

TRENDS IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT – OWNED CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA: THE OYO STATE COUNCIL FOR ARTS AND CULTURE IN FOCUS

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Abstract

An Arts Council is established for the purpose of “preserving, promoting, propagating and fostering the arts and culture of their various states”. Other aims of an Arts Council are to improve the knowledge, understanding and practice of the arts, and to make them more accessible to the public. Paradoxically, the Arts Council has been widely criticized by critics as the citadel of bureaucratic establishment art, whose objectives are too ill-defined to make evaluation possible. Most charges are those of being unrepresentative, undemocratic and irresponsible. The questions evolving from these are: how accessible is the arts to the public? Who does the Arts Council serve? Why do we have an Arts Council? In an attempt to answer these questions and others, the paper examines the trends in public and private support for government-owned cultural institutions. Particular reference is made to the Oyo State Council for Arts and Culture as a prototypical example of a government-owned cultural institution.

Introduction

There has been sustained criticism of the undemocratic and irresponsible composition of the Arts Council and its panels. This has generated arguments among critics about who or what the Arts Council serves. One of such is by Peter Dormer (1981) in his article titled: “Bloodied but not bold: The Arts Council of Great Britain”. Peter Dormer attempts to examine to examine critically various arguments about who or what the Arts Council serves. The question of its accessibility to the public has been the main concern of its critics. Democratizing the Arts Council is just one of the wranglings rooted in the argument about who or what the Arts Council serves. Emphasis is thus on making the council more democratic and

accountable. The essence is for the Arts Council to formulate a policy that looks at how access to the arts can be improved and finds out what people want. Writing within the same vein is Malcolm Griffiths in an article titled: “The Drama Panel Game: an inside view of the Arts Council”. Griffiths described the ways in which the concealment of the council’s real power in, ‘the interstices of administrative decisions’ militates against fruitful theatre work, and in favour of the safe malsoleums of the cultural establishment. He fills the gaps in the ‘official’ version of how the Arts Councils of Great Britain works, and offers practical suggestions for reforming – or revolutionizing its structure. It is observed that the traditional confidentiality of the Arts Council decisions is not in the interest of the public or of the arts, and contributes to a situation in which the very processes of decision-making also become shrouded in secrecy. The implication is that it is the administrative decisions which determine the policy, not a stated, publicly discussed, publicly accountable policy which makes the Arts Council work as it does. In other words, the policy of the Arts Council is most deeply embedded in its administrative traditions; within those are hidden an enormous number of preconceptions and false premises. The whole idea of trying to make information accessible and, hopefully, comprehensible, was seen as rather a doubtful move. Particular reference is made to the composition of the Drama Panel made up of unserious people, with very few people who are identifiable with a burning interest. So there was enormous pressure to make the Drama Panel far more representative; to democratize the Arts Council. Democratization of the Arts Council covers not only the structure of representation, the means of representation, but also accountability, information etc. The article concludes with a plea for public accountability and access. This is to say that more and more pressure should be put on the Arts Council to reveal exactly how it works, what its policies are and why its policies exist, in fact, to have much more informed public discussion. There is, therefore, the need to continue with discussions throughout the theatre on how to democratize the Arts Council and to keep pressure on it to be shaped by events.

Raymond Williams is another eloquent contributor to the Arts Council debate. In his article published in the *Political Quarterly* under the title “The Arts Council”, he examines critically the Arts Council of Great Britain as a citadel of bureaucratic establishment art. On the question of its composition and policy, the author observes that the council is politically

and administratively appointed: “its members are not drawn from arts practice and administration but from that vaguer category of persons of experience and goodwill...” In essence, Williams confirms the council’s dangerous openness to charges of being unrepresentative, undemocratic and irresponsible.

The next article, on the Arts Council of Great Britain, to be examined is titled “Taxpayers, the Arts and Big Balloonz” by Roy Fuller. In this rather short essay, the author expresses amazement at the somewhat Byzantine way the council works. He laments at the overwhelmingly large number of political appointments to the council. Fuller’s argument is, no doubt, in the same line with Raymond Williams and others whose criticisms are based on undemocratisation. This raises a fundamental question with regard to cultural organizations such as the Arts Council whether having more practicing artists on the council is a guarantee of better results.

Ronald Harwood in an attempt to answer that question, reacts as follows:

I do not want to suggest that the council should be composed exclusively of artists, but I do plead for a more intelligent balance than the one offered by the present membership.

Hillary Rubinstein does not seem to share the same view with Harwood. To him, having more practicing artists on the council is not a guarantee of better results. The fact remains that even if Rubinstein is right, the need to involve artists on the management board of the Arts Council is incontrovertible. Both the government and the artists are to dictate the cultural pace of a society. The central principle of democratization, which is a wider, more open, more accountable representation, should therefore be widely supported.

Brief historical insight into the Oyo State Council for Arts and Culture

It was the turn of the Oyo State Government in 1977 when an edict 14 of 1977 establishing the Qyo State Council for Arts and Culture was promulgated in consonance with the clarion call on all the states by the federal government. The Oyo State Council for Arts and Culture was first put to use during FESTAC '77. Although, the main festival venue was at

National Theatre Lagos, related programmes were held in some other parts of the country including Ibadan in the main bowl of the cultural centre. Initially, the state council for arts and culture occupied it temporarily in 1978 as office accommodation until in 1983 when the main hall was declared open for temporary use in order to get it ready for theatrical productions and other social functions. The then governing board of directors under the chairmanship of Dapo Adelugba decided that the thrust stage be covered temporarily with planks. The initial reactions and attitudes of the public that greeted the establishment of cultural institutions in the country are worthy of note. Barely one year after the inception of the Oyo State Council for and Culture, the state cultural edifice was seen as a place of idol worship. It was gathered that this wrong notion, which became more pronounced at the grassroot, went far into the heart of the ignorant people. Realising this, the management of the council thus made frantic efforts to correct this wrong notion about the cultural centre; a notion that was then spreading like a burning fire, through various media organizations, during contacts with artists and people at the grassroot for the festivals of arts and whenever the council's field officers went out on scouting for artists, as well as through the council's publications. The result? J. O. Osunleke, the then director (1999) of the centre confirms as follows:

By and large, people are trying to imbibe our doctrine... and some of them are enjoying our services.

This initial public reaction towards the establishment of a cultural institution is a reflection of the hostile relationship between the arts and society. An obvious reason is the lack of publicity of the cultural policy with the result that the people for whom it is meant to give a sense of direction are not even aware of its existence in theory, not to talk of in practice. In other words, where to read about the cultural policy is unknown to a majority of the literate people and even the illiterate masses, a majority of whom are already beset by ignorance and the effect of an ingrained colonial mentality. Section 6.1.6 of the Cultural Policy for Nigeria states that: (10)

the state shall establish institutions and programmes for the preservation, presentation, promotion and development of the literary, performing and visual arts.

Like other state cultural institutions, the Oyo State Council for Arts and Culture can therefore be regarded as emerging from the National Cultural Policy.

Defining the goals and objectives

To evaluate an organisation like the Arts Council is to assess the effectiveness of its policies in achieving stated aims. Since any aim can be achieved by a large number of policies, we must also take account of the costs of attaining a given degree of effectiveness; having decided on the most effective policy per unit of costs for each stated aim, there is the further problem of ordering the aims in terms of a scale of priorities. This also presupposes that it would be clearly impossible to evaluate government expenditure in a particular direction without knowing the aims of government, particularly as there will usually be many different aims. Be this as it may, we must quickly proceed further with a statement of objectives to arrive at a comprehensive evaluation.

The main objective of the Arts Council is "to promote and reserve our people's arts and the traditions as well as enrich our cultural heritage." (as quoted by Umukoro). This broad objective is more clearly spelt out in the Council's enabling edict no. 14, 1977, part III, Section 8, sub - section 1, which, for the purpose of clarity states:

It shall be the duty of the council within the limits of its resources and subject to the provisions of this Edict, to *foster, publicise, encourage, develop and promote* arts and culture in the state.

Besides this broad objective, the following other objectives of the council for arts and culture have been spelt out as follows:

- (i) to organise or hold exhibitions, performances or festivals of the arts and to admit the public thereto, with or without charge, or to assist financially or otherwise the holding of such exhibitions, performances or festivals.

- (ii) to assist and encourage any deserving Nigerian artistes or craftsmen;
- (iii) to organise and supervise other administration and activities of the culture in Ibadan or any other cultural centre owned by the government in the state under the general or specific directions of the commissioner;
- (iv) to lay down rules under which competitions in the arts shall be held and to award prizes for the same;
- (v) to make recommendations to the government for the award of bursaries or scholarships in relation to arts and culture in the state;
- (vi) to organize or conduct lectures or demonstrations or to provide instructions in the arts;
- (vii) to publish or sponsor the publication of any literature, periodical or newspaper in relation to arts and culture,
- (viii) to co-operate with any other bodies or persons engaged in or connected with arts and culture in Nigeria;
- (ix) to acquire and preserve or to advise the government in the acquisition and preservation of any artistic or cultural artifacts or monuments in the state;
- (x) and to accept, hold and administer any subscriptions or any gift or property for any purpose connected with arts and culture.
Additional objectives as contained or added in the amendment edict, 1989 are as follows:
- (ix) to acquire, purchase, lease, mortgage, hold, construct or maintain any property whatsoever, whether movable or immovable, and whether by investment or otherwise, required for or in connection with the performances of its functions and to sell, dispose of or otherwise deal with such property or any part thereof;
- (x) to enter into such contracts as may be necessary, advantageous or expedient for the performance of its functions subject to any limits the executive council may impose;
- (xi) to carry on all activities, the undertaking of which appears to the council to be necessary, advantageous or expedient for the performance of its functions; and
- (xii) to implement the Cultural Policy for Nigeria 1988.

Some of these objectives seem to naturally dovetail into one another in the obvious effort to foster, publicise, encourage, develop and promote

arts and culture in the state. The final point is the weightiest; a crucial policy statement which sums up all the rest. And any objective or policy not backed up by actual implementation or execution is not likely to yield a desired result. It will then be of interest to examine how the arts council has been able to realise her objectives and meet the set targets in view of the limited available resources- money, men and material.

Towards achieving the goals and objectives

It was reported by Umukoro (2002) that within 22 years of its existence, the Oyo State Cultural Centre was a beehive of activities- at both international, national, state and local levels. Such activities range from film shows, stage drama, workshops, musical shows, seminars and lectures to annual festivals, research, etc Among the usual festival events for competition are oral and written literature, music, dance, drama (in English and Yoruba), fine art, broadcasting and presentation, fashion design, fashion parade, etc. The National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFEST) is considered to be the major activity of the council. The aim of the festival which is organised by the National Council for Arts and Culture is to promote creativity in the field of arts, science and technology, for ensuring the continuity and progressive updating of traditional skills and sports for modern development needs and serve as a melting pot and the crucible for inter-cultural communication as well as the development of a national culture.

The fact is that the whole idea of a cultural centre is for the development of the community to which it belongs. It is therefore expected that similar periodic festivals should be planned in the various zones of the state, to culminate in a grand finale in Ibadan. This is the way the activities at the centre can be brought into focus to enable the culture-conscious community of the state to visit the center, making it possible to put it into a more proper use rather than mere occasional command performances in honour of an important personality.

The arts council certainly has objectives among which are to foster, publicise, encourage, develop and promote arts and culture in the state; what seems not to be definite is the extent to which they are being achieved. A fundamental question this poses is, how has it been faring in this regard? This is an area which continues to attract the attention of cultural administrators. Poor programming has been identified as one of the major problems of our cultural centres. It therefore follows that a well articulated programme will go a long way in ensuring regular attendance at

the centre and which may eventually lead to the financial viability of the centre. Other plans that could be set in motion include:

- (a) establishing an appropriate organisational structure through which the objectives of the centre as enunciated by the edict establishing the Oyo State Council for Arts and Culture could be accomplished;
- (b) promoting the planning of programmes that will enhance the creative but profitable utilization of the centre as an artistic institution and as a community centre;
- (c) establishing a number of prudent financial systems for the centre.
- (d) developing appropriate strategies for effective promotion and publicity of the activities of the centre and;
- (e) ensuring the proper maintenance of the building, facilities and equipment of the centre and its surroundings in such a way that it will become one of the most attractive recreational centres in the city of Ibadan. This principle of democratisation: a wider, more open, more accountable representation should be widely supported.

Financial Provisions

Oyo State Council for Arts and Culture (Amendment) Edict, 1989, (4) stipulates that the funds of the council shall consist of

- (a) such funds as may from time to time be provided to the council by the government of the state;
- (b) such funds as may be collected or received by the council from other sources either in the execution of its functions under this Edict, or in respect of any property vested in the Council;
- (c) charitable gifts by non-governmental, industrial, commercial, financial and other organizations operating in Nigeria;
- (d) a national endowment fund to which government, organizations and individuals may contribute; and
special funding and endowment of specific projects by organisations in commerce, industry and other foreign organisations and foundations. With regard to raising funds, the amendment edict (4) further states as follows:

The council may receive donations and gifts and may engage in fund-raising activities but no funds

may be raised outside the state without the prior approval of the commissioner. The council shall not have power to borrow money from any source.

Essentially, the arts council, like all other government parastatals and ministries in the state, is financed by government funds. The fund is provided annually as annual budget allocation approved in the government annual estimates. It is to augment its finances that the council is empowered to generate funds from other sources, receive donations and gifts and engage in fund-raising activities. It is also important to note that the arts council keeps a separate account of its own, prepares its own budget and is given the departmental vote number "Head 419" in the Government Book of Estimates. One would have expected the choice of the number 419 to generate disapproval of the public considering the negative attitude for which the number is known.

The annual budget or estimate on the basis of which the council is given annual fund allocation is jointly prepared by the council's accounts section and the administrative division according to the needs of the various divisions or segments of whole establishment and with reference to that of the previous years. The prepared or draft estimate is usually and normally passed to the management committee for discussion before being forwarded to the ministry of finance for another round of discussion on it at a meeting of the permanent secretary of the ministry of representatives from the ministry of establishments and with council's representatives - (all heads of divisions, head of account section and the secretary) in attendance. Depending on the success of the meeting at the ministry of finance, the estimate is finally forwarded to the Treasury Board or the Governor for review and submission to the latter for his information and approval. Similarly, before approval can be conveyed to the budget, it must have been exhaustively discussed and successfully defended by the council's chairman, the secretary, all heads of divisions and the heads of the accounts section at the Treasury Board Meeting...

Release of Fund to the Council

The annual grants allocated to the council for "personal emolument" and "other charges" are released piece – meal from the State Accountant – General's Office unlike what used to be in operation (and perhaps still in operation) at the federal level when funds were released and paid en bloc

into the account. Joseph O. Osunleke, who was formerly a member of staff of the Federal Department of Culture, confirms:

The financial trend by then was mainly through the federal government; it was an annual allocation of fund...from the beginning of the year, the whole bulk to be spent by the ministry would have been allocated... from the beginning, once the budget is announced by the head of state, every ministry gets its own vote (automatically).

By way of comparing with what is now in operation at the state level, Dr. Osunleke explains further:

Nowadays you make a request, it goes to the chief executive, who will approve and then send it to the ministry of finance... this is a cumbersome system.

There is a gulf of difference: It is not even automatic that approval for request for fund is granted. Sometimes, approval may not have cash backing. The government will simply say other priorities have taken place. This should not be the case if culture is given its due recognition as a necessary tool for national development. It might therefore be better to have the bulk sum given to the ministry and be spending it periodically or as the need arises. With this, people will be stimulated and also it will reduce the effect of severe financial pressure.

The table below shows annual budget allocations to the council for a period of four years – 1995 – 1998 as extracted from the Books of Estimates – 1996 and 1998

Table 1: Annual Budget Allocations to the Oyo State Council for Arts and Culture 1995 - 1998

Year	Annual Allocation	Personal Emoluments	Other Charges	Capital Project	Total ₦
1995	5,970,000	2,400,000	800,000	2,770,000	5,970,000
1996	5,859,000	2,684,000	905,000	2,270,000	5,859,000
1997	6,465,330	2,799,330	1,086,000	2,580,000	6,465,330
1998	12,301,000	3,354,000	1,267,000	7,580,000	12,301,000

The above budget allocations were during two different military governments. The first 2 -1995 and 1996 - were during the administration of Colonel Chinyere Ike Nwosu, Evidently, less priority was given to culture and this explains the reason for rather low annual allocation to the cultural sector. There was a remarkable improvement in 1997 and 1998 during the tenure of Colonel Ahmed Usman, under whose administration culture was accorded its rightful place in the state. For instance, in 1997, the state government was said to have refurbished the Cultural Centre, the State Council for Arts and Culture headquarters, for the first time after 20 years of its existence. The same year, government also released money to the council to enable her to participate in the National Festival of Arts and Culture, an opportunity seized to exhibit the cultural heritage of the state to other people outside the state. To continue the propagation of the state's rich cultural heritage, a sum of seven million, five hundred and eighty thousand naira (₦7,580,000.00) was allocated in the 1998 budget for the rehabilitation and maintenance of the Cultural Centre to enhance the performance of the state cultural troupe and provide comfort for the members of the public.

Expenditure

The major expenditure of the council centres on the payment of salaries and allowances to the staff. We will also note that the bulk annual budget allocation of the council is classified under three broad headings, viz; personal emolument, other charges and capital project (as earlier reflected in a table).

The personal emolument vote is meant for staff salaries and allowances, while the other charges and capital project are usually distributed to various sub-headings. Each sub-heading is given a sub-head number for the purpose of proper accounting.

Sources of Generating Revenue

The council recognizes the following limited sources for revenue generation through its various divisions.

- (a) Theatre Management Division: Revenue generated by this division is from:-
- i) hiring out of the main hall for which rental is between N10,000.00 to N25,000.00 depending on the type of occasion.
 - ii) hiring out of hall 2 for about N4,000.00
 - iii) hiring out of music rehearsal hall for which rental is N2,000.00 and
 - iv) hiring out of space – both the lobby of the office complex and the wide—open air parking space at the frontage of the main auditorium at moderate charges.
- (b) **Performing Arts Division:** Revenue generated by the performing arts division is from performances on invitation at public functions such as burial, child-naming, chieftaincy, coronation, etc also at moderate charges.
- (c) **Technical Division:** This division generates revenue from the rent of sound equipment and stage lanterns.

Visual Arts Division: The visual arts division is responsible for revenue generation from the Hair-Dressing Saloon, Graphics, Bamboo, Macrame and Tie/Dye units of the division.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that some privately-owned cultural institutions benefit more from grants, sponsorships and subsidies unlike the government – owned counterparts which do not seem to enjoy adequate financial support. The existing bureaucratic structure of the arts council would not allow this.

It is now evident that the general trend in support for the arts in this country is the sustenance of it being left to the cycle of donations and sponsorships, especially by foreign agencies. It is not surprising to note that when an arts organization, Association of Nigeria Authors (ANA) approached former President Olusegun Obasanjo for financial assistance, he (Obasanjo) was quoted to have referred ANA to Ford Foundation. While

this is not objectionable, the issue is how healthy is such a dispensation which could run out any moment. Only few individuals and privately-owned arts institutions are opportune to enjoy some of these sponsorships, others have been frustrated out due to lack of adequate support. While the kind gestures of these foreign agencies are appreciated, it must be realized early enough that such a vital aspect of development should not be surrender to charity.

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