

## **06. Music: Its Relevance in the Nation's Cultural Policy and the Implication to National Development**

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### **ABSTRACT**

A policy is a plan or course of action in directing the affairs of an individual or a group as chosen by them. Culture on the other hand refers to a set of knowledge, beliefs, customs, traditions and skills that are available to the members of a society music is an aspect of our culture and this paper entitled "Music, its relevance in the nations cultural policy and implications to national development" discusses the music culture in a country, defined culture and examined the concept of development. Furthermore, it examined the importance of music in Nation's cultural policy, cultural manifestations, implications to national development with conclusion and recommendations that would ensure a comprehensive cultural approach to national development.

### **Introduction**

Music and culture is a way of life in a country, towns and in rural communities. It is also the attitudes, feelings, thinking and beliefs of the people towards their music. This culture influence their behavioral patterns and by extension of their political orientations.

One of the great mistakes that our previous nation builders made was seeing the cultural activity of a particular society as having no relevance to political considerations. Cultural activities especially in a nation like Nigeria with diverse ethnic groups are bound to be different. But that must be a way of forcing unity down the throats of these diverse groups as a way of convincing then that there is truly unity in diversity. Music seems to provide some solutions that will bring this unity.

### **Definition of Terms**

Music can be defined as one of the strongest tools for cultural uniqueness and self identity in the life of any society. According to Encyclopedia Americana International (1995: 646) music can also be defined as the art by which a composer, through a performer as intermediary, communicates to a listener certain ideas, feelings of states of mind. Music has played an important role in the activities of all people. Music functions at several cultural levels ranging from simple and direct folk utterances such as children's game to high rituals. It plays a significant role in all societies, and exists in a large number of styles in each characteristics of a geographical region or a historical era. A proper consideration of music should involve the musical sound itself, but it should also deal with the concepts leading to its existence with its particular forms and functions in each culture and with the human behavior that produces the sound.

### **What is Culture**

Apart from education, culture is another factor on the wheel of development of any nation. A society is distinguished from another as a result of culture. Culture constitutes the totality of custom, rituals, norms and values that regulate the people's patterns of life. The Cultural Policy for Nigeria (1988:5) defines culture as the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenges of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organization, thus distinguishing a people from their neighbours. The above definition is supported by Okafor and Emeka (2004: 154), as they define culture as "all the knowledge, beliefs, customs, values, ideas and skills available in a society and by which the society can be compared to or differentiated from others". It would also be added that culture can only be felt through societal expression of it and that is what portrays the nation's identity. Any nation that respects her culture normally preserves, promotes and keeps it alive through social activities. This view automatically portrays the relevance of music as a culture promoter. Music performed by every society carries the socio cultural nuances and messages of that society. It is

always said that development is a function of culture because people cannot be developed outside their experiences and cultural ethics. Through cultural exhibitions which music is part and parcel of, the nation achieves economic and social growth. This encourages tourism, inter-ethnic relationship and provides avenues for foreign exchange. Any nation that turns her back or looks down on the music of her people is jeopardizing her economy. In other words, it applies that destruction of culture means retardation and threat to the nation's growth.

### **The Concept of Development**

In the past, it was common to perceive the concept of development only as an increase or expansion in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and other socio-economic parameters. Today, emphasis is placed on the content of the GDP as well as other indicators of quality of life such as infant mortality rate, maturational mortality rate, shift in social status, employment opportunities, life expectancy, fertility level, housing and water supply conditions, nutritional level, available health and education services etc. Consequently, in the views of Obasanjo et al (1991: 175) development now emphasis people as the object of attention. They defined it

...as a process which concerned with people's capacity in a defined area over a defined period to manage and induce positive change; that is to predict plan, understand and monitor change and reduce or eliminate unwanted or unwarranted change.

In a nut shell, development refers to a change, a transformation or a modification into a better state of living.

### **Relevance of Music in Nation's Cultural Policy**

People in many societies recognize the emotional power of music in their personal, family and community life. According to Reimer (2003), music is universally sought and cherished by all humans, irrespective of race for the value it adds to life. Such values include:

Music is powerful at the level of social group because it facilitates communication which goes beyond worlds, induce multiple responses, shared emotional reactions and supports the development of group identity.

The importance of music in the nation's cultural policy will help to keep nations past and present activities.

According to Turino in Netti (1999: 221),

Ethnomusicologist have come to agree in the last decade that music is a key resources for realizing personal and collective identities which in turn are crucial for social, political and economic participation.

These observations are integrally related and they form the basis of the central question of musicology – “why music”. Thus, with the inception of democratic government in Nigeria in May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1999 and the appointment of a minister of culture and tourism, the nation was set to review the cultural policy for Nigeria towards ascertaining its adaptability to today's experience. According to the minister, the federal government was set for the speedy review and implementation of the national's cultural policy based on the recommendations of the committee.

The committee observed that the cultural policy for Nigeria was launched years ago with its roots in the resolution of the inter-governmental conference on cultural policies in Africa and the unesco conference on cultural policies, and it should include both the nation's past and present activities. It further suggested that its objectives of both the organization of Africa Unity (OAU) and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as models for the Nigerian cultural policy. The committee further noted that UNESCO's declaration of the world decade for cultural development focused essentially on cultural dimension towards development, affirming, and enriching cultural identities, broadening participation in cultural life as well as promoting international co-operations. Balogun (2000: 52) said,

... The Director of culture proposed that culture is human-centred and must first add the issue of human basic needs and aspirations, the major indicators of development such as economy, language, dressing, food, medicine, health, environmental planning and religion, should form the vanguard of issues to be addressed.

Since culture is human –centred, music is a vital aspect of that culture which has to do with music compositions supporting the above assertion, Netti (1999: 330) said

A composer might be characterized as one who defines a recognizable body of music that attempts to be both original and unique. However, specific characteristics attributed to a composer also are culturally defined by the community, context and people's expectations of what a composer ought to be.

He went further to explain that most composers do it orally and that factors external to music brought about by war and revolution can influence a composer's method of work. Some deal with the policies of government and individual communities. Others deal directly with music performance while others deal with the ramifications of instrumental technology.

### **Suggested Guides for Future Cultural Summit**

The committee made some suggestions which will act as guides for the next national summit on culture. These include:

1. Introduction of cultural dimension to national development plans.
2. Demonstrating and promoting the links between culture, and one's psychological identity.
3. Enhancing the contributions of cultural industries to the national economy.
4. Promoting a conducive environment for national development as well as allowing freedom of worship.

### **Cultural Manifestations in Nigeria**

According to Idonije (1999: 23), any genuinely creative musician is bound to stimulate his music against his cultural background because music is an expression of one's culture. It is therefore futile for the new crop of musicians to continue to express foreign cultures in hip, hop, rap and reggae.

In support of Idonije's idea above, whether it is during yuletide celebrations (with an alien origin) or it is during harvests, initiations into adulthood, marriage ceremonies, naming ceremonies, or even communal participation in manual work or project, we express ourselves culturally in the form of masquerades, puppet theatre, dances (music), wrestling matches and acrobatic displays. With these we creatively demonstrate that we are not a mere tabularasa in matters of culture and civilization. It also confers an identity to us as a people with distinctive cultural outlook which underscores our relevance to global culture and the ideological issues at work in its engineering process. Each time a major festival happens, we release our cultural energies and accomplishments. The Nigerian, indeed the African does so for some strategic purposes which include to register our existence and to tell the world that we have a culture. In support of the above Tsair (2003: 35) said:

We announce it in unmistakable and unambiguous tones that we have something meaningful to contribute to the instruction of the global cultural edifice in an increasingly postmodernist and globalised world.

### **Implications to National Development**

National development itself is culturally source because it is only through the study of earlier development skills and inventions that we can assure a steady progress of our national development processes. A culture of development presupposed a systematic improvement and refinement of existing practices, informed by knowledge acquired through contacts with others. Its implication is that the adoption of the cultural objectives of both OAU and UNESCO as models are worthwhile. It also emphasizes the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction and communication plus the teaching of our national history, folklore (music), oral tradition and moral values from a national perspective.

Another implication is that the success of either a cultural policy or any other government proposal depends largely on good governances.

### **Conclusion**

Culture is the totality of people way of life. Music is a part of culture. It portrays people way of life. There is no cultural event that can pass without music. The role music plays in the cultural policy of a nation is remarkable. In country like Nigeria, she needs to adapt the policy of cultural

approach to development as in other developed if she wants to survive an independent nation capable of self-reliance, self-sufficiency and more importantly as the giant of Africa.

### **Recommendation**

The following are recommended to facilitate the role of music in the realization of our cultural policy.

1. Essentially the country should encourage the development and standardization of our traditional musical instruments and emphasize their use in the teaching of music at all level of education.
2. It should help in the promotion of traditional and contemporary art and establish a directory of artist, encourage and support the establishment of art galleries.
3. As a means of promoting the nation's cultural heritage at home and abroad, the country should establish cultural attach corps for implementing external cultural relations, bilateral and multi-lateral programmes.

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