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RIVERS STATE GOVERNMENT YOUTHS EMPOWERMENT IN MUSICAL ARTS: SUCCESS AND CHALLENGES

Abstract

This paper evaluates youth empowerment in Nigeria with focus on the Rivers State government's contributions in the development of musical arts. It identified and discussed identifiable successes and challenges. Qualitative and discussion method is employed through the review of related literature and interviews to collect data. Finding shows within the tenure of Sir, Dr. Peter Odili in 2016, Rivers State Government empowered the youths of the State in musical arts through a festival called CaniRivs. Subsequent presentation of the template for Rivers State youth empowerment in musical arts to the different tenures of government has been turned down, no action taken toward the implementation. The paper notes that Rivers youths' empowerment in musical arts has the potentials to intervene in the issues of communal crisis and youth restiveness, and solve financial bankruptcy among the youths of Rivers State when considered as an avenue for development.

Introduction

Youth empowerment is one of the challenges Nigerian youth are facing today. Lack of youth empowerment has led many youth into their early grave within the states of Nigeria. Recently, social media (Facebook) showed a graduate who set his National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) certificate on fire for not having a job for the past 10 years he graduated from school. This is a menace that is dragging Nigerian youth to be involved in deviant behaviour like cultism, and drunkenness, and recently engaged in Yahoo, Yahoo Plus, kidnapping, and one-chance taxi drivers. This challenge has led youths in Rivers State to their early grave, with loss of properties, sicknesses, mental health problems with an increase in deviant behaviours. Parents and siblings are in a state of dilemma and the rate of crime is on the increase daily as a result of the laxity of government essential provision, job creation, and empowerment.

Problem

Musical arts are known globally to create jobs and fan base for musical celebrities, which in turn creates financial enhancement for both the musical artiste and the fans. The state government can

utilize the musical platform in Rivers State to empower youths in the state. This paper, therefore evaluates the involvement of the Rivers State Government in youth empowerment in musical arts, successes, challenges and proffers suggestions on the way forward.

Aim

The study is aimed at discussing the successes and challenges of the Rivers State government in the empowerment of youths in musical arts within the state.

Objectives

These objectives are to:

- i. find out if the Rivers State government has been involved in musical art at any time in Rivers State.
- ii. find out if the Rivers State government had empowered any youth of Rivers State in musical arts before.
- iii. know if there are established criteria by the Rivers State government in musical arts for youth empowerment.
- iv. find out if other organizations in Rivers State engage in empowering youth in musical arts.
- v. proffer suggestions to the River State youth empowerment in musical arts.

Research Questions

These research questions serve as a guide to the study.

- i. Has the River State government been involved in any musical arts before?
- ii. Had the Rivers State government empowered any youth of Rivers State in musical arts?
- iii. Are there established criteria by the Rivers State government for musical arts youth empowerment?
- iv. Are there other organizations in Rivers State that engage in empowering Rivers youth in musical arts?
- v. What is the way forward in the River State youth empowerment in musical arts?

Methodology

Qualitative and discussion method is adopted through the review of related literature and interviews to gather data for this paper. The interviews were conducted by the author, using the interview questions generated from the research questions above. The author interviewed musicians, (musicologists and non-musicologists), especially those that are closer to the seat of power (government) in Rivers State and music institutions in the state and other musicians through phone calls. Furthermore, members of staff at the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE), and the University of Port Harcourt (UNIPORT) were also interviewed to find out the level of involvement of the Rivers State government in their various departments in the area of music

Literature Review

Rivers State

for serious governmental intervention in providing many platforms for development, especially in music in the state to give youths who are interested in music an identity in the state. Bucholtz (2002) affirms that:

It is a commonplace of much research on youth cultures and identities that the youth category lacks a clear definition and in some situations may be based on one's social circumstances rather than chronological age or cultural position. In a given culture, pre-adolescent individuals may count as youth, while those in their 30s or 40s may also be included in this category. Youth as a cultural stage often marks the beginning of a long-term, even lifelong, engagement in particular cultural practices, whether its practitioners continue to be included in the youth category or not. Related categories like adolescent, teenager, or young adult provide a greater degree of specificity concerning age, but they also vary in their application across contexts. (p. 15)

Theory of Empowerment

The theory of empowerment was propounded by Perkins and Zimmerman in 1995. The theory asserts that:

A distinction between empowering processes and outcomes is critical to clearly define empowerment theory. Empowering processes for individuals might include participation in community organizations. At the organizational level, empowering processes might include collective decision-making and shared leadership. Empowering processes at the community level might include collective action to access government and other community resources (e.g., media). Empowered outcomes refer to the operationalization of empowerment that allows us to study the consequences of empowering processes. Empowered outcomes for individuals might include situation-specific perceived control and resource mobilization skills. When we are studying organizations, outcomes might include the development of organizational networks, organizational growth, and policy leverage. Community-level empowerment outcomes might include evidence of pluralism, and existence of organizational coalitions, and accessible community resources. Empowerment suggests that participation with others to achieve goals, efforts to gain access to resources, and some critical understandings of the sociopolitical environment are basic components of the construct. Empowerment is a construct that links individual strengths and competencies, natural helping systems, and proactive behaviors to social policy and social change (p. 571).

The author interprets this theory of empowerment in this paper as:

1. **Empowering Process:** The Government of Rivers State needs to develop a defined process for youth empowerment in the musical arts. To ensure that the youths of Rivers State benefit so well from the government in the appropriate form, there must be a well-structured process of empowerment.
2. **Empowering Outcome:** The motivational factor behind empowerment is the outcome. The physical evidence of such empowerment. When youths are empowered by the government and they observe the development of such empowerment by the individual, it serves as a motivational factor for the government to do more. However, when such an outcome is not visible, the willpower to empower is defeated.

3. **Situation-specific Perceived Control:** The ability to control the individual that is empowered is value placed. In the scarcity of resources of the State and the unending cue of youths hopping to be empowered by the government, a situation-specific control is needed. This shall help the government withdraw from youths who are not vicious in the empowering process and outcome.
4. **Resource Mobilization Skills:** Resources should be mobilized from every fragment of the state. The Local Government and senatorial districts, commissioners and senators, and other business moguls of the State should also be mobilized in empowering youths in musical arts within the state.
5. **Links Individual Strengths and Competencies:** Another way youths can be empowered in the state is to link up individual strengths and competencies in the craft. If this is done, empowerment shall not only be on the shoulders of the government but a concern of all. Unfortunately, many are comfortable standing alone for fear of the unknown and overtaking.
6. **Natural Helping Systems:** This is what the Rivers State government is doing presently with musicians in the state. Empowerment comes naturally without any set policies and procedures.
7. **Development of Organizational Networks:** Musicologists in Rivers State should develop an organizational network within them and activities that shall drive the Rivers State government's attention to them. This networking shall grant them the platform to involve the government in their activities.
8. **Policy Leverage.** There should be set plans by the government and the musicologists in Rivers State on youth empowerment in musical arts, stating the dimensions of empowerment shall be beneficial individually and collectively.

Successes and challenges of Rivers State Government youths' empowerment in Musical Arts.

Rivers State has been involved in the musical arts right from the creation of the State. Musical arts have been used by the government for political campaigns, state functions, and festivals through the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Recently, the immediate past government of Rivers State, His Excellency, Nyesom Wike featured both classical and popular musicians throughout his tenure in state project commissioning as a means of empowerment. These given birth to the rise of numerous concert choirs and bands within the state. Majebi and Anierobi (2017), assert that:

Since 2008, the Rivers State Government through the Rivers State Ministry of Culture and Tourism has annually organized the Rivers State Festival of Art and Culture (otherwise called RIVFEST and presently known as CARNIRIV)...The Rivers State Government in an attempt to enhance its socio-economic base, strategized to harness the rich cultural and arts dispositions of the various diverse ethnic varieties in the state to achieve tourism reform through the amalgamation of these divergent cultural groups to the State capital. (p. 131-132).

The CARNIRIV was dominated by the display of different musical arts in the state, and this was used to promote and develop the rich musical culture of Rivers State. It was an avenue of engaging youths of the state from the street into artwork. Mbata (2024) in an oral interview discussed the success of the Rivers State in musical arts:

The Rivers State Government has always supported the musical arts, especially in singing. His Excellency, Sir., Dr. Peter Odili, who was one of the governors in Rivers

State loved music so much and supported Sotonye Omeli (a tenor singer) one of the best voices in Rivers State.

Ekimiete (2024) in an interview also affirms that:

The Rivers State Council for Arts and Culture has empowered youths before, bringing them into stardom in various areas, especially in music, dance, and cultural displays. Generally, in terms of musical arts, the Rivers State for Arts and Culture has done well in producing some notable men like Ibo Ikoko-the commissioner of culture and tourism, and Mr. Kinye Georgewill who was in charge of the choral music presently a lecturer in the Department of Music Ignatius Ajuru University of Education.

The hindrances to Rivers State Government youths' empowerment in musical arts are the lack of established government policies on youth empowerment, lack of functioning state musicologists' organization, self-centered syndrome, and ethical issues.

Discussion of Findings

The key finding of the paper is based on an evaluation of the involvement of Rivers State Government in youth empowerment in musical arts and the way forward. It is clear from findings that the Rivers State Government has been involved in youth empowerment through musical arts. However, there is no clear policy or contributions from the musicologists/musicians or government in the state that serves as a guideline on the process of youth development in musical arts within the State. Government empowerment can be achieved vis-a-vis the youths in musical arts within the state through a relationship between the musician and state's political personals, opportunities to perform in state's sponsored programme where the governor or political personals are present, attaining a height in the craft that has drawn the attention of the state government to the appreciate musical craft.

To adequately involve the government of Rivers State in the empowerment of youths in musical arts within the state, musicologists/musicians within the state need to first, set aside ethnical sentiments, constitute a committee on youth empowerment on musical arts, and communicate with the government through the ministry of arts and culture on the necessity for youths empowerment in the state.

Conclusion

Music is a force that brings the youths together. Recently, musical arts in the state have been advancing immensely. Both secular and sacred music is gaining recognition and gathering the youths together in performances. This is a great channel for the government of the state to create opportunities for youths to showcase their creative talents for empowerment. Also, revitalizing the lost CANIRIV and showcasing all the musical arts of the various local governments in the state is very important. The youths in musical arts of the state should also endeavor to have the goals of making music and setting structures that shall put the government in the right perspectives for empowerment. Music is very important in the growth of a society. It is therapeutic and entertaining, enlightening the spirit, soul, and body of an individual. Therefore, musicians in the state should be empowered by the government for cultural sustainability, job creation, and entertainment within and outside the state.

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Oral interview

S/N	Name	Age	Occupation	Place of Work	Status	Date of Interview
1	Enetoue Iyalla	Adult	Civil servant	Government House, Musicologist	Married	10/2/24
2	Otunde Ekimiete	Adult	Civil servant	Artiste, Musicologist	Married	15/2/24
3	Aloysius Nbata	Adult	Civil servant	Government Artiste	Married	7/3/24
4	Precious A. Omuku	Adult	Civil servant	Department of Music University of PorHarcourt	Married	18/3/24
5	Kinye Georgewill	Adult	Civil servant	Department of Music, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education	Married	20/11/24
6	Albert G. Alfred	Adult	Civil servant	Department of Music University of PorHarcourt	Married	21/11/24
7	Daido P. Toah	Adult	Civil servant	Department of Music, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education	Married	01/12/24