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Bibliographic and Discographic Inquiries in Music Composition

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***Abstract**: This article touches on developed research designs in music composition called bibliographic and discographic research designs which are geared towards inquiries in music composition that involves producing a creative work and at the same time maintaining the intellectual phase of that creative work. It was established out of an experience encountered in teaching music composition research, supervising and assessing graduate dissertations in music theory and composition. It is situated within the qualitative paradigm of research and links to the compositional process under the framework of the Stage Theory propounded by Wallas. The design has three phases: Data collection and Generation phase, Analytic phase, and Creative phase. These phases provide an epistemic approach in music composition research that may not necessarily need creative ethnomusicological stance for composing intercultural musical artefact. It is envisaged that it advances the relevant knowledge in music composition research by means of practice and to offer solutions to the problems encountered by graduate music composition candidates during their dissertation journey.*

Keywords: Analytic, Bibliographic, Creative, Discographic, Music Composition.

1. INTRODUCTION

Creative practice is gradually developing as a significant focus of research activity, both as process and product through the concept of praxis and exegesis as developed in most artistic research designs. Many scholars have given exposures on discourses in the Visual arts, with various terminologies such as studio-based, practice-led, and practice-based research (Gray, 1996; Gray & Malins, 2004; Marshall, 2010; McNamara, 2012; Nimkulrat, 2007; Skain. 2018; Smith, 2009; Sullivan, 2009; Rust et al., 2007) to make a strong case for its validity as a method of studying the visual art and its practice. Music composition research, unlike that of Music Education, Ethnomusicology and other cognate disciplines in music, is faced with the problem of methodological approaches to creative practice among scholars in the field. Through the development of my own creative practice research, I advance bibliographic and discographic inquiries as applied to music composition research that connect creation of artefact and exegesis without necessarily employing the nuances of fieldwork. It is to further

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the discussion on what constitutes some aspect of research designs in music composition. The development of the designs also emanates from my own experience of teaching and assessing Masters and Doctoral research and dissertations, respectively, in Music Theory and Composition in my University and other Universities where I have served as external examiner. It is to unearth the understanding of possible conceptualizations of research designs that are unique in music composition inquiry without necessarily resorting to the remits of population specifics in social science research. In most of graduate music composition research in my university and others I have assessed, candidates are forced to employ human participants as population, where indeed, they may not be relevant in that specific inquiry. The frustrations candidates go through seemed to be a sort of failed effort of supervisors as well as limitations of scholarly directions to the graduate students. Many candidates identify problems from existing creative works, from books and recorded gadgets, analyze the corpus generated and create their works within that frame without using interview or any conventional instrument to collect the needed data from human participants. I feel, this is about a structure of research and how it relates to its substance in which I want to address here and create the consciousness to allow graduate students, supervisors and assessors in music composition to flow together in the dissertation journey. Bibliographic and discographic inquiries therefore dovetail into such journey, which is not well mapped in the University, to mitigate against the struggle that candidates of music composition go through in their dissertation defense.

It is worth noting that this establishes and adds something new to knowledge in the area of music composition for lecturers, supervisors, students and examiners. I am aware of the existing conventions of the structure for writing dissertation in the University which are not very clear and precise as they apply to the creative artefact, its elements and the exegesis. With bibliographic and discographic inquiries, it provides the necessary scientific procedure for music composition research that deals with existing creative works and onward composition of intended artefacts. As Arnold (2005) puts it, such thoughts offer a new and dynamic understanding of the intellectual and cultural debates regarding knowledge that can be addressed without subordinating one conventional model to another.

Bibliographic and Discographic designs act to add to the conventional qualitative pragmatic designs since knowledge grows. Indeed, research is not an absolute one (Scrivener, 2000). It is socially constructed and its meaning shifts depending on the circumstances of its usage. These designs therefore take us beyond the prescription of the conventions of the designs developed under qualitative research paradigm as such norms can be restrictive to apply only to the nature of the acceptable models. The designs therefore make new contributions to knowledge in music composition research within the scholarly discourse. This is what Kroll (2004) defines as the schizophrenic nature of the two attributes of the graduate dissertation: *praxis* and *exegesis*. While praxis deals with the creative artefact, exegesis produces a substantial discourse on the artefact created, and this needs to be scientifically done within the realms of research. The proposed design is different from what Euba (1989) describes as creative ethnomusicology which says that the creative ethnomusicologist engages in fieldwork and transforms field data into compositions. Indisputably, to create a musical work of a particular descent, it becomes imperative that the composer understands the music of the community, to have a background of their music, dance practice and ensemble that will serve

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as the backbone of the compositional style in the composition to be created (Labi, 2003). In this manner, using human participants is a possibility but the circumstance becomes different where the data for creating the artefact does not emanate from the community. In that manner, bibliographic or discographic design becomes relevant.

The Concept of Bibliographic and Discographic Inquiries

According to Hardesty and Tucker (1989), bibliographic approach is instructional and used by academic libraries dating to at least the 1880s to enhance the role of the academic library in the educational process. In recent years, proponents point to the steady, perhaps dramatic, movement of bibliographic instruction and its adoption by librarians (Farber, 1992). Duit (2009) indicated that bibliography is based on a collection of papers including articles on empirical investigations and theoretical considerations. Publications in journals, books, working papers, contributions to conferences, and so on. It, therefore, has to do with the use of books and other written materials containing the right source of information for the research. In adapting this notion in music composition research, data for a novelty composition are sometimes collected from existing song sheets and published books of musical pieces. The bibliographic design involves sonic analysis of such musical pieces from the books and onward creative works within the naturality of the sound gathered.

For discographic inquiry, Smolian (1976) used the term "discographic source" to describe the primary source materials for commercial recordings or log books prepared for recordings that list the names of the performing musicians, the composers and titles of the music performed, and the internal control information. The scholar is of the view that discographic source must include matrix, take, and tape numbers through the later manufacturing and distributing processes of recorded sounds, to combine with examination and audition of the records themselves, as reliable sources for discographic investigation. Similarly, Shuker (2005) noted discography as the study and cataloging of published sound recordings, often by specified artistes or within identified musical genres. The exact information included varies, depending on the type and scope of the discography, but a discographic entry for a specific recording will often list such details as the names of the artistes involved, the time and place of the recording, the title of the piece performed, release dates, chart positions, and sales figures. Applying discography as a research design paves the way for specific details of the sound collections to be adhered to in the research. Candidate in music composition research may collect and generate sounds from audio and video compact discs as well as other instruments for storing musical sounds which may contain traditional and non-traditional ensembles as well as musical performances, analyse them and create their works using the sonic nature of the sound generated.

While bibliographic inquiry conceptualizes explorations and compilations from books, discographic inquiry analyses and adapts such data from recorded sounds from gadgets for storing musical sounds. These designs can be independent or complementary. The inter-dependence and the complementarity of the two inquiries are reliant on the kind of data needed for the creation of the artefact. I have already indicated earlier that the bibliographic and discographic inquiry designs seem to be related to the studio-based research usually adopted by researchers in the visual arts including works of art in multiple media. They connect aesthetic perceptions that are stimulated by existing creative works in order to

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generate, emotional and cognitive responses from the researcher that are amenable to re-composition, re-modification and re-expression into a novelty.

Phases of Bibliographic or Discographic Inquiry Designs
The bibliographic and discographic inquiries are in three phases. These are Data Collection and Generation phase, Analytic phase and Creative phase as illustrated in figure(fig.) 1.



Fig. 1: Bibliographic or Discographic Inquiry Design

Data Collection and Generation Phase
This begins with sample and sampling techniques of the generated corpus from which the creative materials will be selected. Mouton (1996) defines sample as "an element selected with the intention of finding out something about the total population from which they are taken" (p.132), however, the sample in this case is the selection of those appropriate sonic elements that will propel the creative activity. In this case, it is the explored elements from the song sheets and books or the CDs, as the case may be, that will be appropriate for the composition of the artefact. In this regard, population, as in human participants will not be applicable in these designs. Some scholars such as Polit and Hungler (1999) as well as Agyedu, Donkor and Obeng (1999) elaborate on population to include set of objects which may be infinite. That means that it includes aggregated objects, other than human participants to conform to a set of specifications, thereby capturing objects as part of population in research. In the application of this to the bibliographic or discographic inquiry, the generated corpus itself is the object of analysis, and may not necessarily be regarded as population from which the sample can be selected.

The sampling technique recommended for these designs is purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is described as "selection of units based on personal judgment rather than randomization" (Elder, 2009, p.6). The idea for the purposive sampling in bibliographic or discographic design is to allow the researcher-composer to focus on the exact source of the sounds to be used for the creative artefact. Thus, critical sampling becomes significant and most appropriate in this manner. Suri (2011) in defining critical sampling technique stated:

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Critical case sampling is a type of purposive sampling technique that is particularly useful in research with limited resources, as well as research where a single case (or small number of important cases) is likely to "yield the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge. (p. 236)
In this case, the scholar-composer hands on the exact information needed. Thus, materials found important for the creation of the novelty from the books and the CDs are selected before analysis.

Data Collection Instruments
The principal data collection instrument recommended for the inquiry is document analysis or what is called documentary search. There can be other ancillary methods such as observation and listening to complement the document analyses. The document analysis brings out the selections from the books, song sheets or printed materials or transcriptions of performances from audio and video recordings and digital ephemera. It is very appropriate to be used to detail idioms embedded in already created works from books, video recordings and audio recordings on CDs or any digital platform. This leads to the second phase which determines the sound synergy, rhythms, melodies and modes that are significant in the creation of the artefact.

What Data is Collected and Generated?
The first phase establishes the corpus, which includes the various media that constitute, in this case, the source materials collected for the composition through the principal and the ancillary methods. The data may cut across the sounds, background stories, musical ensembles and their instrumental set-up as well as the performance of some of the songs, depending on the exigencies of the study.

Analytical Phase
At this juncture, the researcher needs to group the generated sounds that form the corpus of the first phase and analyze for use. In analyzing the data, formal, contextual and thematic analytical procedures are plausible. Text translations can be done and interpreted for its use. The sounds can be analyzed by its cultural nexus relative to the work to be created. The analysis determines the criteria for selection of the sound for its suitability in terms of meters, form, melodies, textures, ostinatos, harmonies and other elements appropriate for the creative work. These are materials within the various contexts and its application in the work to be created as described by Webster (2016) as enabling conditions in the creative process.

Creative Phase
The Creative phase is the actual compositional process that leads to the final artefact. It involves creative designs that emanate from the theories underpinning the study. As already stated, the bibliographic and discographic designs are all of which are part of qualitative research paradigm. Under this phase, the researcher needs to develop an idiosyncratic design that shows the creative process. Many scholars have developed some designs in the compositional process which can be adapted as the case may be. The design can be a diagram, a table of procedure or text description. It must show the arrangement of texts/sounds/images, establishment into sections/forms/plots and choice of appropriate instrumentation. If the work is a musical drama, the creative phase must show the acts and

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scenes and the determination of the characterization, costuming and other necessary corresponding theatrical elements. All these must be shown in the creative design which has been self-developed or adapted. It is worth noting that the musical themes and resources must reflect from the emerged data collected and analyzed. The intention for combination of Pan-African and Western instruments to satisfy intercultural music as described by Sadoh (2004) must be shown clearly in the design. That must be carefully chosen to reflect tone compatibility, pitch implications and their availability for the performance of the novelty to be created.

It is worth noting that Wallas (1926) established the Stage Theory in creative activities. Four stages were indicated in the theory as preparation, incubation, illumination and verification. This is reflected in the model of creativity by Webster (2016) and in the work of Kratus (1989). Burnard and Younker (2002) explicated such a model more fully in musical terms in their study of compositional process. In fact, the last of the stage theory – verification - can lead to the beginning of the process thereby making it cyclical as illustrated below.

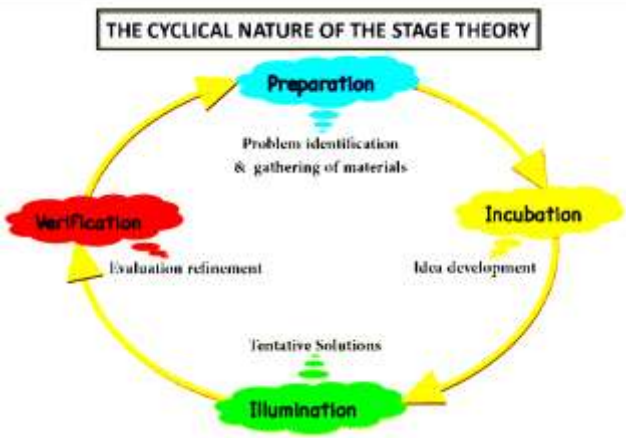

Fig. 2: The cyclical nature of the stage theory

Looking at the stage theory, although propounded over a century ago, it is still applicable and fits the bibliographic and discographic inquiries. The data collection and generation as well as the analytic phases link the preparation part of the stage theory while the incubation, illumination and verification of the stage theory link the creative phase of the inquiries as illustrated below.

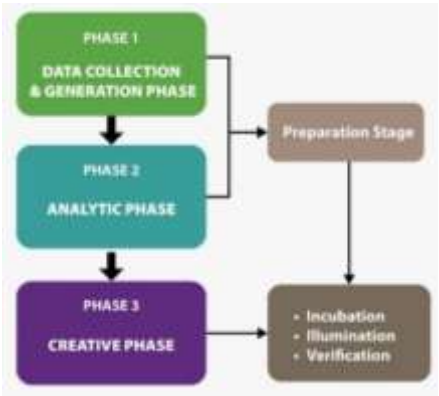

Fig 2: Bibliographic or Discographic inquiry design customized with Wallas' Stage Theory

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In his explanation of the stages in the theory, Wallas (1926) describes the 'preparation' period as the time frame when the initial problem is assessed and the composer or the creator finds and chooses the appropriate materials to be worked with. He explains that the 'incubation' period represents time away from the problem when conscious work is set to one side. Lubart (2001) postulated that this period may include passive forgetting of superficial details or previous attempts of the problem, and/or associative play between problem elements. Wallas explains again that 'Illumination' is known as 'flash of insight' within problem-solving behaviour which is often preceded by some form of intimation that a solution to the problem is imminent. The production of new ideas requires a process of refinement, development and evaluation which Wallas termed 'verification'. Fig. 2 therefore incorporates the stage theory into the bibliographic or discographic design to create the consciousness of the process involved in the creative activity.

These constituents of the bibliographic and discographic inquiries draw upon the qualitative approach in other social sciences that apply population specific approaches to research, resulting in an analytic and creative account of a setting or practice. Drislane and Parkinson (2011) referred to as a form of interpretive sociology. The Analytic phase of the inquiry deals with the interpretation of the sound collected at the data generation phase and therefore situates within the pragmatic phenomenon in qualitative research. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explained qualitative research and stated:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. […] they turn the world into series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p.3)

By this upshot, bibliographic and or discographic designs utilize the qualitative research paradigm that involves collecting and/or working with texts, images or sounds. It therefore allows for the inclusion of many different kinds of data collection as well as the diversity of information within the epistemological framework that are associated with qualitative research in order to advance praxis and exegesis through the three phases – data collection and generation, analytic, and creative phases.

2. CONCLUSION

Bibliographic and discographic designs are appropriate and very relevant to music composition inquiry that combines praxis and exegesis in the context of pragmatism in qualitative research paradigm. Bibliographic inquiry was conceptualized from the instructional approach used to enhance academic library in the educational process while discographic inquiry emanated from sources to describe the primary source materials for commercial recordings or log books prepared for recordings. They can be used independently or complementarily in music composition research that deals with collection of sounds from scores and records for creating musical artefacts. It is a framework that comprises three phases: Phase one flows from data generation to establish the corpus necessary for musical creation. Phase two is the analysis of the corpus into parameters and components of the

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artefact to be created while phase three deals with the synthesis of the various parameters in the second phase using a design process to produce the musical work. The application of the bibliographic or discographic design can be combined with other designs such as the case study, creative ethnomusicology concept and other qualitative designs that may be significant as much as the necessities of particular inquiries in music composition are concerned. It is indeed inevitable in solving epistemological problems encountered by researcher-composers in music composition.

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