

Professionalising the Management of Nigeria's Public Performing Arts and Culture Institutions

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Abstract

The national identity quest by a people cannot be independent of the arts and culture of the people, in that, within the ambit of the people's arts and culture, lies the fabric and very root of their way of life; mores, cultural dispositions and value system, and of course their traditions, customs and beliefs. Ironically, Nigeria's public-run performing arts and culture institutions represented by the National Arts Theatre, and the corresponding states' councils for arts and culture located in the 36 states of the Nigerian federation, which all, supposedly warehouse and midwife the nation's arts and culture heritage, have not lived up to their founding mandates due to the dearth or complete absence of professionalism of the management, administration and the operations of the institutions. This study identifies the expected roles of these public-run arts and culture institutions, towards the humongous national identity project, and examines the present challenges of managing the institutions, with a view to determining the existing lapses that hamper them in delivering on their founding mandates. It recommends the effective professionalisation and revitalisation of the management and operations of the arts and culture institutions, for more efficacious contributions to the national identity agenda. In-depth one-on-one interviews, participant observation and focused group discussions methods are relied upon, and data collected subjected to content analysis. There is a dire need to professionalise and revitalize the management and operations of Nigeria's public-run performing arts and culture institutions, with a view to repositioning them for optimum contributions to the nation's national identity quest.

Keywords: Nigeria, National identity, Public-run arts institution, National Theatre, Management, Professionalism.

Introduction

Since the pre-colonial days, the Nigerian nation has been bedevilled by one form of civil crisis or the other: inter-ethnic and boundary rivalries, civil protests against colonial or local authorities, struggle for independence, and religious conflicts that sometimes turned uncontrollably violent. Then the immediate post-independence era experienced political intra and inter-party conflicts which eventually degenerated into inflamed political crises of national proportion. These have always been a prevalent intrusion in the entrenchment process of the national unity and identity project of the Nigerian nation, and have not abated since then. In fact, colonial complexities have not made the situation better as the neo-colonial structures that took the place of what the imperialist left behind became an off-shoot of new and exacerbated forms of civil and violent criminal crises. According to Akinola (2018, p. 265), some key contributors to the various crises in most African countries, beyond the issues of ethnicity, are "... colonial heritage through resource exploitation, and inability of ethnic nationalities within African States to negotiate the terms of their statehood, inept political leadership, poverty and alienation, misrule and corruption and 'sit-tightism' has predisposed African States to the intrigues of violent conflicts." The crises have, however, manifested in diverse forms such as large scale armed robberies, high-profile kidnapping, oil bunkering and hostage taking of oil company nationals, religious intolerance-induced violence reminiscent of ethnic cleansing and genocide, which finally birthed the dare-devil boko-haram insurgency. This has also brought about the regime of suicide-bombing and massive bombing of public institutions and buildings, market places, religious worship places even while worshipers are gathered therein. This had been inter alia, alien to the Nigerian society.

The other extension of the anti-national identity crises in Nigeria is that colonialism, industrialisation and globalisation did bring about, the importation of various cultural values and norms into the African continent post-colonisation, most of which are quite alien to the African peoples' indigenous psychographics and belief system. This is the background to the establishment of public performing arts and culture institutions by various African nations at the post-independence era, to serve as pivots in the acculturation and national identity agenda ensuring that African countries sustain their mores,

values and traditional beliefs and ethos which ultimately culminate in their national identity. Ironically, the efforts and contributions of these national performing arts institutions as epitomized in the National theatres and other government-owned theatres of the various countries have however been grossly inadequate in the fulfilment of their founding mandates amongst which is the national identity project is a critical item. This study examines the management challenges of these public-run performing arts and culture institutions, with the National Arts Theatre of Nigeria as a major reference, against the background of its perceived inadequate contributions to the national identity project, and therefore proffers the professionalisation of the management and administration of the institutions as a panacea toward making them more effective in the fulfilment of their founding mandate.

The Need for the Professionalisation of the Management of Public Arts Institutions

The public arts and culture institutions especially as epitomized by the National Theatre institution of any nation is, by its inherent components and assumed competencies, an a priori custodian of the host people's mores, values, customs and culture and therefore possesses the propensity to lead, as well as midwife the national identity agenda of their host nation. If any National Theatre is to live up to its name especially in Africa, its performance and objectives should be seen against the background of these parameters proposed by Barbara Ann Teer for the National Black Theatre which she established way back in 1968 in New York – that such a theatre should: 1. raise the level of consciousness through liberating the spirits and strengthening the minds of its people; 2. be political, i.e., must deal in a positive manner with the existing conditions of oppression; 3 educate to bring out that which is already within, giving knowledge and truth; 4. clarify issues, by enlightening participants as to why so many negative conditions and images exist in their community in order to eliminate the negative condition and strengthen the positive condition; and 5. entertain (Osofisan, 2001, p. 204).

To that extent, a public performing arts establishment like the National theatre in any country in the world for that matter, should be capable of significantly impacting on the level of consciousness

of the people and be able to orient them towards the desired national socio-cultural and political goals intended by the theatre's professional managers. This is achievable through deliberate programme planning, repertory design and implementation, effective decision making, delegation and selecting and developing the right people, customer-focused, audience development and marketing communications strategies, and of course, astute strategic management and leadership. An effective and efficient synergy between this and the creative aspects goes a long way in helping this theatre format to achieve the desired national identity goal. This is evident in the cases of most National theatre institutions of developed countries in Europe and America. Ironically, even with the extremely robust cultural heritage of indigenous Africa, which already serves as a fertile platform for an effectively productive national theatre, the general state of Africa's National theatre institutions in terms of general management and administration, and day-to-day operational output, is an abysmal situation. To be able to fulfil their founding objectives and contribute meaningfully to the cultural identity advancement of the continent in general, and that of Nigeria, in particular, a repositioning and professionalisation of the management and operations of the various public performing arts and culture institutions (alongside their private sector counterparts), is required.

The 21st century is no doubt, very competitive in search of the fundamentals of life. All sectors of the economy are undergoing transformation. The artists should understand that expertise that exists in their cultural and creative industry field, offers them the opportunity of helping to anticipate and respond to the need for fast-paced technological and operational challenges and changes of the time. The professionalisation of performing arts management will increase the efficiency, effectiveness and productivity of the artists and their institutions in the manner that will promote the harnessing of diverse ideas, knowledge, expertise, experiences and skills which ought to bring about effective and efficient resources management development as well as scientific and technological breakthrough, and ultimately, the fulfilment of the nation's overall socio-cultural, political and economic objectives. Professionalised art management has been used effectively for the advancement of art, art organisations and artists in advanced countries especially

due to their capacity to flow with the progressive trends of advancement in technology, such as global telecommunication infrastructure, all due to globalisation. Enamhe (2014) posits that in the last two decades art scholars have been making clarion calls for the repositioning and rebranding the art and culture industry in Nigeria. This is being in tandem with the evolving global changes, and the need to accord the art and culture its proper place in the society. This again intensifies the need to reposition the management and general operability of the institutions for the optimisation of their performances and productivity.

Management Challenges of the Public Performing Arts and Culture Institutions in Nigeria

There are a number of identified challenges affecting the productivity and effectiveness of the management of the public performing arts and culture institutions such as the National Arts Theatre, thereby largely hampering its full capacity utilization and its ability to deliver its own contribution to the national identity agenda:

Resistance to change: In commenting on the challenge of resistance to change as it obtains in the public performing arts institutions, for example, Awodiya ((2006, p. 167) states, particularly about Nigeria's National arts theatre, "the National Arts Theatre, which has been in operation for 25 years (since September 30, 1976), has become too rigid to meet the first test of effective organisational structure, that is, adaptation to changing environment and meeting new situations." He adds, "The theatre (NT) provides ample evidence of these organisational inflexibilities" Change can be regarded as a planned or an unplanned dynamic condition. Change is about the most constant recurring phenomenon in the day-to-day management and administration of any institution. It can be brought about due to a number of reasons:

- a. When new technologies require introduction into a system.
- b. When improvement and updating is required in the structure or general operations of the organisation.
- c. When the publics/customers begin to request for a different, or higher quality products or services.
- d. When structural or operational expansion or reduction is required for better corporate performances.

To a large extent, there is a default tendency for any part of the stakeholders of an organisation to want to resist one form of change or the other that is either being introduced or requires introduction. Incidentally, the bureaucratic set-up in the public sector organisations, and as epitomized in the National Arts Theatre of Nigeria certainly is a huge dis-service to innovative changes in the status quo, which therefore goes a long way in affecting initiatives and contemporaneous innovations.

Gross under-capacity utilisation and facility abuse: A larger percentage of the facilities at the National theatre and its contemporary states council for arts and culture theatre facilities are rather over-subscribed for other activities like book launches, wedding events, birthday parties, product launches, funeral parties, etc. While it is necessary that these events hold for the purposes of revenue generation, a situation, however, arises where such social events become so overwhelming in terms of frequency of usage, reservations, facility dominance and abuse that the very art and culture performances and activities for which the institutions are put in place in the first instance now struggle for space. B. Yerima (n.d.) citing Mahmoud Ali Balogun on the losses the National Arts Theatre is suffering due to under-capacity utilisation of its very contemporary and professionally equipped facilities, states that earnings from the cinemas are just one aspect of what can be done with the National Theatre, if you look at what is being done at Terra Kulture, Film One House, Silver bird Galleria, and Genesis in terms of raising revenues, I would say the National Theatre loss is too much, too unquantifiable. Citing E. Ogbomah, B. Yerima further claims that:

With the kind of facilities at the National Theatre which till date remained unparalleled in the country, the goals for its establishment still remain un-achieved as the facilities remain under-utilized for most part of the year. In his words: 'There is an exhibition hall, the banquet hall, the VIP hall, a 5,000-seater main bowl, no venue in Nigeria has this capacity. The main bowl also has a revolving stage, which is rare to come by in most events centres, and this stage has not been used in about 30 years, imagine how much money Government would be making if 5,000 people pay at least 500 hundred naira to watch a film or play that would be shown thrice or four times a day.

This underutilisation of the public performing arts institutions in Nigeria is an abuse of the facilities and characteristically contributory to a huge loss of revenue and misconceptions of the economic value of such establishments by government itself.

Bureaucracy: Bureaucratic bottleneck has always been the bane of public service institutions and establishments. This also gives birth to the high level of bureaucracy in the various public performing arts and culture centres – the National Arts Theatre and the states councils for arts and culture inclusive. Bureaucracy consequently hampers the response time to required contemporary speed of programme implementation and decision-making. For example, every major decision to be taken by management must go through several ranks to the supervising Minister for Arts and Culture, then to the Board of Trustees which incidentally do not meet too often. Some decisions even have to wait for the assent of the Senate Committee in charge of culture, or worst, the President, and Commander-in-Chief. Commenting on bureaucracy at the National Arts Theatre, in a personal interview (February 6, 2007), A. Yerima, the then Director General of the National Theatre noted that:

You cannot beat that. Bureaucracy, if you want to work with government, you can't escape it. Because government is bureaucracy in the first instance. In my ministry, there is the arm that formulate policies, and you are to implement policies. But the formulators want to implement. The formulators are not happy that you are the one people are hearing about. So they want to write some memos that will slow you down. Formulators believe that by turning the theatre around, you are showing that they have failed.

A. Yerima further surmised that:

You (as the Director-General) are not a member of the party. You are a member of the board. But the board sees you as an errand boy. Then you talk of the Minister, who sees you as his officer. Meanwhile, you are appointed, not at the pleasure of the board, so the board cannot fire you, but they can make enough recommendations and noise to kick you out. You are there at the pleasure of the Minister. In fact, the President. But the President cannot come and see you every day. So it's the Minister who decides. And if the Minister says he cannot work with you, you are on the way out. So you find these

challenges. Then there is also the House of Assembly. There is the House Committee on Culture. There is the Senate Committee on Culture. And there are usually about 13 or 14 members each. They must all be convinced about your recommendations and decisions. So it is a huge challenge that as an officer of government, you must convince all these people about your policies, strategies and direction. Here is the President, here is the Minister, here is the Chairperson of the board and you must work with, and through all of them, and they must all be happy with you. (A. Yerima, personal interview, February 6, 2007). In a situation when most strategic decisions have to wade through the assent of these various bureaucratic bottlenecks, a lot of things suffer in the process of time and resources wastage.

Miss-appointment: On a number of occasions, government appointees for the chief executive officer position of the National arts theatre do not have the requisite academic, professional qualifications and cognate work experiences for the job. There have been situations where an engineer or a medical doctor was appointed as head of the publicly run performing arts and culture organisation. It is almost certain that there will be under-performance, as the appointees do not have the required technical expertise to run an art-based organisation. Commenting on the situation of miss-appointment in the publicly run Theatre Institutions, Awodiya (2006, p.170) posits that the National arts theatre “has a weak organisational structure as a result of inappropriate staff recruitment policy, and a bloated workforce”. He cited E.N. Bassey in saying that: “while the number of workers in the service of the National Arts Theatre had been steadily increasing, the stock of positions and responsibilities had been decreasing over the years, thereby creating serious bloated workforce.” Awodiya adds that “the National Arts Theatre has thus become a public sector model of inefficiency”. Other times, even when appointees are art-based, they are not professional theatre managers, and therefore not schooled nor experienced in the management and politics of administering a public arts institution of such magnitude. A. Yerima, in an interview (2007), referred to this deficiency as a major challenge with the Osofisan administration as General Manager of the National Arts Theatre. A situation where a playwright or an actor par excellence is appointed to manage a theatre is a miss-normal because he or she lacks the professional art

management competencies for the job. This has also been a major setback for the anticipated optimisation of the values of such institutions.

Lack of consistent annual programme/repertory planning: A national arts venue like the National Arts Theatre or the state council for arts and culture of any of the states in Nigeria, should have a consistent annual repertory of theatrical performances all year round, and possibly an additional planned annual fiesta of arts, for its teaming audience and publics to subscribe to on a continuous basis. But this is not so with the National Arts Theatre and the corresponding States Art Council Theatres. Awodiya (2006, p. 149) states that “lack of programme planning is the bane of the National Arts Theatre” He explains further: “The absence of committees to plan production programmes has led the National Arts Theatre to poor project implementation, ineffective operation and weak programming” Incidentally, Nigeria’s National and state arts and culture houses are, either engaged full time with showcasing dances at house-warming events for State dignitaries, or entertaining state visitors at arrival terminus at airports, or most of the time idle, or on an overseas tour with a single performance during the away-from-home period of which the entire theatre will then be idle in lieu of the returning of the touring contingent.

Lack of periodic audience research: These public theatres do not seem to deem it necessary to carry out a periodic audience satisfaction survey which would ordinarily help to appreciate or appropriately gauge the feelings of the audience, what they want and what their input would be as to their expectations from their theatre institutions. Awodiya (2006, p. 201) believes that “the National arts theatre cannot accurately identify its multiple audience constituencies and monitor their changing characteristics and needs.” This should be easily captured in a concerted periodic audience research. Awodiya adds, that: “the theatre does not conduct appropriate audience research to consider how its programme of performances could be modified to meet the needs of its constituents; to determine the theatre’s weaknesses and strengths and its perceived value in the community.” Whereas, a periodic audience research will enable a theatre to effectively gauge the temperaments, appetite and disposition of its existing and potential audience at

regular intervals to enable them provide performances that fit the audience per time.

Overdependence on sponsorship funding and government subventions: As government-owned institutions, these public art houses should receive statutory government subventions and other public financial supports and sponsorships. This however should not foreclose an effort by the administration of the institutions from being productively self-reliant for most of their funding requirements, or at least from achieving break-even performance in the funding of their productions and general operations. Ironically, instead of taking full professional and business advantage of a number of Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) opportunities, the administration of these institutions rather sit still, depending wholly on government supply of funds that may in the end never be sufficient for their expenditure, and when such funds do not come as expected and planned for, the arts houses are stranded. Incidentally, fund-raising activities are becoming more challenging and competitive by the day. According to Webb (2004, p. 91), "fund raising is very competitive with performing arts facilities (now) competing for funds with hospitals, schools, churches, and even the non-profit organisations they serve." Ipso facto, it becomes an issue for concern for organisations that almost entirely depend on these same sources as their major source of income to run the organisation.

Inadequate audience development initiatives: Most relevant and cost effective awareness creation and audience development programmes are not done either for lack of managerial initiative or because of low budget. For example, not too much of the conventional below-the-line and above-the-line marketing communications strategies as listed below, are deployed by the marketing department of the National Arts Theatre again, either due to low budget, or due an unfounded and unjustifiable confidence that 'the audience will always come because it is happening at the National Arts Theatre:

- (a) Audience survey;
- (b) Newspaper advertisement;
- (c) Radio and television advertisement;
- (d) Publicity and public relations;
- (f) Effective personal selling;

- (g) Outdoor advertising;
- (h) Direct marketing; and
- (i) Website advertising.

As reported by Awodiya (2006), “the gloomy picture of audience paucity at the National Arts Theatre is as a result of lack of concerted efforts to cultivate theatre audience”. Whereas these go a long way in making awareness creation and audience development a lot easier and more effective.

Lack of adequate facility maintenance and management:

Commenting on the dismal state of the National Arts Theatre and the abandonment and lack of maintenance challenges it faces, A. Yerima, in a personal interview, February 6, 2007, claimed that:

The National Theatre I inherited was likely comatose when I took over. Administratively, in terms of the staff attitude, in terms of dynamism of management and focus, in terms of programmes; first there had not been power here for about two years. Water wasn't running, the roof was leaking, well quite a lot of things were gone really, really bad. Well, because after the FESTAC 77, the Federal Government decided to treat the place like a government property. You know, the Nigerian thing, and Government properties usually are treated as its our own, so there is no need to go the extra mile to take good care of it. So the facilities were dilapidated, and unfortunately, the facilities outside in terms of technology and development were improving and moving at a fast rate. And theatre halls like MUSON were coming up – the MUSON Centre, so it was easy to now judge it (the National Arts Theatre) , as a failed property (Yerima, A, personal interview, February 6, 2007).

Evidently, the facilities of Nigeria's National Arts Theatre are abandoned to rot without diligent maintenance. As a result, the facilities are run down. Apart from the usually obviously touted excuse tendered by the administrators of the place, which is that there is no adequate funding support from the government for the purpose, there is also the very troubling issue of the cancerous generally nonchalant attitude of the operators toward public facilities in the name of government-owned properties, and therefore not belonging to anybody in particular. This negative attitudinal disposition of the typical civil servant toward their working

environment and facilities is a major reason for under-performance of these institutions.

Lack of commitment to policy/budget implementation: There is a conscientious and consistent effort of government to renege in its policy/budget promises and commitment to its institutions and parastatals especially the performing arts concerns. This is usually due, according to the conclusions reached in a focused group discussion conducted by this researcher, to government disinterests or their under-prioritisation of arts and culture institutional projects, and that available working budget plans are usually mere paper works, which do not contain sincere figures or genuine, realistic, implementable plans. The identified items on the budget plans, where there are figures at all, are eventually, not provided for by government, as budgeted.

Professionalisation of the Management of Public Performing Arts Institutions

Against the backdrop of these management challenges, the Theatre Managers of these public theatre establishments ought to begin to apply a systematic flow of contemporary management principles and practices to achieve results by skilful planning, marketing, event management, fund raising, mounting exhibition, etc., adequate interlacing of viable activities that can generate developmental goals. It is the duty of the Theatre Managers to create favourable conditions for the general staff, crew and cast of the public performing arts centres to enable them optimize their efforts and creativity toward the realisation of the founding objectives of the institutions. The Rockefeller report of 1965 described the expected capacities and competencies of the contemporary professional theatre manager as: ... a person who is knowledgeable in the art with which he is concerned, an impresario, labour negotiator, diplomat, educator, publicity and public relations experts, a politician, skilled businessman, a social sophisticate, a servant of the community, a tireless leader, becoming humble before authority, a teacher, a tyrant and a continuing student of the art with which he has to do... (Langley, 1990, p. 23).

What is Professionalisation of Management?

Ohenhen (2017, p. 113), citing Merriam-Webster Dictionary, conceptualises professionalism as the skill, good judgment, and polite behaviour that is expected from a person who is trained to do a job well; a conduct, aims or qualities that characterise or mark a profession or a professional person. Accordingly, to be a professional arts or theatre manager suggests that the person is inherently or by training, equipped with the ability to make good judgment and is courteous in behaviour and conducts his affairs in a manner that speaks in tandem with the profession he or she represents. To that extent, professionalisation of management is an attempt to impart social responsibility and dignity to management. The professional has professional knowledge and judgment, which he or she uses to make his or her decisions. Thus, professionalisation makes business produce results that are most efficient, dynamic and socially responsible. Cited in <https://www.wisdomjobs.com/e-university/principles-of-management-and-organisational-behaviour-tutorial>, (August 2019), Abraham Flexner spells out the characteristics of a profession in the following specifications: 1. A body of specialized knowledge and recognized educational process of acquiring it; 2. A standard of qualifications governing admission to the profession; 3. A standard of conduct governing the relationship of the practitioners with clients, colleagues and the public; 4. An acceptance of the social responsibility inherent in an occupation and the public interest; and 5. An association or society devoted to the advancement of the social obligations as distinct from the economic interests of the group. (<https://www.wisdomjobs.com/e-university/principles-of-management-and-organisational-behaviour-tutorial>, 2019).

In the same vein, Lewis Allen is also quoted in <https://www.wisdomjobs.com/e-university/principles-of-management-and-organisational-behaviour-tutorial>, 2019, as positing that “a professional manager is one who specializes in the work of planning, organising, leading and controlling the efforts of others and does so through a systematic use of classified knowledge, a common vocabulary and principles, who subscribes to the standards of practice and code of ethics established by a recognized body”. Then, as cited also of Peter Drucker, “professional management is a function, a discipline, a task to be done; and managers are the professionals who practice this discipline, carry out the functions and discharge

these tasks." The World Council of Management recommended the criteria for professionalisation as follows:

1. Members of a profession subordinate self-interest to the client interest and the official interest;
2. A profession is based on a systematic body of knowledge that is held to common and lends to application;
3. Membership of a profession should depend on the observance of certain rules of conduct or behaviour. (<https://www.wisdomjobs.com/e-university/principles-of-management-and-organisational-behaviour-tutorial>, 2019).

According to Eribake (2014), in the typical Nigerian civil service, there are too many people doing nothing, too many doing too little and too few people doing too much. Eribake, further cited the 1999 White Paper on Modernising Government by the UK Government which sets out six key themes as the locus of the professionalisation programme aimed at promoting a performance-oriented civil service:

- (a) stronger leadership with a clear sense of purpose ('vision and values' for departments; stronger central control of senior appointments, '360-degree feedback' on staff performance);
- (b) better business planning from top to bottom (with all departments to have business plans with peer or outside review 'cascaded down to personal responsibility plans;
- (c) sharper performance management (with relative appraisal systems to identify poor performers);
- (d) a dramatic improvement in diversity (with targets to have more women and ethnic minorities at senior levels);
- (e) a service more open to people and ideas, which brings on talent (more interchange and outside recruitment); and
- (f) a better deal for staff ('good conditions of service, meeting or exceeding best employment practice in the UK' - a concession to tradition).

Furthermore, Eribake (2014) argues that it is definitely not a mere conceptual coincidence that the modernising imperative is hinged, first and last, on the image of leadership - a civil servant that understands the direction of effectiveness and efficiency, and takes it". Capturing the Nigerian civil service reform (professionalisa-

tion) efforts of various regimes between 1985 and 2015, namely: “1985/1988 Phillips Commission, the Ayida Reform of 1995, the Obasanjo Renewal Programme, Yar’Adua Civil Service Reform Programme, and the Jonathan Transformation Agenda 1999/2015. Hence, he submits that all of the efforts though named differently by the different regimes, where however aimed at achieving the following:

- (a) to re-professionalise as a means of creating a new generation of officers and technocrats with sufficient skills, knowledge and motivation for institutional innovation;
- (b) the conduct of vigorous and systematic evaluation and reporting of professional performance to make policy-makers accountable for resources used and for results;
- (c) modernising core operations and systems of the Nigerian Civil Service using ICT;
- (d) creation of a number of more specialized cadres;
- (e) putting in place a system of capacity utilization wherein core skills are better matched with jobs;
- (f) injection of high skills and competencies available in other sectors of the economy into the public service, using a range of incentives; and
- (g) strengthening policy and research synergies through enhanced collaborative projects, including public-private partnerships.

All of these were past governments’ efforts at professionalising the Nigerian Civil Service. But again, whether the civil service (both state and federal) have duly imbibed these plans as at today is a matter for research and evaluation in another paper. But as a pre-emptive hypothesis, this is very much to be doubted. However, given that the National Arts Theatre and its corresponding states councils for arts and culture are very representative of the same Civil Service system, it only then gives a lot of credence to the propositions of this article which are that, these institutions are actually professionalisable, and could be made to function and perform at more effective and efficient peak, towards the more feasible achievement of their set corporate objectives.

Strategies for the Professionalisation of the Management of Public Performing Arts Institutions

The following recommendations, arising from focused group discussions conducted by this researcher, are strategies to be imbibe in the professionalisation efforts of the management of the National Arts Theatre and other public performing arts concerns in Nigeria, and those of other countries in the African Continent, if the institutions are to become viable, sustainable and run in tandem with 21st century world class civil service institutions, and be consequently positioned to contribute substantially to the national identity project of their countries.

De-bureaucratisation of the performing arts and culture administration: The present strictly civil service-oriented, bureaucratic structure of the public performing arts institutions in Nigeria, is a fundamental dis-service and setback to the productivity and aspiring peak performance of the institutions. If these organisations are to effectively achieve their corporate founding objectives amongst which are the said national identity project (which is the focus of this paper), then Government and the other supervising authorities of these institutions must restructure the administrative and operative apparatus with an intention of reducing the current too-numerous and cumbersome reporting layers, and drastically reducing the response times to decision-making and job implementation. This will help to free up the system and allow for more effective and efficient use of time, materials and other resources.

De-politicisation of appointments procedures and employing rightly: Government should desist from subjecting employments especially at the leadership levels of these institutions to political or other nepotistic sentiments and engage best qualified and experienced professional arts managers to the various sensitive positions of the day-to-day administration of the institutions; the much more so, as the job of managers and indeed, theatre managers essentially requires the specialised skills, knowledge and attitude of trained individuals. Conscientious efforts should be made, to hire the right people for the job. For example, the man at the helm of affairs of any performing arts and culture institution should understand the arts, have a passion for it, and should fit into the

1965 Rockefeller Foundation definition of a contemporary Theatre Manager cited by Langley and as earlier quote in this paper: ... a person who is knowledgeable in the art with which he is concerned, an impresario, labour negotiator, diplomat, educator, publicity and public relations experts, a politician, skilled businessman, a social sophisticate, a servant of the community, a tireless leader, becoming humble before authority, a teacher, a tyrant and a continuing student of the art with which he has to do... (Langley, 1990, p. 23). This Stephen Langley's definition should become a parameter for hiring, training and developing managers for the Nigerian performing arts and culture institutions be they public or private. It effectively covers the basic requirements in the aspects of knowledge, skills and attitude for the job. Compromise of any sort must not be exercised in ensuring that the right persons are hired to run the organisations.

De-centralisation of authority: The reporting lines of authority in the public service and particularly that of the public performing arts institutions could be extremely hierarchical and overtly centralized and cumbersome, a lot of authority and power revolving around very few personalities. This slows down, and therefore, discourages initiative approval processes and consequently affects productivity. The team oriented flat-organisational structure is recommended for the new professionalised management and more productive public performing arts organisation. In the new performing arts institution that must be effectively run, its management, broken down into active team leads, must be empowered enough and allowed the freedom to dispense their professional initiatives to the day-to-day planning, organising, staffing, controlling and leading of the institutions.

Research-Based Audience Development and Marketing Communications Strategies

The National arts theatre and the corresponding states councils for arts and culture should be allowed to run as independent business concern while however, still receiving government subventions and subsidies. That presupposes for example, that they should aim at breaking-even or even making profits in every performance, instead of running their productions at cost or at a loss, which is presently the case. This drive and consciousness will then enable them to

engage research-based audience development and marketing communications strategies both for immediate productions and for all times. Grants for the Arts, Arts Council England, Webb reports that: the term Audience Development describes activity, which is undertaken specifically to meet the needs of existing and potential audiences, and to help arts organisations to develop on-going relationships with audiences. It can include aspects of marketing, commissioning, programming, education, customer care and distribution. 'Audience' encompasses attendees, visitors, readers, listeners, viewers, participants and learners (Webb, 2004, p. 51).

Whereas, marketing communications refers to a combination of every form of communications tools relevant to the marketing process of goods, ideas and services. For utmost success of the public performing arts institutions, like their private sector commercial performing arts counterparts, or conventional industry counterparts, their marketing efforts must become strictly based on research findings far more than sheer guess work. The institution that must market right, selling the right product, to the right audience, at the right time, for the right pricing, for the right location, must not by any means be research-shy. Through research, for example, a volume of vital information will be thrown open to enhance the organisation's marketing communications efforts, making them more result-oriented and customer-driven. An effective pre-marketing research will provide needed answers to the following questions:

- a. What is the best segment of audience to be targeted?
- b. What are the psychographics and demographics of the target audience?
- c. What kind of performances do they prefer over the others?
- d. What is the audience impression about previous performances presented?
- e. What would they like improved?
- f. What attracts them to their theatre?
- g. What repels them from their theatre?

Becoming a customer-centric institution: The management of the public performing arts centres must become deliberately customer-friendly and put programmes in place that must help the achievement of a customer friendly organisation from the Theatre precinct gate

to the Board of Trustees membership. The following customer loyalty programmes are therefore suggested to help the customer-centric efforts of the institution:

- a. An annual customer forum where customers of various categories will be invited, entertained and various patronage awards given;
- b. Special regular customer concessions;
- c. Customer satisfaction survey;
- d. Customer complaint/suggestions forum.

Regards for an adequate marketing communication budget: The performing arts institutions should broaden their present marketing and marketing communications platform to become more relevant and competitive. The marketing communications efforts of the institutions cannot exceed the limits of budget approvals for the proposed efforts. The importance of the role played by marketing communications in the whole drive for the audience should be enough impetus to provide for it substantially in the annual organisation's budget.

Strategic planning/management: The National Arts Theatre and the States Councils for Arts and Culture should develop their own working corporate blueprint which should become their guiding compass, beside whatever government may have handed over to them. A corporate blueprint should contain a vision statement, a mission statement, corporate objectives and a set of corporate culture guidelines. A well crafted, broad-based corporate mission statement according to Webb should be able to: "motivate people inside the organisation, inspire and invite support (from outside), must be understood to provide a lot of flexibility to the organisation as it considers how to accomplish its goals" (Webb, 2004, p. 128).

According to Ivancevich, Lorenzi Skinner (1994, p. 207), "... an organisation's mission is its *raison d'etre* (French for 'reason for being'), the fundamental purpose it is designed to serve". They further stated that: "The organisational mission statement answers the question 'what is this organisation's purpose: for employees, customers, and other constituents". For an illustration of what a typical mission statement suitable for a performing arts centre should be like, below is the mission statement of the Arts Centre of Schenectady as cited by Webb (2014) to provide a diverse programme

with excellent performances to restore and preserve the beautiful Proctors Theatre, to serve as a cultural centre for the Capital Region and to the extent that resources permits support activities that contribute to the quality of life of the region (2004, pp. 127-129). Besides the corporate blueprint, the institutions should also engage in long term planning which enables them know well in advance of 10 to 20 years where they wish to take the organisation.

Employee engagement programmes: The professionalised managers of these institutions must endeavour to provide an enabling environment that will engage their employees in a way that will become a departure from the present moribund, boring and routinized workplace of the Nigerian civil service. Various creative employees engaging activities, including recreational initiatives should be installed in the organisation's precincts. This makes the workplace a lot more employee-friendly and a refreshing work atmosphere where the employees are allowed to enjoy a high level of self-worth, and the dignity of labour and creative initiatives. More than ever before, institutions and particularly performing arts institutions the world over are realizing, and even more importantly too, that their employees make the organisations work, and that the employees are the greatest and most valuable assets of the organisations, and that its management must therefore invest their best resources in achieving a workforce that is highly motivated and is loyal, dedicated and interested enough in serving the best interest of the organisation. This is the bedrock of result-oriented and performance driven organisations of the 21st century economy.

Social responsibility: Regardless of what the policy of Government may be towards this initiative, the theatre is naturally a people and societal oriented concern. It should therefore not be out of place for the performing arts institutions to design programmes that will be people-based and aimed at giving back to their immediate host communities. These efforts can include: scholarship offers in any area of the arts, street beautification, charities, talent hunting and sponsorships of young and individual artists and performing arts groups; collaboration with indigenous arts groups. More than ever, public performing arts organisations managers should become socially responsible in their thinking and in their planning to succeed as a public socio-cultural concern. At the end of the day, the

performing arts institutions are a people-oriented and culture-driven concern, which must go beyond its internal programmes and affairs to make its impact felt in its community. Periodic human capacity building and manpower development: In view of the growing competitiveness of the labour terrain, one known way of keeping the management and staff of organisations updated, innovative, top performing and loyal to the organisation is through training and constant re-training and development. The institutions should develop a training curriculum for its cross-section of employees, touching various aspects of the facilities' operations. Drawing from the various lapses and problems in the typical Nigerian Public performing arts institutions as identified earlier in this study, the following training needs can be evolved and various officers directly involved with such needs selected for trainings in those areas from time to time:

- a. leadership and team building skills;
- b. planning and goal setting skills;
- c. facility management skills for a non-profit performing arts organisation;
- d. developing a winning attitude in employees;
- e. developing interpersonal skills;
- f. issues in public/customer relations;
- g. excellent customer service delivery;
- h. delegation of authority and decision making skills;
- i. developing audience research skills;
- j. skills in achieving a customer-centric organisation;
- k. managing a non-profit performing arts facility effectively;
- l. managing conflicts in teams;
- m. managing multiplicity of responsibilities and effective prioritizing;
- n. time management and personal effectiveness.

Trainings of all levels of employees in these areas will help to ensure a well-empowered, updated and inspired work force. It will also help to sanitize the work atmosphere and create a more humane team-driven, customer-focused, performance-directed, and result oriented organisation.

Planning and plan implementation: The effective theatre manager's starting point is planning. Planning according to Koontz *et al* (1972,

p. 152), is "... an intellectually demanding process which requires the conscious determination of courses of action, and the bases of decisions on purpose, knowledge and considered estimates". They continued by saying that: "If group effort is to be effective, people must know what they are expected to accomplish and that this is the basic function of planning". Every manager must plan as a habit. Plan annually, monthly, weekly, daily and on an event-by-event basis. The professionalised theatre manager in the process of planning should consider putting goals and plans in place for programmes and budget. Implementation. According to Usukuma in *Brand Faces* magazine, budgetary planning involves "providing a platform for allocating resources and it constitutes a major instrument for monitoring progress towards achieving long-term objectives and sets a control discipline which helps to accomplish plans within agreed expenditure limits" (2004, p. 3). To be effective, the expenditure limits as set by the managers in their annual or periodically reviewed budget, must as much as possible be defined, agreed on and respected, if the organisation is to be an economically and profitably viable venture.

Total quality management culture: This is a most crucial and professionally strategic management tool that is available to the contemporary theatre manager. Total quality management (TQM) is a management technique that is obsessed with excellence and highest quality attainable in every activity within the organisation. For an organisation like the public performing arts institution that is likely prone to accepting any level of quality standards due to a general lapse in employee attitude, TQM is one way to go, if peak performance is to become a culture. According to Akanro, in *Brand Faces* (2003, p. 25) "... most managers do not understand what TQM is all about, and those who seem to understand do not apply it to their business operations and management, hence a lot of business have closed shop or are in distress." TQM will enable the organisation's managers understand their customer enough to be able to select the right theme of the right play by the right author for the right cast in the right season for the right ticket pricing, all for the right audience at the right time and in the right place and on the basis of a right budget. And of course, the acting and the entire production and performance processes will have to be right. TQM recognizes that the cost of mistakes made in first attempts is usually

too wasteful and expensive for the organisation and in some cases, irredeemable. He or she therefore does everything to avoid publishing errors in the first instance. This culture will change the face of the Civil Service-run theatre institution.

Conclusion

The trending context of internationalisation, globalisation, and the increasing global migration, presents challenges and opportunities for the arts and cultural sector which necessitates the professionalisation of the management of institutions. With creative and aesthetic expressions inherently reflective of cultural ideas, it is much easier to contribute more substantially to the highly sought national identity quest through such public institutions like the National Arts Theatre. The knowledge and values that arts and cultural managers possess, have a significant role to play in directing, administering and mediating as well as channeling the needed intercultural understanding that leads more effectively to the national identity of a people that have been so bastardised by all sorts of national, regional and tribal malaise. This refers to the managers' ability to know, accept, value, and empathise with alternative perspectives and perceptions of the world due to their training and competencies. Ipso facto, professionalisation of the management of public performing arts and culture strongly indicates a call to paying ardent and urgent attention to effective and result-driven management of the erstwhile straitjacketed, inefficient, bureaucratic systems, in ensuring that they imbibe a contemporaneous and unfolding systematic body of knowledge in management. That is in saying that the new theatre managers should themselves have formally acquired the specialised knowledge, attitude and skills for management of the art, more especially for bracing up to the inherent challenges of the public performing arts institutions. According to Akomolafe as cited in Ogunbiyi (1981, p. 427), ... the problems of administrative coordination within and amongst these theatres demand great attention; that the need has surfaced for properly trained theatre administrative executives and managers to begin to perform other functions if live theatre is to survive and prosper according to the needs of society.

This research has reported that the publicly run performing arts and culture institutions anywhere in the world, especially as

represented in the National theatre of the various countries, are positioned, particularly in reference to their founding mandates, to be the midwife and custodian of the customs, culture, norms, mores and traditions of their host countries, and an instrumental contributor to the national cohesion and identity of their individual countries. Ironically, while this has been very achievable by the National theatres in developed countries like the USA, Britain and Europe, it has however been far-fetched by the National theatres and other public theatres in African countries. This is due to several environmental, managerial, administrative and operational challenges faced by these theatres as identified in this research, with a case reference to Nigeria's National arts theatre, and the corresponding states council for arts and culture. The article posited that one inevitable panacea to the identified challenges of these theatres for a more effective positioning to be able to perform and begin to achieve their founding mandates, including that of their host countries' national identity, is the professionalisation of the management of these government-run theatre institutions. Also, it provided an overview on the professionalisation concept and to what extent it could impact on the overall performance and productivity of the institutions. In the end, professionalisation strategies are recommended. Indeed, the public performing arts and culture institutions can live up to their expected national mandates if diligent attention is paid by government and the various supervising authorities over these establishments, to the professionalisation strategies herein recommended, critical amongst which is the de-bureaucratisation of the management system, de-politicisation of the leadership employment process, and the introduction of a total quality management culture.

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