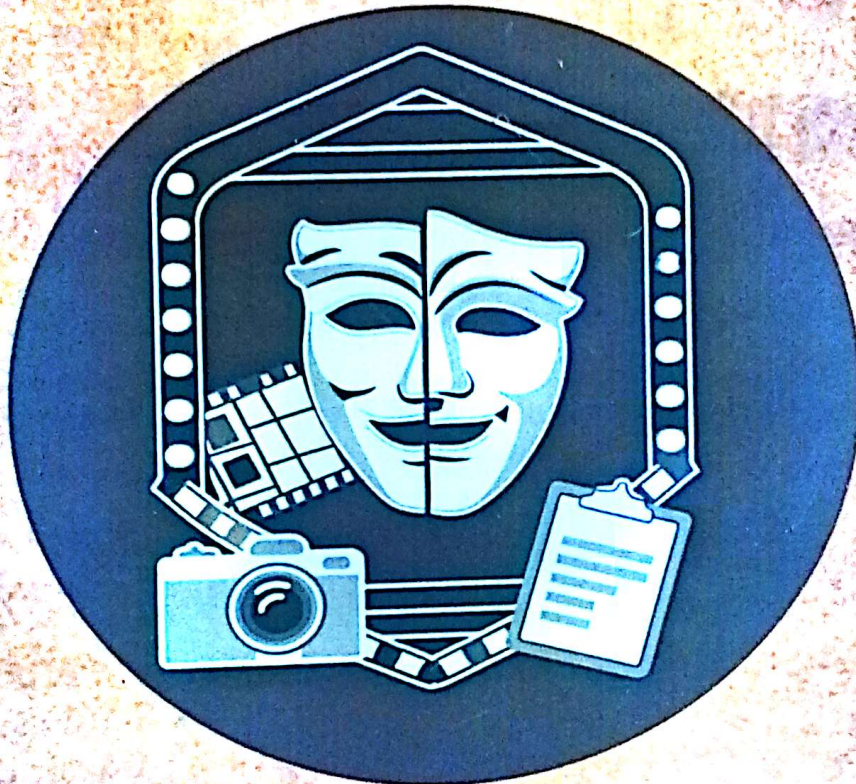




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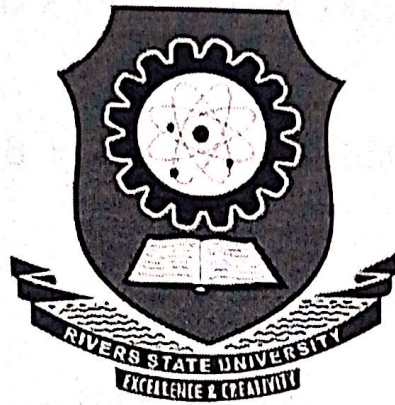


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THE CONUNDRUMS OF ARTS COUNCILS ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF KWARA AND OYO STATES COUNCILS FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

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Abstract

The Nigerian arts councils are cultural institutions saddled with the statutory functions of preserving, presenting, promoting and packaging of the Nigerian arts and culture resources. The establishment of the institutions was borne out of the potentials of arts and culture in internal and external cultural diplomacy. In spite of the significant roles of arts councils in national development and international cultural relations, both the Kwara and Oyo states arts councils have suffered continuous neglect from the government which established them. The paper, therefore, examined the conundrums of the Nigerian arts councils from the perspective of the Kwara and Oyo states councils for arts and culture. The paper employed interview and participant-observation methods to gather relevant data. It was revealed that despite the provisions of the cultural policy and the objectives of edicts which established the Kwara and Oyo states arts councils, they cannot compete with their peers in other parts of the world due to political interference, bureaucratic bottleneck on leadership imposition, neglect of substantial policy framework (non-implementation of funding) and underdeveloped councils' infrastructure. The paper, therefore, concluded that there is an urgent need for arts and culture reforms and the establishment of an endowment funds for the arts in order for the Kwara and Oyo states arts councils to survive, and meet the global standards.

Key words: Arts administration, Arts Council, Cultural Diplomacy, Cultural Policy, Arts Institutions

Introduction

The cultural activities of the pre-colonial and colonial periods, the directives of the conference on Inter-Governmental Cultural Policies in Africa which was held in Accra in 1975 and FESTAC '77 brought into existence the formulation and the launching of the Nigerian cultural policy in 1988 (Awodiya, 2005; Umukoro, 2014; Awodiya, 2017; Yerima, 2022). Imuokhuede (1994) cited in Yerima (2022) states that "the cultural policy for Nigeria has its roots in the resolutions of the inter-governmental conference on cultural policies in Africa held in Accra 1975 and the UNESCO conference on cultural policies which took place in Mexico in 1982". These decisions brought about the existence of the Nigerian cultural policy. The cultural policy is a document which serves as a guide and states the position of government as regards the arts and culture activities.

Oyesoro (1999, p. 29) identifies that the cultural policy document involves two basic areas; the internal cultural policy and the external cultural policy. According to him "Internal Cultural Policy (ICP) charts the course of action for culture and its administration within the domestic/ local or internal environment". The external cultural policy deals with the administration of arts and culture to nurture and promote external relations through cultural

diplomacy. The formulation of cultural policy has as its primary objectives, the need for government to preserve, promote, present and fund the Nigerian arts and culture resources.

In her quest to bring to fruition the preservation, promotion and presentation of Nigerian culture, the Federal Government of Nigeria established various structures to actualise its set goals and objectives in the Nigerian culture sector. Yerima (2022, p. 31) agrees to the fact that some aspect of the mandate of the cultural policy was realised through "the creation and ratification of ten agencies for the purpose of its implementation". Institutions such as National Council for Arts and Culture, National Institute for Cultural Orientation, National Commission for Museum and Monuments, Nigeria Tourism Development Corporation, Centre for Black and Africa Arts and Civilization, Nigeria Film Corporation, were established by the government for easy regulation and implementation of the provisions of the cultural policy (Yerima, 2022, p. 31). *The Cultural Policy for Nigeria*, (1988, p. 18), also states in section 10.1.6 that the state shall.

- (a) establish a powerful administrative body for culture with access to the highest policy-making council of the nation, and
- (b) establish national bodies specialising in specific areas of preservation, presentation and promotion including galleries, film development, film censorship, tourism, museums and monuments, theatres, archives.

The Federal Government further stated in the Cultural Policy that funds for the arts and culture activities will be sourced from:

- (a) government
 - (b) non-governmental, industrial, commercial, finance and other organisations operating in Nigeria making voluntary financial contributions which shall be tax-deductible,
 - (c) a national endowment fund to which government, organisations and individual shall contribute,
 - (d) percentage contributions from entertainment tax charged during artistic performances and presentations,
 - (e) special funding and endowment of specific research projects in related institutions and establishment by private sector organisations in commerce and industry.
 - (f) compulsory percentage contribution from building budgets for landscaping and environmental planning, and
 - (g) public earnings from cultural activities.
- (*Cultural Policy for Nigeria*, 1988, p. 20)

However, the councils for arts and culture in Nigeria are facing some challenges which deterred them from performing up to the expectations and some of these challenges emanated from the government attitude not to implement the funding objectives of the cultural policy as stated in section 10.3.1, above. From this, it can be stated that some of the administrative bottlenecks being faced by the Nigerian Arts Councils are partly due to the inadequacies in the implementation of some provisions of the Nigeria cultural policy especially in the area of funding. This assertion is further supported by Yerima (2022, p. 67) when she comments that "the main objective of (financing) culture is to ensure the continuity and

consistency in the efficient management of our cultural resources and also sustain the preservation, presentation, development, and democratisation of the arts in the country”.

In view of this, the paper examines the conundrum of Arts Councils Administration in Nigeria from the perspectives of the Kwara and Oyo States Councils for Arts and Culture. The paper further identifies administrative challenges and inquires how the neglect of substantial policy framework (non-implementation of funding) has affected the two selected Arts Councils. The paper, therefore, serves as a medium to garner the attention of policy makers, culture advocates and stakeholders to the possibility of reviving the dying spirits of the Nigerian Arts Councils.

Research Methodology

The method of data gathering for this study is qualitative research employed through interview instrument and participant-observation. The population sample for the paper involves the Head of the Performing Arts Department who was interviewed at the Kwara State Council for Arts and Culture on 17th December, 2024 during the researcher's Ph.D. field work. For the Cultural Centre, Makola, Ibadan, the data was gathered during an academic excursion to the centre on 26th April, 2025. The Head of the Performing Troupe and the Director of the council narrated the ordeals faced by the council during an interactive session with the lecturers and the students of PFA 409 (Advanced Theatre Management and Administration) of the University of Ilorin. The students and the lecturers were taking round the facilities to have a glimpse of the dilapidated state of the council's infrastructure. This tour served as the motivation for this paper.

Global Perspectives on Arts Councils Administration

The existence of arts council to the development of a country's image and global recognition in arts and culture for diplomatic purposes is of paramount to national development. From time immemorial, the significance of arts and culture has been a focus of discussion both at the traditional institutional levels and academia. There has been a general insinuations on the administration of arts and culture from the perspectives of general practice and whether arts councils performed according to the directives of the laws and edicts that established them. Sunday-Kanu (2022, p. 99) opines that cultural policy was “deterred by political instability and its associate lack of continuity in government policies. Consequently, the policy has remained a mere historical resource material on paper even in this present day of democratic rule in Nigeria”. This had adverse effect on the effective administration of the Nigerian Arts Councils as Yerima (2022, p. 8) rightly reacts that “the state of arts administration has remained unchanged and the culture sector has remained non-virile, unproductive and comatose despite the policy”.

From the global perspectives, Dewey (2003, p. 5) while discussing the formative metamorphose of arts management to cultural administration, emphasises that “culture and arts are vital to the world's advanced economies, which are transforming from information-based systems to creativity-based system”. Dewey's opinion shows that arts and culture in contemporary global context do not only serve as providers of information but creator of creative artistic and cultural contents which must have a global acceptability. Dewey's view is supported because arts and culture administration has reached a critical level in which the

attention of government, arts and culture advocates, private institutions and NGOs are critically needed for their institutional support.

Chong (2010, p. 18) lends his voice to the significance of creativity-based system suggested by Dewey when he says that "arts organisations need to address three mutually supporting commitments: to excellence and artistic integrity; to accessibility and audience development; and to public accountability and cost effectiveness". In the quest to achieve excellence in the discharge of statutory duties of Arts Councils, factors such as inadequate funding and lack of recognition as a revenue generating mechanism by the government have deterred them from doing so. These factors serve as both weaknesses and threats to the effective administration and management of Arts Councils in Nigeria. Our position here is that there is a nexus between the Nigerian cultural policy and the administration of Arts Councils in Nigeria. Positioning the Arts Councils strategically within the global space will, no doubt, require adequate funding, and prioritising the uplift of various dilapidated and collapsed infrastructures and other theatre facilities. Reacting to the implementation of the cultural policy, Yerima (2022, p. 27) posits that:

The primacy of purpose for any policy is performance or, simply put, the achievement of the goal for which it was formulated, and it is towards this overall objective that the result, the contents as well as the strategies of implementing the policy becomes relevant to the people.

This, unlike in Kwara and Oyo states Nigeria, has manifested in the administration of arts and culture from the global points of view as exemplified in the research carried out by the International Federation of Arts Councils and Cultural Agencies (IFACCA), analysed by Laaksonen (2014, p. 2) that:

Respondents described their cultural policy administration as solid, committed to the cause of public arts support and in contact with the civil society. At a more operational level, the respondents noted a strong emphasis on funding, policies, programmes, organisational structures and committed professionals.

These strengths were identified with countries such as Barbados, Singapore, New Zealand, Sweden, Scotland, other countries from Northern Europe and Latin America. In the SWOT analysis by Laaksonen, major opportunities were identified with administration of council for arts and culture. These accounted for possible development which advanced countries attained in promoting, supporting and funding arts and culture in their countries. Opportunities such as structural reforms through new funding structures, training for both artists and arts administrators and integration of advanced technology abound. Laaksonen (2014, p. 6) however, reacted that "national and international partnerships were not included in the main opportunities listed by respondents from national agencies except in Canada, Finland, Niger, Scotland and England".

Arts Councils administration in China took a different dimension as arts and culture resources are now being integrated with modern technology. Roche (2018, p.13) notes that the

government of China “understands culture as a force to drive economic growth...China's ambition is to make the arts, culture and creative industries a pillar of its economy”. This scenario re-emphasised the need for the Nigerian arts councils to aim towards digitalising arts and cultural resources within their domain. Digitalising the Nigerian arts and cultural resources will require building more arts and culture infrastructures and exploring the integration of arts, culture and technology through adequate funding. Zhang (2025, p. 36) also reveals that in China, “from 2014 to 2023, the National Arts Foundation funded 7,116 projects with a cumulative investment of approximately 55.7 Billion Yuan (around 5.8 Billion Dollar), spanning stage arts, fine arts, promotion and talent development”.

Achieving this feat in arts and cultural administration in Kwara and Oyo states Nigeria, will require a steady commitment and review in arts and culture funding. The Kwara and Oyo states governments are yet to commit themselves fully to allocating substantial budgets to arts and culture despite its economic potentials to tourism development. In the United States, “the public funding ecosystem for the arts...is supported by Federal, State, and Local governments”, (Rhoads and Rhee, 2024, p. 1). The mix funding system makes funding of the arts easier because it promotes accessibility of funds through National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Rhoads and Rhee (2024, p. 1) further opine that “no single level of government can fully support the arts. The symbiotic relationship among Federal, State, and Local governments is essential for delivery the leadership, funding and partnerships needed to sustain the arts nationwide”. Research have also been conducted locally on the administration of arts councils in Nigeria. Johnson (2014, p.17) discloses in his own research that:

Many states arts councils appear to be redundant. They hardly advertise for any production that woos the audience to their theatres. Drama performances are rarely or scarcely done if done at all. They only perform dances, once in a while, and mainly for state government functions. There is hardly any initiative to use the rich arts of the various ethnic entities, not to talk of adopting cultural forms of neighbouring extractions in supra-dousing performances.

Johnson's view reflects the regular practice in the Nigerian arts councils. The frequent staging of dances during government functions, no doubt, portrays the Nigerian arts councils as an organisation established mainly for this assignment in the eye of the publics. This has turned out to be a domineering function at the expense of other crucial roles of the arts councils as stated in the edicts that established it. Awodiya (2005, p. 230) submits in his book titled *Managing Arts Institution in Nigeria* that “in reinvigorating Nigerian arts for operational excellence, it must adopt a new organisational structure to refocus the arts industry for effective rendering of excellent cultural services to the people”. In order to render excellent services, funding is crucial to the administration of arts and culture. The attitude of government at various levels to fund the arts councils is low.

Furthermore, Rotimi (2024, p. 85) observes in his research on North-Central States arts councils that “the state allocation to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Culture and Tourism for the ten years (2005-2015) under review was relatively low at 0.12 percentages (#818,708,000)

of the state budget over the period of ten financial years". Similarly, Odunze and Asigbo (2022, p. 45) comment on the conundrum of Arts Councils in Delta State that it "has been occupying a rented apartment since 2008 that it was given an official seal to serve as a cultural centre". All these findings have indicated that the state of Arts Councils in Nigeria requires adequate attention in order to compete with their peers globally. It is, therefore, imperative to identify the conundrum of the other Arts Councils in Nigeria especially Kwara State Council for Arts and Culture and Oyo State Cultural Centre Mokola, Ibadan.

Kwara State Council for Arts and Culture

The Kwara State Government established edicts in order to conform to the national directives as encapsulated in the Nigerian Cultural Policy. Cap 37 of the edicts of 1976 established the Council for Art and Culture with the aim to "promote, preserve, revive, develop and encourage the art and culture within and outside the state" (Innih, 1978, p. 4). On the organisation of exhibitions and festivals of art as stated by the edicts which established the council, it was discovered that this has been done in the past when late Dr. Stella Oyedepo was the director of the council. The council has also participated in local, national and international festivals especially the National Festival of Art and Culture (NAFEST). The objective that the council should serve as a cultural centre of the state, has not been effectively carried out. Serving as a cultural centre of the state connotes that the council should be a vibrant hub of cultural activities and performances.

Theatrical performances in which the cultural milieu of the state can be showcased have not been given priority by the council. It is only during the government functions or on the invitation of corporate or individuals that the council showcased the art and culture of the state aside their participation in National Festival of Art and Culture. The inconsistency in the discharge of this basic function is hinged and attributed to inadequate budgetary allocation and public orientation. Olorunwa in an interview (2024) states that:

People cannot define culture from religion and from other political issues. The issue of religion is one of those things that is militating against the council for art and culture because people that are not oriented believed that the council for art and culture is a place where idols are worshipped.

These insinuations and erroneous beliefs of the people especially in Ilorin where the majority are Muslims, have been discouraging the theatre attendance, not only in Kwara State Council for Art and Culture but other places within the capital. Furthermore, the appointment of officers who are not versatile and professionally inclined has also been identified as an impediment to actualising some of the objectives in the edict. It has been a perpetual situation that people who are appointed as directors to channel the machinery of the council are not professionally qualified and lacked the required qualifications and experiences in the field of art and culture to effectively run the affairs of the council. This has created redundancy and negligence of specific statutory responsibilities of the council. For instance, organising exhibition and festival of art at divisional and state level which should have been an avenue to harness and promote cultural heritage of various ethnic groups that constituted Kwara State, has not been given priority for a long time.

The organisation and conduct of lectures and research on matters relating to art and culture of Kwara State is obviously a channel to sensitise both the government and the public on the socio-economic importance of promoting art and culture. Even though this was stated in the edict, it has not been given attention. The public misconception and erroneous beliefs of some segments of the public that see the council for art and culture as a place for idol worship as noted by Olorunwa (2024), can be corrected through regular annual public lecture and establishment of an independent cultural promotion body to harness and promote cultural activities in Kwara State.

Oyo State Council for Arts and Culture

The Oyo State Cultural Centre came into existence as a result of the cultural activities in Nigeria around the late 70s. The existence of the centre, according to Felix (2019) was "a fall out in 1977, in preparation for FESTAC '77. The Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture". The Oyo State Cultural Centre, Makola, Ibadan "was established by Edict No. 14 of 1977 (now Act of Parliament) to foster, preserve, record, document and propagate the cherished arts and culture and their Allied Matters of Oyo state" (<https://artsandculture.oyostate.gov.ng>).

Since then, there has been a vibrant, consistent and regular artistic and cultural products such as drama, dances, sculpture and other arts and crafts from the centre especially during the earlier stage of its establishment. However, with this artistic dedication and commitment, it was recently observed that the main theatre which is supposed to be a venue of regular performances, as it used to be, is not in a good shape and condition to aid the showcase of artistic endeavour. The option which is left to the centre is to take performances to government functions. It was revealed during the visit that lighting equipment are outdated and the roofs of the building are falling. It was further explained that the theatre hall has been used in the past for theatrical performances but due to unavailability of funds and low government intervention, the administration and management of the council is difficult.

The cultural centre, Makola, Ibadan has hosted quite a number of performances and other socio-cultural events. In view of the recent state of the centre, it is imperative that the centre is given appropriate attention by stakeholders in order to continue serving the primary purpose of its establishment which include promotion and preservation of culture and tradition of Oyo state in particular and Nigeria in general. The Oyo State Cultural Centre theatre auditorium is in a state of distress and neglect. The effects of this are that the place is not conducive for theatrical and other arts projects which are parts of the main objectives of establishing the centre as contained in the edicts. Inadequate funding for maintenance and development of the available infrastructures are part of the ordeals faced by the centre.

A Brief Comparative Reflections

From the two case studies, the major reflections bordered on the gap between the councils' readiness to perform according to the edicts which established them and the policy implementation by the government that served as a constrained. Apart from the public perception of arts councils as places of idol worship, political interference through bureaucratic

bottleneck on leadership imposition, funds unavailability and negligence in the development of the councils' infrastructure by the state governments are common factors to both the Kwara State council for arts and culture and Oyo State cultural centre, Ibadan.

Conclusion

The paper has revealed the level of commitment to arts and culture from the global context in comparison to what is obtainable in Nigeria especially in budgetary and policy consideration. The possible actionable policy implication is restructuring through arts and culture reforms. It is important to state that introducing an endowment funds for the arts at state levels through mix funding system which will involve the state governments and local governments in both Kwara and Oyo states will be beneficial to sustaining the operations of the Nigerian arts councils in both states. Kwara and Oyo States Governments may need to consider Public Private Partnership (PPP) initiatives to outsource for funding and other logistics for better operation of the councils.

There should be an artistic collaborations between the two selected arts councils and related academic departments such as the Performing Arts, Creative Arts, Dramatic Arts, English and Literary studies within the two states. The collaboration can be in form of academic excursion, workshop and regular joint theatrical performances. There should be a regular hosting of annual arts festivals, arts exhibitions, film festivals, arts competitions among schools in both Kwara and Oyo states, and regular in-house theatrical performances between the selected arts councils and amateurs and community theatre practitioners to create visibility and correct the popular erroneous beliefs of arts councils as places for idol worship. Both the Kwara and Oyo states arts councils' visual arts departments need a separate digitalised and modern arts gallery to create an appealing and attractive atmosphere for visitors.

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