually to ensure close engagement with the data, and themes were developed inductively but interpreted through the study's conceptual lenses of indigenous epistemologies, decoloniality, and Artistic Research. After both strands were analysed, findings were integrated through a convergent mixed-methods approach in which qualitative insights were used to deepen the interpretation of

quantitative patterns and highlight points of convergence and divergence.

The study adhered to established ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. Participation was voluntary, and respondents could withdraw at any point before submitting the survey. No identifying information, such as names, institutions, or contact details, was collected. All data were stored on an encrypted, password-protected device accessible only to the researcher and used exclusively for academic purposes. Rigour was ensured through methodological triangulation, transparency in coding, detailed documentation of analytic decisions, and repeated review of emerging themes. The inclusion of direct participant responses enhanced authenticity and grounded the findings in lived experience.

Findings

The findings from the qualitatively driven mixed-methods analysis reveal strong and consistent patterns in how Nigerian music scholars, performers, composers, and scholar-practitioners engage with indigenous musical traditions and how they perceive the role of Artistic Research in Nigerian universities. The results are presented as integrated themes that emerged from both the descriptive statistics and the thematic analysis.

Strong Indigenous Foundations in Musical Practice

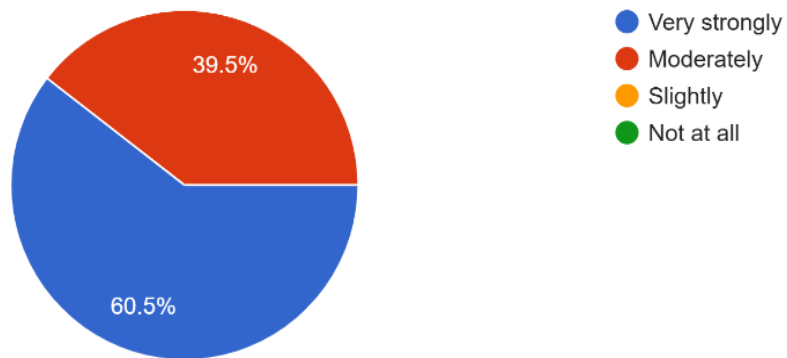
engagement with indigenous musical traditions as represented in Figure 1.

Across the 41 respondents, there was clear evidence of deep and sustained

Figure 1: Evidence of Sustained Engagement with Indigenous Musical Traditions.

5.] How strongly do indigenous musical traditions shape your creative or scholarly decisions?

43 responses



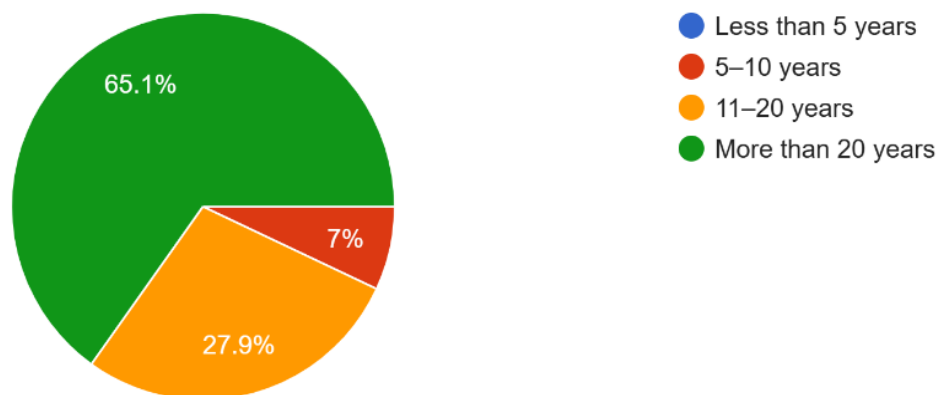
Most participants reported between 11 and more than 20 years of working with indigenous musical forms, demonstrating

long-term immersion in traditional practices (See Figure 2).

Figure 2: Participants' Years of Engagement with Indigenous Musical Traditions

3.] How many years have you engaged with Nigerian indigenous musical forms?

43 responses



The closed-ended responses showed widespread use of tonal language, polyrhythm, call-and-response. The thematic analysis confirmed that these elements are not used superficially but are embedded in the respondents’

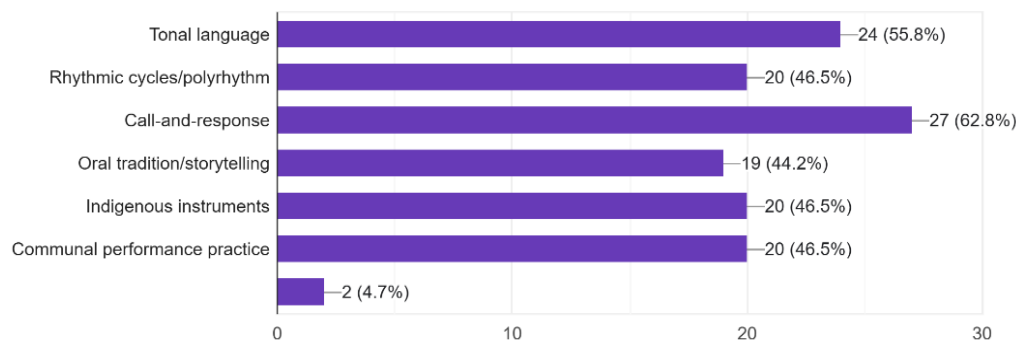
storytelling, indigenous instruments, and communal performance practices.

creative, pedagogical, and scholarly processes, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Influence of Indigenous Elements in Participant’s Work

4.] Which indigenous musical elements strongly influence your work? (select all that apply)

43 responses



Participants also described indigenous music as a repository of moral, historical, spiritual, cosmological, social, identity-based, and practical knowledge. These descriptions align with indigenous Knowledge Systems, showing that practitioners view music as a form of lived knowledge rather than mere artistic expression. This strong indigenous foundation indicates that the raw material for Artistic Research already exists within Nigerian musical life.

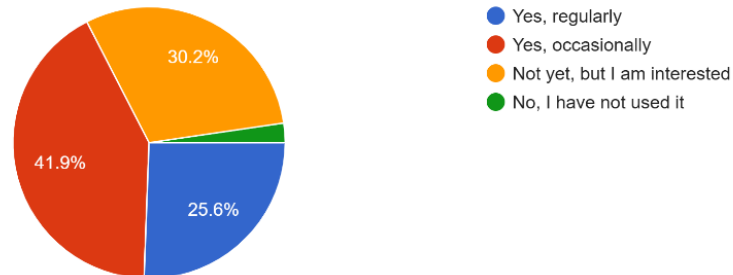
Widespread but Informal Practice of Artistic Research

Although Artistic Research is not formally recognised in most Nigerian universities, the data show that many respondents already engage in practice-led and practice-based methods. A large proportion indicated that they use Artistic Research approaches “occasionally” or “regularly”, particularly through reflective documentation, experimentation, and performance-centred inquiry as shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Participants' Deep Engagement with Artistic Research

7.] Have you used artistic research methods (e.g., practice-led inquiry, reflective documentation) in your work?

43 responses



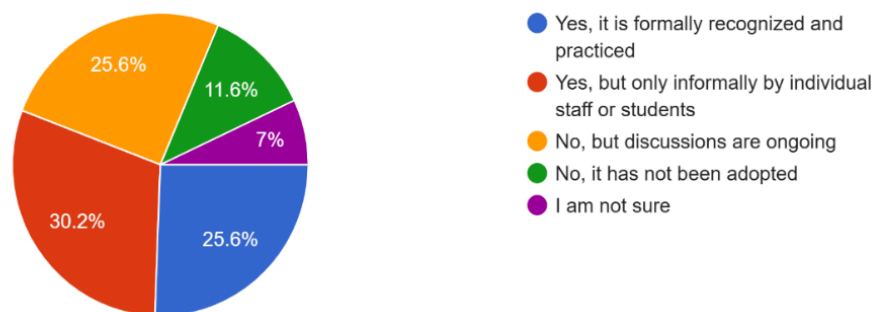
However, institutional adoption remains uneven. Only a small minority reported

that their universities formally recognise Artistic Research, as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Institutional Adoption of Artistic Research

8.] Has artistic research been adopted or operationalized in your institution?

43 responses



Several respondents noted that Artistic Research is practised **informally**, often driven by individual staff or students rather than institutional policy. Many expressed interest in Artistic Research but highlighted the absence of training, guidelines, or structural support. This pattern suggests a **latent readiness** for Artistic Research: practitioners are already doing the work, but universities

have not yet created the frameworks to support or legitimise it.

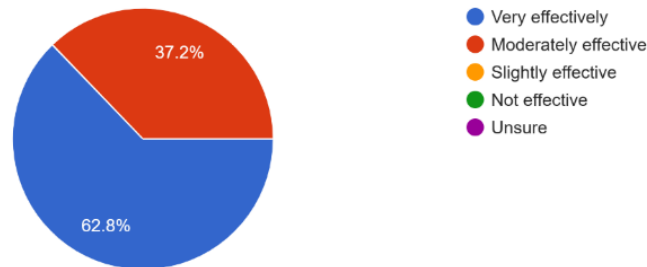
Artistic Research Seen as a Tool for Challenging Eurocentrism

A striking majority of respondents, as represented in Figure 6, believe that Artistic Research can “very effectively” challenge Eurocentric dominance in Nigerian music scholarship.

Figure 6: The Potency of Artistic Research in Challenging Eurocentrism

9.] In your view, how effectively can artistic research challenge Eurocentric approaches in Nigerian music scholarship?

43 responses



Participants emphasised that Artistic Research resonates strongly with African musical traditions because it centres embodied and experiential ways of knowing, validates indigenous epistemologies, and recognises creative processes as legitimate forms of inquiry. They explained that its emphasis on doing, making, and reflecting mirrors the communal, oral, and performative structures through which Nigerian musical knowledge has long been produced and transmitted. Artistic Research was also described as a direct challenge to the colonial hierarchy that elevates written text above practice, a hierarchy that has historically marginalised African modes of

knowledge production within university settings.

Collectively, these perspectives show that practitioners regard Artistic Research as far more than a methodological alternative. They view it as a decolonial strategy capable of unsettling entrenched academic norms and reshaping the foundations of Nigerian music scholarship.

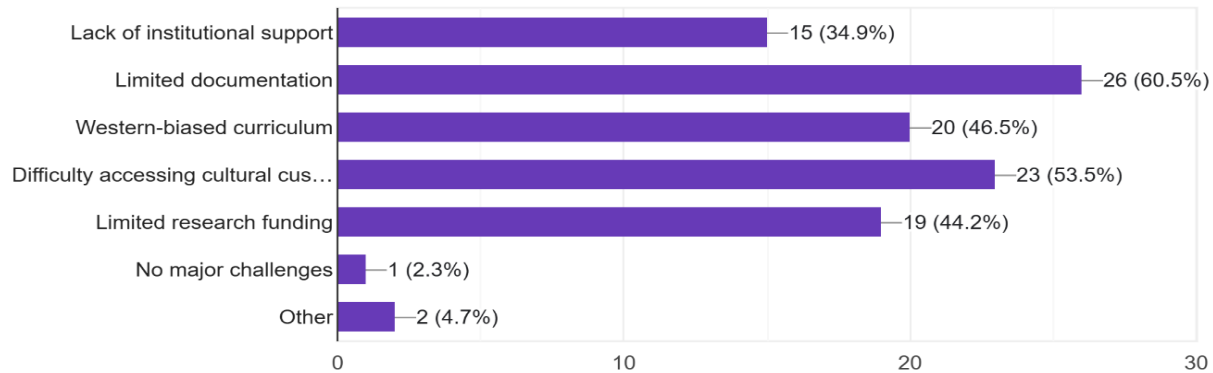
Systemic Barriers Limiting Artistic Research in Universities

Despite strong support for Artistic Research, respondents identified several systemic barriers that hinder its adoption, as represented in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Barriers to Conducting Artistic Research

13.] What challenges do you face when working with indigenous musical materials?

43 responses



Participants identified several structural and practical barriers that limit their ability to embed indigenous knowledge within formal scholarship. The most frequently mentioned challenges included Western-biased curricula that continue to prioritise European theory and analysis, the limited documentation of indigenous musical traditions, and the absence of institutional support for practice-based inquiry. Respondents also highlighted the difficulty of accessing cultural custodians, an issue that restricts opportunities for community-grounded research, as well as the persistent problem of limited funding for creative and practice-led projects. Together, these constraints were described as inhibiting both the depth and legitimacy of practice-led engagement within university settings.

The thematic analysis showed that participants viewed Artistic Research as

a direct response to these challenges. They argued that its emphasis on creative process, reflective practice, and embodied knowledge could support curriculum redesign, strengthen the documentation of indigenous music, and legitimise community-based research partnerships. Several respondents also suggested that recognising Artistic Research formally could open new funding pathways for creative inquiry, enabling Nigerian universities to support research that aligns more closely with the country's cultural realities.

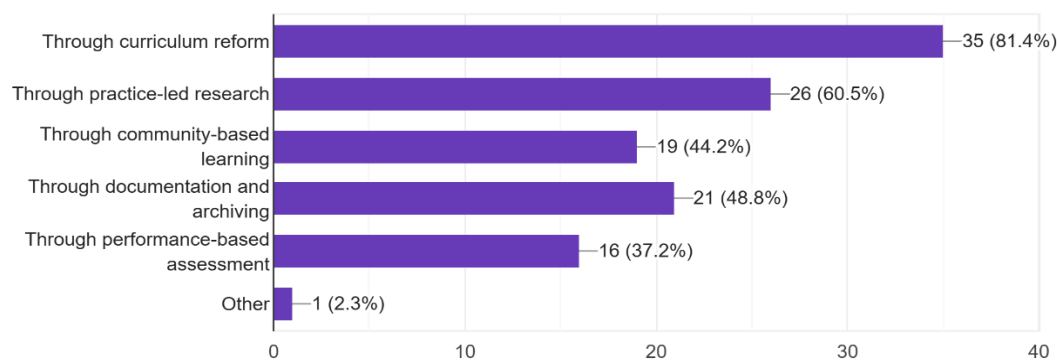
Strong National Call for Institutionalising Artistic Research

Across the dataset, respondents consistently recommended the formal adoption and operationalisation of Artistic Research in Nigerian universities, as represented in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Recommendation for Formal Adoption and Operationalisation of Artistic Research

12.] How can indigenous knowledge systems be better integrated into Nigerian music education?

43 responses



Participants proposed a range of reforms aimed at creating an academic environment in which indigenous knowledge and practice-led inquiry can thrive. The most common suggestions included establishing clear institutional frameworks for recognising and evaluating Artistic Research, providing structured training for scholar-practitioners, and redesigning curricula to reflect indigenous epistemologies more faithfully. Respondents also emphasised the importance of strengthening collaboration with communities, particularly cultural custodians, to ensure that research remains grounded in lived traditions. Increasing funding for indigenous music projects was highlighted as essential for sustaining creative inquiry and enabling long-term documentation efforts. Collectively,

these recommendations signal a national appetite for transformation and reflect a growing recognition that Artistic Research offers a culturally grounded and academically rigorous pathway for reshaping Nigerian music scholarship.

In all, the findings show that indigenous musical knowledge is rich, diverse, and widely practised among Nigerian music professionals. Practitioners already engage in practice-led inquiry, even without formal structures, and strongly believe in the potential of Artistic Research to decolonise music scholarship. The primary barrier is not a lack of interest or capacity but the absence of institutional frameworks. Respondents overwhelmingly call for training, funding, and formal adoption of Artistic Research. These results provide compelling national evidence that

Nigerian universities must adopt and operationalise Artistic Research as both a method and a field. Doing so will legitimise indigenous epistemologies, modernise curricula, empower scholar-practitioners, strengthen community engagement, and position Nigeria as a leader in decolonial music scholarship.

Discussion

The central insight emerging from this study is that Nigerian music scholars and practitioners already generate knowledge through indigenous musical practices in ways that closely align with the principles of Artistic Research, even though universities have not formally recognised these methods. This finding matters because it demonstrates that the foundations for a decolonial, practice-led research culture already exist within the practitioner community, and the primary obstacles lie not in capability but in institutional structures. It also directly addresses the study's research questions by showing how indigenous epistemologies shape creative inquiry and by providing national-scale evidence for the need to institutionalise Artistic Research.

The results extend long-standing ethnomusicological arguments that African musical knowledge is embedded in lived experience, communal practice, and embodied performance (Merriam,

1964; Nettl, 2005). Respondents' descriptions of tonal language, polyrhythm, call-and-response, and storytelling indicate that these epistemic forms remain central to Nigerian musical life despite decades of curricular emphasis on Western theory. This alignment reinforces the view that African musical systems are not merely cultural artefacts but sophisticated knowledge frameworks that demand academic recognition. The study also advances global debates on Artistic Research by showing that Nigerian practitioners engage in experimentation, reflective documentation, and performance-centred inquiry in ways that mirror international definitions of Artistic Research as a mode of knowledge production grounded in creative practice (Hannula, Suoranta, & Vadén, 2014). In this sense, the findings support observations that artists often practise Artistic Research informally long before institutions create structures to support it (Candy & Edmonds, 2018).

The study further contributes to decolonial scholarship by demonstrating that practitioners view Artistic Research as a means of challenging Eurocentrism in Nigerian music education. This perspective aligns with wider arguments that African universities must move beyond inherited colonial frameworks and embrace methodologies that reflect local epistemologies (Odora Hoppers,

2002; Dei, 2011). Artistic Research's emphasis on embodied knowledge, oral transmission, and communal creativity resonates strongly with African musical traditions and offers a methodological alternative to text-centred, Eurocentric approaches. By foregrounding creative practice as research, the findings suggest that Artistic Research could serve as a vehicle for legitimising indigenous knowledge systems and rebalancing epistemic hierarchies within Nigerian higher education.

An unexpected tension in the data concerns the contrast between practitioners' strong commitment to indigenous epistemologies and the systemic barriers that prevent these practices from entering formal scholarship. Respondents described Western-biased curricula, limited documentation, lack of institutional support, and difficulty accessing cultural custodians as persistent obstacles. These challenges echo broader critiques of African higher education, including structural constraints, underfunding, and slow curriculum reform (Ajayi, Goma, & Johnson, 1996; Jørgensen, 2010). The tension suggests that while practitioners are ready for methodological transformation, institutional inertia continues to limit the possibilities for decolonial change. This finding complicates assumptions that resistance to Artistic Research lies within the

practitioner community; instead, it indicates that the gap is structural rather than cultural.

The study's limitations provide important boundaries for interpretation. Because the data are self-reported, they reflect practitioners' perceptions rather than direct institutional analysis. Although the diversity of respondents across roles and universities strengthens the credibility of the findings, the study does not examine university policies, accreditation standards, or departmental practices. Future research could address this gap by analysing institutional documents, interviewing administrators, and comparing policy frameworks across universities. Such work would complement practitioner perspectives and provide a fuller picture of the structural conditions shaping Artistic Research in Nigeria.

Despite these limitations, the study offers the first national-scale empirical evidence that Artistic Research is already embedded in Nigerian musical practice and that practitioners view it as essential for decolonising music scholarship. The findings demonstrate theoretical significance by showing how indigenous epistemologies and practice-led inquiry can reshape academic knowledge production; methodological significance by evidencing the presence of Artistic Research practices in a context where they are not formally recognised; and

empirical significance by documenting practitioners' experiences across multiple universities. Collectively, the results point toward a clear implication: Nigerian universities must develop frameworks that recognise creative practice as research, not as an adjunct to scholarship but as a central mode of knowledge production capable of transforming the field.

Conclusion

This study examined how Nigerian music scholars and practitioners engage indigenous musical epistemologies and assessed the extent to which these practices justify the formal adoption of Artistic Research in Nigerian universities. By analysing national-scale qualitative and descriptive data, the study demonstrated that practitioners already generate knowledge through creative practice, reflective inquiry, and embodied performance, even though these methods remain largely unrecognised within institutional research structures.

The study established that Artistic Research is not an external import but an approach that coheres naturally with Nigerian musical traditions, offering a theoretically grounded and methodologically rigorous framework for legitimising indigenous knowledge. Its key contributions lie in showing, first, that indigenous epistemologies already

underpin much of the creative and scholarly work undertaken by practitioners; second, that practice-led inquiry is widespread despite the absence of formal structures; and third, that practitioners themselves view Artistic Research as essential for decolonising music scholarship and modernising university curricula. Together, these insights provide a coherent answer to the research questions: Artistic Research aligns with existing creative realities and offers a viable pathway for embedding indigenous knowledge within academic practice.

The significance of these findings extends beyond the immediate context. They advance debates on decolonial scholarship by offering empirical evidence that the shift toward practice-led, culturally grounded research is already underway at practitioner level. They also highlight the methodological potential of Artistic Research to bridge the long-standing divide between lived musical knowledge and academic validation. For policy and curriculum reform, the results indicate that institutionalising Artistic Research would strengthen community engagement, empower scholar-practitioners, and support the development of research frameworks that reflect Nigeria's cultural realities.

Future research should examine institutional policies, accreditation

standards, and departmental practices to understand how Artistic Research can be operationalised at scale. Comparative studies across African universities would also clarify regional differences in readiness, capacity, and policy environments. Such work is necessary to address the structural tensions identified in this study, particularly the gap between practitioner innovation and institutional inertia.

In sum, this study shows that the intellectual and cultural foundations for Artistic Research already exist within Nigerian musical practice, and that formal adoption is both timely and necessary. By embracing Artistic Research, Nigerian universities can create a more inclusive, culturally relevant, and epistemically just environment for music scholarship.

Implications and Recommendations

The findings of this study reveal a clear misalignment between the realities of Nigerian musical practice and the structures that govern higher education. Practitioners already generate knowledge through indigenous epistemologies and practice-led inquiry, yet these methods remain largely unsupported within university systems. This gap has significant implications for policy, curriculum design, and the future of music scholarship in Nigeria. The evidence indicates that the intellectual

and cultural foundations for Artistic Research are firmly in place; what is missing is an institutional framework capable of recognising, evaluating, and sustaining such work. Addressing this gap is essential for creating an epistemically just and culturally relevant research environment.

At the policy level, the absence of Artistic Research in national accreditation standards restricts universities' ability to innovate. Without formal recognition, departments cannot design programmes, allocate resources, or develop assessment models that support practice-based inquiry. Integrating Artistic Research into national policy would legitimise creative knowledge production, align Nigerian institutions with global research standards, and ensure that academic practice reflects local epistemologies rather than inherited colonial norms. Such policy reform would also provide a foundation for long-term sustainability across institutions.

Curriculum reform is equally critical. The dominance of Western theoretical models has produced a persistent mismatch between what is taught and what practitioners do. Embedding Artistic Research within the curriculum would allow students to engage indigenous musical traditions through creative practice, reflective documentation, and community-based

inquiry. This shift would encourage departments to introduce modules on indigenous epistemologies, documentation methods, and practice-led research techniques, thereby strengthening the cultural relevance and methodological diversity of music education.

The findings also underscore the need for stronger university–community partnerships. Indigenous musical knowledge is held and transmitted within communities, and meaningful research requires sustained engagement with cultural custodians. Policy frameworks that support fieldwork, community-based research, and collaborative projects would enhance knowledge exchange and ensure that academic inquiry remains grounded in lived experience. Expanded funding mechanisms are essential to support performances, recordings, field documentation, and other forms of creative research that are central to Artistic Research.

To operationalise these implications, several strategic actions are recommended. Universities should formally recognise Artistic Research within their research policies, postgraduate regulations, and departmental guidelines. Curricula should be redesigned to embed indigenous epistemologies and practice-led methodologies. Training programmes, through workshops,

seminars, and postgraduate courses, should equip scholar-practitioners with skills in reflective writing, documentation, creative methodologies, and ethical community engagement. Institutions should establish formal partnerships with cultural custodians and community organisations to support fieldwork and knowledge exchange. Dedicated funding streams are needed to sustain practice-led and indigenous-centred research, while creative research laboratories or centres would provide spaces for experimentation, performance, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Finally, national-level advocacy is required to ensure that Artistic Research is incorporated into accreditation standards and higher education policy.

Future research should examine institutional readiness and explore models for implementing Artistic Research across Nigerian universities. Comparative studies, pilot programmes, and case analyses of successful initiatives would help identify scalable approaches and address structural barriers. Such work is essential for translating practitioner-level innovation into system-wide transformation.

Collectively, these implications and recommendations demonstrate that Nigeria possesses the cultural, intellectual, and creative resources necessary to lead in decolonial music

scholarship. What is now required is the institutional commitment to recognise and support Artistic Research as a legitimate, rigorous, and culturally grounded mode of knowledge production.

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