

BEING A PAPER PRESENTED BY DR. DANJUMA W. DADU, MANAGING DIRECTOR, NIGERIAN FILM CORPORATION (NFC) ON “*NIGERIAN FILMS AND THE PUBLIC POLICY PROCESS: TRANSFORMING NIGERIA INTO A TRULY MODERN SOCIETY*” AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA NSUKKA (UNN) ON TUESDAY, 4TH NOVEMBER, 2014

Abstract

Nigerian cinema is Africa’s largest film industry in terms of the quantity of films being churned out annually. Although Nigerian films have been produced since the 1960s, the rise of affordable digital and editing technologies has stimulated the country’s film industry. As the power and significance of this sector widens, Nigerian films tend to be governed and guided by general rules and regulations that derive their legitimacy from the methods or convenience of industry practitioners. This paper acknowledges the need for definite public policy for the growth and development of the Nigerian film industry. Apart from discussing the general overview of policy, implementation problems as it concerns the Nigerian film industry, focus is on the potential of the film industry in attaining a truly modern state. Some implementation problems identified includes the lack of capacity to enforce existing policies which often lead to implementation gap i.e. widening of the distance between stated policy goals and the realization of such planned goals.

1.0 Introduction

In the past, many reforms in government have been aimed at increasing efficiency, effectiveness and value for money with very little focus on the actual policy process and the way it affects the ability of policy makers to meet the needs of the country and its people in an increasingly complex, uncertain and unpredictable world. However, if these core processes were to be brought to the fore especially in the Nigerian film industry, it would yield considerable economic and social benefits, including enhanced productivity, openness, transparent and participation, as well as actionable and interoperable policy intelligence (Paki and Ebiefa, 2011). Public policy making can be characterized as a complex, dynamic, constantly evolving interactive and adaptive system.

The process is stakeholder-driven. Actors are engaged in a goal-driven decision-making process and have a great deal of autonomy in the way they organize their work.

Higher demands from the system in which policy makers operate requires a level of support that existing facilities cannot deliver. The current support infrastructure for policy makers is characterized on the one hand by isolation, fragmentation and non-responsiveness to change, and on the other hand by a lack of crucial support elements. A new approach is required. Policy makers need an infrastructure and instruments that enable them to operate in a flexible, adaptive, transparent and compliant way in a complex and dynamic environment. They need an infrastructure that seamlessly

integrates with regulation-specific sources and services. This infrastructure should be designed for people and built for change.

2.0 Nigerian Films in Perspective

Film implies the entire institution of filmmaking, film distribution, film exhibition, and film viewing (Holborn, 2004). This definition underpins the need for adequate policies for such a huge industry with its diverse potentials to be harnessed toward desirable modern society. Growing within the last two decades to become the second largest film industry in the world, the Nigerian film industry has become worthy of note and deserves attention.

According to Adesokan cited in Liston (2014), the first Nigerian films were produced by filmmakers such as Ola Balogun and Hubert Ogunde in the 1960s, but they were frustrated by the high cost of film production. However, television broadcasting began in Nigeria in the 1960s and received much government support in its early years. By the mid-1980s, every State had its own broadcasting station. At the time, extant regulations limited foreign television content so producers in Lagos began televising local popular theater productions. Many of these were circulated on video as well, and a small-scale informal video movie trade developed.

Over the years, Nigerian films have witnessed what can be called a complete revolution. Balogun cited in Pfatt (2004:180) captured the future of the industry rightly when he stated that *“let us wait and see...out of the effervescence of the current production,*

works of art may emerge that will raise Nigerian Cinematography to the rank on universal art". He saw Nigerian films as yet another proof of the ability of Nigerians to respond to specific situations and produce something totally original and adaptable to local condition.

Every society, especially in Africa, desires a major transformation from a traditional, rural, agrarian society to an urban, industrial society. Kumar (2014) believes that to successfully modernize a society, there is need to first of all strengthen its industries, especially those that reflect the image of that society. And as it is, films are major reflections of every society of their production (Enahoro, 2000).

Films generally carry the institutions and values of the society along with them. And the rising success of the Nigerian film industry has the capacity to breed discontent on an increasing scale, about the nation's need to experience a progressive, upward movement into a truly modern society.

Like other forms of creative expressions, filmmaking constitutes a form of discourse and practice that is not just artistic and cultural, but also intellectual and political. Film has been a way of defining, describing, and interpreting Nigerian experiences with those forces that have shaped Nigeria's past and that continues to shape and influence the present. Filmmaking in Nigeria is fundamentally a product of historical experiences of

Nigerians, and it has direct bearing and relevance to the challenges that face the country's need and journey toward being a truly modern society (Paki and Ebiefa, 2011).

Thus, in looking at Nigerian films critically, one is looking at particular insights into ways of thinking and acting on individual as well as collective realities, experiences, challenges, and the supreme desire for Nigeria to attain a status referred to as a modern state. It will create a very powerful combination that supports policy makers and brings government closer to the filmmakers, the industry and even the citizens at large. Nigerians are believed to highly patronize Nollywood films.

Modernization is a continuous and open-ended process. It is because of this process that public policy takes root. The Nigerian Film Corporation believes that by undergoing the comprehensive transformation of the Nigerian film industry and the policies surrounding it, Nigeria can become modern because of the great potential of the film as a transformational tool. However, for Nigeria to become a truly modern society is not a once-for-all-time achievement. Here spells the synthesis between the Nigerian films and the public policy process.

There seems to be a dynamic principle built into the very fabric of modern societies that does not allow to settle, or to achieve equilibrium. The Nigerian story has revealed that development is always irregular and uneven. Whatever the dimension of development in the country, there are always backward sectors and peripheral Agencies and Parastatals. This is a persistent source of strain and conflict in such a nation that strives to be a truly

modern society. Yet challenges and responses are the essence of modern society (Kumar, 2014). Thus, the need for public policy process to be re-evaluated in the context of Nigerian films.

3.0 **Public Policy Process**

One of the widely quoted, but simple definitions of public policy is that by Dye (1975:1), where he defines public policy as “*what government chooses to do or not to do*”. Governments do many things. They regulate conflicts within society, they organise society to carry on conflicts with other societies, and they distribute a great variety of symbolic rewards and material services to members of the society and extracts money from the society, most at times in the form of taxes. Thus, policies may regulate behavior, organize bureaucracies, distribute benefits, and extracts taxes or all of these things at once. A government’s action or inaction is still a matter of policies. In other words, between what governments decide to do and what they actually do lie that government’s policies. Public policy is a future oriented inquiry into the optimum means of achieving a given governmental objective.

Similarly, public policy is a government programme of action which stands for various degrees of goal articulation and normative regulations of government activities, that is what government intends to do or achieve and how it intends to do it (Egonmwan, 2003). Public policy also connotes official statements determining the plan of action or what the government wants to do (Mlekwe, 1976). Public policy is a future oriented inquiry into the optimum means of achieving a given governmental objective.

Policies can be regarded as political, management, financial, and administrative mechanism that are arranged to achieve explicit goals. Policies may apply to government, to private sector, organizations and groups, and to individuals. In this paper, the focus is on public policy process. However, the insights by this paper are also applicable to other policy making domains.

This paper defines public policy as “a choice that government makes in response to a certain issue, sector, organization, a department or a public problem”. The term ‘public policy’ used in this context always refers to the decisions and actions of government and the intentions that determine those decisions and actions. Policy guides decisions and actions towards those decisions and actions that are most likely to achieve a desired outcome.

In the film industry which the Nigerian Film Corporation represents, Film Policy making must be a dynamic process of interaction with the involvement of film administrators and other stakeholders in the motion picture industry. Both government, stakeholders and practitioners views must be taken into account. The decision making by the public sector for the film industry, must be consultative, collaborative and of course transparent. Thus the policy makers are required to take the needs of all stakeholders into account, if the film industry is to move from mere quantity driven to a much sort for content.

4.0 **Government's Institutional Agencies**

In an effort therefore to develop the Nigerian film industry, government developed policies and established Agencies which will help create the enabling environment for the growth and development of the sector. These include the following:

- (a) The Cultural Policy of 1983 and the Mass Communication Policy of 1987.
- (b) The promulgation of Decree No. 61 of 1979, establishing the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC) which is responsible for the development and promotion of the Nigerian film industry as a whole and the cinema culture in Nigeria.
- (c) The Nigerian Copyright Commission Decree of 1990 to protect intellectual property including works of art such as films.
- (d) The National Film Policy for Nigeria of 1992.
- (e) The Nigerian Broadcasting Commission Decree of 1992 to regulate broadcasting which includes giving prominence to local film programmes.
- (f) The promulgation of Decree No. 83 of 1993 establishing the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) whose major responsibility is classifying film content for public consumption.
- (g) There is a proposed Motion Picture Council of Nigeria to regulate professional practice in the film industry. This body which is already established by the Nigerian Film Corporation, is to determine who are to practice in any of the Guilds and Associations in the film arts in Nigeria.

- (h) There is also a proposed National Film Development Fund (NFDF) which is to make funds accessible to film practitioners for the production of film projects.

5.0 **Nigerian Film Corporation**

In order to stimulate the growth and development of the Nigerian film industry, government through Decree No. 61 of 1979 established the Nigerian Film Corporation. The Corporation has the responsibility of planning, promoting and organizing an integrated and efficient development of the film industry in Nigeria, in accordance with the broad social and economic policies and objectives laid down by the Federal Government from time to time.

However, the prevailing trend in the film industry with regards to its content, practice, modus operandi and rapid development in Nigeria, calls for strong institutional and Policy Reforms to refocus the sector towards national development.

By virtue of its mandate, the Nigerian Film Corporation is not relenting in its effort towards repositioning the Nigerian Film Industry and making it globally competitive.

The increased economic activities in the sector in the last one and half decades, have seen the Nigerian film industry grow at an astounding rate to become the second largest in the world after India's Bollywood, in terms of the volume of production. Such impressive growth has not only positioned the Nigerian film industry otherwise known as "Nollywood", as a global brand but has also impacted on other sectors of the creative industry. Furthermore, the development has brought about the expansion of markets for Nigerian films both within and outside Nigeria, particularly in the West, East and Central

Africa region as well as countries with significant black population namely, United Kingdom, United States and the Caribbean. However, the earnings by the filmmakers are the least in the world due to poor distribution and exhibition network.

In order to further grow the industry, the Nigerian Film Corporation undertook some policy initiatives to help transform the Nigerian film industry to grow. These policy initiatives includes:

(i) **Review of the 1992 National Film Policy**

Considering, therefore, the linkages of creative industries within the economy at both macro and micro levels, it is imperative to put further in place a robust national film policy that will harness the full potentials of this sector for sustainable socio-economic growth and development. Moreover, a coherent film policy that will have institutional mechanisms is needed to drive the sector and deal with the numerous key challenges in the sector, relating to human capacity building, financial constraints, supply capacities, regulations and intellectual property regimes.

The aim of the 1992 National Film Policy for Nigeria was to ensure that the film sector realizes its full potentials, so that the sector can also contribute to national development and help transform Nigeria into a truly modern society. As a key objective, the 1992 policy was formulated to stimulate growth and orderly development of the sector through public – private sector partnership; specifically

in production, distribution and exhibition sub-sectors of the industry. The main focus of the policy was on the provision of infrastructure, training and capacity building, research, effective administration and funding of the sector. These are far from being achieved. There are no film infrastructures in Nigeria to carry or implant the objects of the Film Policy. Nollywood is developed more in the media as a concept and not as a physical arena for film activities such as in Hollywood in California, USA.

However, the advent and growth of the home video industry and the technological innovations in the last two decades as well as the dynamics of the society, which were not contemplated at the time the 1992 National Film Policy was formulated and adopted, have all added new dimensions and components to the 1992 Film Policy; thus making the review of the extant policy, compelling and urgent.

There is an urgent need to develop film infrastructures, studios and other film production facilities in Nigeria. In Jos, a piece of land in a choice and filmic environment complete with a C of O since 1983, stands undeveloped.

(ii) **Review of the 1979 Nigerian Film Corporation Act and Change of name to Nigerian Film Commission**

The call for review and amendment of Decree No. 61 of 1979, establishing the Nigerian Film Corporation by stakeholders has been very persistent in recent times. It was in recognition of these concerns and the fact that the Decree (Act) was enacted during the military regime, that a Ministerial Committee was set up in

2003 to review not only the Decree (Act), but also, the laws of other parastatals under the Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation. Interestingly, the purpose of the exercise was to update and streamline the enabling laws of these parastatals in line with the tenets of democratic principles, so as to reposition them for present day challenges. The reviewed Nigerian Film Corporation Act into a Film Commission, is to refocus and reposition the Corporation to play a more active and strategic role in the development of the Nigerian film industry. The dynamics of the sector and the society coupled with the rapid advancement in technology are all compelling reasons for the Corporation to be repositioned to reflect present day realities. Furthermore, it would align the functions of the Corporation with similar national and international film Agencies around the world, particularly, with the *African Audiovisual and Cinema Commission* endorsed by the Assembly of the African Union 2nd Ordinary Session, in Maputo, Mozambique, in 2003.

The proposed Commission will then carry out the following functions;

- (a) initiate and implement national film policies and establish the framework for the growth and development of the film sector in collaboration with development partners;
- (b) provide guidelines and set standards for the establishment of film and video infrastructure such as film schools, film villages, film production studios and film multi-media centres by the public and private sectors ;

- (c) establish and participate in the establishment of cinema theatres across the country in collaboration with Federal agencies, States, Local Governments and private investors;
- (d) advise the Federal Government generally on all regulatory and developmental matters relating to the film and video industry;
- (e) manage, disburse and monitor the proper application of the National Film Development Fund and other government interventions and grants for the film sector;
- (f) source for and provide grants from government and other sources to any person, organization or institution for the development and promotion of the film and video industry;
- (g) use lottery as a means of raising funds for the development of the film industry;
- (h) maintain a database of persons, organizations, institutions, equipment facilities connected with the film and video industry;
- (i) provide and encourage the provision of facilities for training and advancing the skills and talents of persons employed in the Nigerian film and video industry;
- (j) encourage, organize and participate in national and international film festivals, fairs, markets and similar activities to rebrand and enhance the exposure of Nigerian film and video industry;
- (k) issue shooting licenses to foreign crew upon accreditation by the Ministry;
- (l) acquire, distribute and exhibit films in Nigeria; and
- (m) perform any other functions that are necessary or expedient for the full discharge of all or any of its functions under this Act.

(iii) **Motion Picture Council of Nigeria (MOPICON)**

It is significant and indeed gratifying to note that the National Film Policy made a profound statement with respect to the establishment of a Motion Picture Council of Nigeria (MOPICON) which shall regulate professional practice and conduct of practitioners for proper, harmonious and organized development of the Nigerian film industry. It will be the umbrella body of all Guilds and Associations practicing in the film and video industry.

The Council will among other things perform the following functions;

- (a) determine who is a Motion Picture Practitioner;
- (b) determine the standards of knowledge and skills to be attained by persons seeking to be registered as Motion Picture Practitioners and review those standards from time to time;
- (c) maintain a register of persons entitled to practice as professionals in the motion picture industry and publish from time to time the list of such persons;
- (d) maintain a register of Guilds and Associations of Practitioners of the trades and specializations within the profession, such as motion picture producers, distributors, exhibitors and marketers;
- (e) ensure that practitioners maintain the ethics of the profession as contained in the Code of Ethics;
- (f) ensure the protection of the rights and privileges of motion-picture practitioners in the practice of their profession.

(iv) **National Film Development Fund (NFDF)**

Today, in well developed and viable film industry, they have in place one form of film financing scheme or the other, to stimulate its growth and development. Countries such as the Netherlands, Canada, South Africa, France, Egypt, India, China, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, United States, have recognized the need to properly guide and nurture their film industry to grow. Governments across the world provide varying levels of support directly or indirectly to their film industry and funding is one major area of support. The South African film Foundation in 2012 was funded to the tune of R1.6m for film activates.

The under-pinning philosophy and objective of the National Film Development Fund (NFDF) developed by the Nigerian Film Corporation therefore, is to harness funds for the sustainable development and growth of the Nigerian film industry, so that the sector can significantly increase its contribution to the nation's wealth.

The Fund shall be the repository of all monies, donations, government grants, funds and financial incentives to the film and video industry. It shall be used to support the film industry in the following areas;

- i) production of films of national interest;
- ii) provide capital resource for human capacity development through training and research;

- iii) develop distribution and exhibition infrastructure in the film industry;
- iv) provide soft loans and intervention financing of film production activities such as script and project development, documentaries, features, production and post-production facilities

To achieve its laudable objectives, the Fund would be driven by the private sector and also adopt global best practices in its administration and management.

(v) **National Film Village Development Programme**

With the phenomenal growth of the sector in the last one decade and the potential size of its market within and outside Nigeria, the film industry has the capacity for further growth, if the necessary policy environment, production facilities and infrastructure are provided across the country; such as the provision of standard and purpose-built production facilities to enhance quality of productions of various themes.

It was in recognition of this and in response to the Federal Government's reform programme that a Ministerial Technical Committee was inaugurated in February, 2006 to among others; develop guidelines and modalities for the establishment of Film Villages in the country as well as advice on acceptable standards in terms of structure and technical requirements of a Film Village. A 400 hectares of land in Miango in Jos, has been set aside for this purpose.

A Film Village is designed to provide a range of state-of-the-art production and post-production facilities for the making of films from “*the script to the screen*”.

It is a known fact that countries with well developed and thriving film industry today have in place, one type of film village/city or the other to facilitate and enhance production quality. Notable among these countries are Kelly Park Film Village in New Zealand and Ramoji Film City in India. Others include Pinewood-Shepperton Studio in the United Kingdom, and the Disney Orlando Studio, Hollywood Studios and Warner Brothers Studios all in the United States of America, Media Production City in Egypt and the Cape Town Film Village in South Africa.

In Nigeria, however, there are no such facilities. This has posed a great challenge to filmmakers who use makeshift studios, such as peoples’ homes and other crude and unprofessional methods and locations for their production sets. This has greatly affected the quality of productions in the country, thus, making our films low in quality and content, thus less competitive in the global market. The non-existence of professional production locations and facilities for filmmaking in the country such as a Film Village and/or Studio (Sound Stage), has continued to impede on our ability to project the finest of the country’s art, culture and heritage in our films.

Accordingly, the Nigerian Film Corporation has developed a policy document for the establishment of Film Villages across the country. To achieve this States must establish Film Bureaux to properly harness and develop their own film potentials. Prelude to this, the Corporation also developed policy documents to assist the States establish their own Film Bureau. So far only two (2) in Nigeria (Kano and Lagos) have one form of film agency or the other. The Film Village will be an ideal professional environment created for shooting a film whether indoor or outdoor in any format that is either video or celluloid.

6.0 State of the Policy Initiatives

When these policies are put in place, the full potential of the film sector will be significantly harnessed for sustainable socio-economic growth and development which will help in the transformation of Nigeria into a truly modern society that will be the pride of any nation.

7.0 Benefits of the Proposed Policy Initiatives for the Nigerian Film Industry

The benefits of the proposed policies when put in place and implemented will strategically reposition the Nigerian film industry and make it globally competitive. Specifically, the benefits include the following:

- i) provide the enabling environment for the overall growth and development of the film industry by ensuring that the film sector realizes its full potentials and contribute significantly to national development.
- ii) stimulate growth and orderly development of the sector through public – private sector partnership; specifically in the area of production, distribution and exhibition sub-sectors of the film industry.
- iii) encourage the provision of infrastructure, training and capacity building, research, effective administration and funding of the sector;
- iv) identify critical institutions that are involved in the administration and development of the Nigerian film industry, empower them as well as provide adequate operating guidelines for their optimal performance;
- (v) Practitioners in the Nigerian film industry will experience the impact of Government co-ordinated interventions in the industry;
- (vi) project our rich cultural heritage and national image to the outside world;
- (vii) ensure the standardization of product quality as well as enhance the global competitiveness of Nigerian films;
- (viii) provide an effective medium for communicating government socio-economic and political programmes and policies to the people;
- (ix) entrepreneurs and investors’ returns on investment in the sector will be assured;
- (x) employment opportunities for our teeming Nigerians will be enhanced;.

- (xi) government can generate huge revenue through taxes from a well developed and organized film industry;
- (xii) enhance the professionalization and ethical conduct in the industry as well encourage cohesion amongst the film practitioners;
- (xiii) promote tourism and position Nigeria as a film production destination.

8.0 **Conclusion**

The film and video industry if properly developed could be a very significant source of wealth to any nation, particularly its contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It is also a very potent tool for communication, education, cultural integration and image projection. It is both an art and an industry whose development should be of great national interest both in terms of its social and economic values.

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