Cultural Policy for Sustainable Development in Nigeria
By

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Abstract

Several countries around the world operate with a cultural policy document to accelerate their cultural development. Nigeria is not left behind on this developmental stride; although over the years, there has been a gap in the implementation of the Nigerian Cultural Policy. This study focuses on how the Nigerian cultural policy helps to protect the Nigerian Cultural Heritage. It further provides information on all aspects of the cultural policy, with an end to making recommendations to help improve on the cultural policy document where necessary. The paper examines; the focus and methods of implementation of the cultural policy, the impact of the policies on values, practices and standards and lastly the policy and its provision for the preservation of culture. The qualitative research method was used. The secondary data from libraries, books and the internet were valuable and crucial to the research. The Cultural Policy document as provided by the Federal Government of Nigeria was analysed in detail. This method was necessary as it enabled the researcher to identify and collate relevant data for the description of findings and results in this paper. The researcher proffers informed conclusions and recommendations.

Keywords; Cultural Policy, Culture, Policy, Heritage

Introduction

It is quite common that every society, whether developed or developing, face the challenges of preserving their cultural practices. This struggle for cultural preservation is to make use of the cultural practices to enhance growth in the face of threatening modern cultural trends.

For many societies, the crucial question has been how to preserve and extend indigenous traditions which root them strongly in the past and provide parts of their deepest sources of energy and inspiration; and at the same time, to take what is more appropriate for their development from the industrialized world without being inundated by it.

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa with over two hundred and fifty ethnic groups including Hausa, Fulani, Yoruba, Igbo, Ijaw, Kanuri, Ibibio, Urhobo, Benin, Tiv among others, faces these challenges on a daily basis as it has over the years.

In the wake of this continuous challenge, it is study worthy to take a critical look at the "Cultural Policy" document of Nigeria.

Without doubt, every society must build upon its past. It is history, traditional values and norms that make for a present and a future. In this case, Nigeria as a whole stands to gain a great deal from the discussion of its cultural policies and for the light it can shed on how to keep the multiplicity of our cultural traditions alive, yet acquiring modern knowledge for continuous development.

Objective

This paper seeks to address the following

- To study carefully the cultural policy of Nigeria
- Discuss the focus and method of implementation of the cultural policy

- Analyze the impact of the cultural policies on cultural values and standards.
- Discuss the cultural policy for the preservation of culture.

Methodology

The method employed in gathering the necessary information was qualitative. This involved Library and Archival research where valuable information was unearthed.The Archives at the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Abuja was helpful in that data collected from there proved useful. The Cultural Policy document of Nigeria was obtained from the Public record section of the Department of Archives at the National Council for Arts and Culture, Abuja.

Literature about Cultural Policies and the need for them in developing Africa was sought for and information retrieved from books and the internet were interpreted in an analysis of the Cultural Policy of Nigeria.

History and Theory of Cultural policies.

People often do not realize that cultural policies exist, when in fact we have many- we just do not realize that they are cultural policies. Cultural policies then, are part of our everyday lives. All the choices and decisions we take concerning our daily activities amount to some form of policy making that usually brings about improvement.

Cultural policy is connected to all major issues of our societies: economic stratification, race relations, international relations, technology, education and community development (Atlas, 1985, P.7).

It happens at different places, ranging from the family house to the board rooms of national foundations, corporations, places of worship and public agencies. Altas (1985) maintains that the choice of a family to educate their child(ren) in the language, traditions and history of a particular ethnic group is cultural policy a grant maker's criteria for quality and excellence is cultural policy, a community development corporations decisions to focus on cultural tourism or historic preservation is cultural policy, the

convergence of television, internet and other digital media is cultural policy.

Girard (1985) discusses that courts, churches, legislatures and patrons have for many centuries made decisions about whether, why and how to support work in the arts and cultural facilities; about the language and religion of a society; and about such issues as proper dress and behavior.

Philosophers and historians have had a good deal to say about the conduct of a society with respect to culture. In every society and every period of history, people have made choices about the culture they would build, how to express their aspirations and fears how to embody their values in rituals and celebrations. But the concept of a special socio-cultural Responsibility for democratic governments is a relatively new invention. The cultural policy as such came into currency after World War II.

Atlas (1985) stated "In the discourse which has since ensued, the idea of cultural democracy has emerged as the major innovation in cultural policy. Cultural ministers throughout the world became interested in the idea because of their alarm over social trends that are being felt globally: the proliferation of electronic mass media, urbanization, "modernization", along with the individual alienation and deracination which accompanied them. Taken together, these phenomena have come to be known internationally as the "Americanization" of cultural. These factors coalesce to breed a pervasive social passivity dangerous to democracy eroding traditional cultural activities'.

Miller and Yudice (2002) noted that a cultural policy refers to the institutional supports that channel both a static creativity and collective ways of life – a bridge between the two registers. The cultural policy is embodied in systematic regulatory guide to actions that are adopted by organizations to achieve their goals of an all-round development. Girard (1983) supports this as it is stated that " the ideas which have informed cultural policy came from many sources – from traditional practices in diverse societies, from philosophers and theoreticians, from accounts of history and utopian speculations.

The following statements further buttress the researcher's point that with proper implementation of cultural policies, a nation can thrive while maintaining its roots. Cultural Policy remains a process that provides for the preservation of the arts and culture of a people which is foundational of their history and of utmost importance for growth and development. (Towse, 1999, P. 143).

A Cultural Policy remains important for the preservation of culture not just for Africa, but for the world at large (Singh, 2010, P. 21). Based on these statements, one can safely suggest that every country needs a cultural policy. As a matter of fact, more and more policies should be made not just in culture but also on education, agriculture, health among other aspects of the society as long as they provide a solid support for continuous growth and development. Furthermore, the rules and decisions made for the purpose of preserving the cultural history of a people (cultural policy) should be considered as a document for further and sustainable development in every society.

The Influence of Cultural Policies on Development in West Africa.
Just as culture is all encompassing, cultural policy incorporates a broad range of measures taken to develop cultural life. Many policies with profound cultural impact are made by decision makers who have given cultural consideration a thought.

In recent times, most policy makers have not made the paradigm shift that would bring culture freely to their consciousness when government agencies in the industrialized world define cultural policies. For instance they generally limit themselves to the most specialized expressions of culture; media and communications, the arts and education and in some countries, sports. The measures taken to implement policy are quite varied. Grants to artists and institutions are common approaches as are public service employment programmes, building and maintaining cultural facilities, encouraging financial historic preservation for posterity (Girard, 1983, pp. 171 – 172).

With efforts from organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) several conferences and workshops have been held in the last three decades in West Africa. These meetings have been brought about cultural policies, and reviews of these polices but ultimately it has led to an analysis and understanding of the cultural life, cultural values and cultural needs and expectations of the people of West African Countries, the affirmation of the authentic cultural values and cultural heritage, the building up of international cultural identity and parallel affirmation of cultural infrastructure and introduction of new technologies in cultural activities and an establishment of links between culture and education as well as between education and different cultural industries among West African Countries.

Analysis of the Cultural Policy of Nigeria

The Federal Government of Nigeria shall recognize, for a meaningful achievement of the objectives of the cultural policy, traditional, religious and chieftaincy institutions, guilds, age grades, voluntary associations, craft guilds and co-operatives as agents for cultural preservation, presentation, promotion and development.

The Government shall promote and encourage the active collaboration of these agencies and ensure their creative interaction within the nation's economic and political circumstance.

The establishment of national associations of the various cultural and artistic interests, to assist it in the preservation, presentation and promotion of arts and culture shall be encouraged by the Government. Through the Ministry of Culture, The Nation Council for Arts and Culture, National Commission for Museums and Monuments and the Centre for Black and African Arts and civilization, national bodies specializing in specific areas of preservation, presentation and promotion including galleries, film development, film censorship, tourism, museums and monuments, theatres, archives shall be established.

The cultural policy shall be expressed in four broad categories of state action, as follows:

(a) Preservation of culture,
(b) Promotion of culture,
(c) Presentation of culture and
(d) The establishment of administrative structure and the provision of funds for its implementation.

The impact of the Cultural Policies on Cultural Values and Standards

The cultural policies are in place to project national culture, pride, solidarity and consciousness. Cultural values and standards are important parts of history; therefore the cultural policy incorporates them into our general national development process. This incorporation is achieved through the involvement of all agencies and individuals both traditional and contemporary in cultural activities which remain bedrock of national identity. The cultural policies with the set of rules, requirements and priorities, set out to retrieve and restore history and heritage, cultural values and standards by protecting and projecting them for posterity.

It is noteworthy that traditional standard and processes are not in any way tampered with and no attempt has been made to change them or do away with them in the entire write up of both cultural policies. The policies are proposed to give direction to give direction and pave way, for the promotion of culture in nation building.

It is important also to note that the cultural policies provide for the awareness of the traditional values and generate respect and appreciation for each nation's heritage. Besides, the fact that our culture gives us our distinct identity as peoples of various places, it is the values and standards which are practiced in cultural activities and are also observed in day to day activities that provide for sustenance and maintenance of what is referred to as culture.

The performing arts, visual arts, mass media, educational institutions, government and non- governmental agencies, traditional rulers inter-alia have been taken up as vehicles for the promotion, protection, preservation, and projection of cultural standards and values in the Nigerian society. The culture in terms of food, clothing, language, economic activities, rites of passage activities amongst others.

Finally, the cultural policies serve as a platform and elevation for culture. These policies put the spotlight on the very important foundation of every nation, its culture alongside the standards and values that guide it. The result of this is a never ending acknowledgement of the relevance of culture for sustainable growth and development of Nigeria, Africa and the world at large.

The Cultural Policies and the Preservation of Culture

The preservation of culture as provided for in the cultural policy of Nigeria relates to the promotion of cultural property whether of concrete or non-concrete nature, past or present, written or oral in so far as it relates to the values and facts of history.

The objective of cultural preservation is to ensure harmony with contemporary realities and the demands of change and development and to prevent a mindless sweeping away of the cultural heritage, as if this is allowed to happen, the situation will only result in disorderly change, societal instability and a people completely cut off from its cultural roots.

To this end, special attention shall be given to the preservation of traditional sacred groves, monuments, mausoleums, artistic treasures belonging to the state and to individuals, private homes and all objects of high artistic value. Also, collaboration with concerned institutions, agencies and individuals by the government to initiate research, into the various traditional and customary rules and laws of Nigeria and the research will be aided by documentation on audio and video tapes, film, e.t.c.

The important role which certain individuals, play in the society including chiefs, elders, women leaders, youth leaders shall be recognized

and utilized in the unearthing, preservation and conservation of cultural assets. The above stated measures have been documented in the cultural policies and serve as steps through which culture can be kept over time.

Conclusion

Based on the research data available, the following conclusions were made. A constant implementation of the measures in the cultural policy by the relevant agency would see a country that boasts of a sound history and rich cultural heritage.

A sound historic and cultural background is a solid foundation to build the future upon.

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